O le Fa'atamasoali'iga a Tautai Matapalapala

A Soul-Searching and Far-Reaching Voyage of the Tautai

(The Master Navigator)

How and why effective educational leadership can advance Pacific students' learning, health and wellbeing

A thesis presented to the University of Canterbury in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Empowering
Learning and Influencing Changes through Effective Leadership

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Abstract

Keywords: Culture, cultural metaphors, leadership, educational achievement, educational engagement, Lalaga research method, Pacific students, Saoalaupulega Samoa Research

Six decades ago, after World War 2, many Pacific families migrated to Aotearoa, leaving behind their aiga (families), fanua (lands), nu'u (villages) and traditional ways, but migrating with commitment and aspirations for their children to have an education that would lead to better employment and a positive future. However, the children of many of these Pacific migrants have experienced underachievement in the New Zealand education system, the realities of which can result in poverty, low-paid jobs, high unemployment, poor health, a high incidence of youth suicide and poor housing. This research is about 'talatalaina ole upega lavelave', untangling the tangled net of the issues that so adversely affect children and their families.

The issues have motivated Pacific families and communities to work collaboratively with schools to ensure their children make a better start for their learning, health and wellbeing. Pacific parents' educational aspirations are carried through by the waves of the echoing sound of the Foafoa (conch shell) from the Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa (Pacific Ocean) to the Land of the Long White Cloud, Aotearoa. The sound reminds them of the hope and the purpose they brought or bring to their migration, which includes securing a better future for their children through education.

For approximately the last 40 years, the New Zealand Ministry of Education has developed and led robust Pacific strategies to guide planning and implementation of programmes designed to lift Pacific learners' engagement and achievement across all school sectors. These strategies have included the development of several Pacific education plans from 2001 to 2017 and then beyond with the development of the *Action Plan for Pasifika Education 2020–2030* (Ministry of Education, 2020a).

Ongoing Pacific education reviews and monitoring systems over the years have provided useful reports on student underachievement and key recommendations for future improvement. One particularly important resource has been the Ministry of Education's *Tapasā: Cultural Competency Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2018a). The

primary aim of this framework has been to improve teachers' and educators' understanding of culturally responsive practices so they can better engage with Pacific children and thereby help raise their educational achievement.

The Ministry of Education has also been influential over the years in leading key Pacific initiatives and teachers' professional development (PLD) programmes designed to improve student engagement and the partnership between schools, families and communities. These initiatives include, among others, home–school partnerships, the Pacific Islands School Community Parent Liaison Project (Gorinski, 2005), and Talanoa Ako previously known as the Pacific PowerUp programme.

The current strong emphasis on supporting children's learning in their early (preschool) years so children have a better start from the time they enter compulsory schooling was initiated by the government's *A Better Start: E Tipu e Rea* project. The project was a response to one of the government's National Science Challenges, established in 2014 "to tackle the biggest science-based issues and opportunities facing New Zealand" (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2013). Since it was launched in 2016, *A Better Start: E Tipu e Rea* - National Science Challenges has brought together a "community of learners" in both education and health to lead research projects directed towards helping students make a better start in their learning. *A Better Start* supports the work that the Ministry of Education has implemented over many decades in response to the questions that Pacific families and communities continue to ask as to why their children's educational achievement is so slow to improve.

My interest in educational leadership combined with my Indigenous Samoan leadership and Samoan epistemology inspired my research. A considerable body of research shows that effective leadership is a catalyst for influencing schools to make changes that turn low student achievement into achievement. Moreover, in regard to Pacific students, the research emphasises the need for schools to make school achievement for these students a priority *and* to ensure the school culture reflects those students' cultural needs. Research furthermore shows that the critical indicators of success on both these fronts within schools include access to culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogical practices; acknowledgement and valuing of Pacific cultural identities, languages and cultures; and close connections, through respectful relationships and partnerships, with Pacific families and communities.

My doctoral research is an inquiry into the educational leadership characteristics effective in bringing about the changes in schools that support Pacific children to make a better start in their learning, health and wellbeing. At a more specific level, my inquiry also sought to

identify strategies that school principals use to inspire and empower teachers to improve students' learning in culturally inclusive and responsive ways.

I selected three different educational leadership groups to contribute their voices as I carried out my investigation: Samoan Matai Indigenous leaders, Pacific community leaders and school principal leaders. I used thematic analysis to interpret the conversations and discussions I had with these leaders both individually and in groups. My analysis of what they said led me to identify eight key leadership qualities that need to underpin and inform the strategies school principals use to help guide teachers as they strive to support Pacific students' learning, health and wellbeing: ta'imua (lead from the front), tausimea (keeper of measina, treasures) tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), fa'asinomaga (identity), ta'iala (vision), auala a'oa'o (pedagogy), and agaga ma le loto (emotional and spiritual connections).

Dedication

I dedicate the completion of this doctorate to my much-loved parents:

My father, the late Leali'ie'e Suafo'a Ova Taleni

My mother, Valaei Faloa'i Pritchard Taleni

*You have been influential and instrumental in laying a strong foundation for me; a
foundation that has contributed immensely to my success in education.
You gave me a "basket of five things" from my culture to bring to Aotearoa New Zealand
when I first left Samoa in 1985. These five things have been the true pearls among my
memories of you; they, too, have been instrumental to my successes.*

Dad's words:

Manatua lou aiga ma tausi i lou igoa

Remember your family and look after your name

Mum's words:

Ia fai mea uma ma le fatu

Do and achieve everything from the heart

*Your legacy, through your inspiration and hard work, will always be remembered.
O alofa'aga molipo mo oulua matua peleina.*

Leo o Ta'ita'i o le Pasefika | Pacific Leaders' Voices

O moemitiga a matua ia manuia le soifua a'oa'oina o fanau ina ia aua ne'i ola ise olaga mativa ma le le tagolima. O le tatou matafaioi fai fa'atasi lea ina ia una'i ma fa'amalosi'au i le fanau ia i'u manuia a latou a'oa'oga, aua e tele manuia o lo'o fa'atalitali mai e fa'aaogaina ai lo latou ola taumafai ma le ola magafagafa.

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Ruta McKenzie

CORE Education, Samoan community

'Oku ou fakafofonga atu 'a e Tonga kotoa pē he Kolo Ngoue Kakala 'i ho'o fakakau kimautolu 'i he fangota, "Laku 'a e kupenga 'i he tahi loloto"—ko e fekumi mo e fakatotolo ki he angi mei taumu'a 'o e ako. Mālō pea ko e ngāue ke fakatu'uta pea mo huohua'i.

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Ofa atu.

Siale Faitotonu

University of Canterbury lecturer, Tongan community

Vinaka na veikacivi ni kena matanataki tiko ni railesu ni kila ka matua, me titobu na makare kei na savasava ni nodra i lakolako na muri mai.

Thank you for your calling to action in utilising our ancient knowledge, so the depth of clearance and authenticity will be our next generation pathways for the future.

Epeli Bogitini

Fijian community

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opuanga o te ra

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Kia rauka i te apii te uki o muri mai. Kia akapapa'ia te Atua Kua rauka taau kimianga.

Kia Orana e Kia Manuia.

Hilton & Poe

Cook Islands Maori leaders i Otautahi

It is a great privilege for me to write this on behalf of our Samoan Church Ministers Fraternal to convey our sincere blessings for your thesis, Lealiie'e—a wonderful topic and we support the philosophy surrounding your research in the area of education.

Awaken to the sound of the Foafoa heralding through the airwaves, telling the people that the Tautai (navigator) is set out for the day of fishing. We want to remind you of Jesus's words to his disciples to cast the net to deeper waters to get fish. Remember also that the deeper you go, the more challenges you will face, but that it is there the village will know you are a Tautai Matapalapala (Master Navigator). The soul-searching and far-reaching voyage of a Tautai is when you return with a good catch, enough to feed the whole community awaiting for your safe return to shore. Ia manuia tele lau Fa'atamasoali'iga aua le atunu'u o loo tapuai mai. God Bless.

Reverend Fitifiti Luatua

EFKS Hornby, Christchurch , Aotearoa New Zealand

Education is important for our Pacific people because it provides individuals with knowledge and skills that can help them pursue their passions, achieve their goals, and contribute positively to their aiga, community and society.

Our Pacific people are critical and creative thinkers and problem-solvers, skills that are essential in today's rapidly changing world. Overall, education is a vital investment for our Pacific communities to ensure we thrive and prosper in Aotearoa and abroad. I wish you all the best, Lealiiee. Your research will benefit generations to come. Malo lava le tautua.

Ropeta Mene-Tulia

Regional Director, Regional Partnerships, Southern, MPP

Fakaalofa lahi atu kia motulu oti.

Education is not only about what we learn but about what we are able to teach others. Our value will be understood and appreciated when we are able to to share our stories in a way that others understand. Each individual plays a part in the wealth and wellbeing of all.

He uhila kua lupa tata mai Fatiia ho la Tavahi mata e Pogipogi to uhu mo e liogi.

The whole is broken up into its respective parts, with flashes of light illuminating each so that the connections between are understood and valued.

Maria Pasene

Pasifika Health Manager, Niuean Community

Tau ia ina momoli atu o matou mo'omo'oga e le manu na sau sau fia lele i lou faga i Utufiu, ta'ita'i atu le Fa'atamasoali'iga i le sini o le fa'amoemoe, aua le tapuai'ga a matua, aiga, le afioaga, uo ma aumea mamae, ae fa'apea le laumua a le Iunivesite o Kenetaperi (UC) o lo'o tapua'ia faiva.

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Laloifi Tonumaipe'a

Social Work Supervisor, Ministry of Oranga Tamariki

Family representative

Fa'afetai Tele

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"He moana pukepuke e ekengia e te waka" | A choppy sea can be navigated."

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In closing, I draw on a saying that comes from my birthplace: "Ua sausau fia lele le manu nai Utufiu" | "The bird of Utufiu flaps its wings ready to fly." The bird of Utufiu flaps its wings

with excitement, as it welcomes the dawning of the new day, ripe for exploration. This saying accords with my completion of this doctoral thesis that this is dedicated from me, my family, my village and my community to all school leaders, teachers, educators, policymakers, academics, key government agencies, families and community to make a difference for Pacific children's learning health and wellbeing.

To you all—"E gase toa ae ola pule" - your words of wisdom and true support will always be remembered.

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A Note on Terminology

In this thesis, I use the term "Pacific" to refer to all "Pasifika" peoples regardless of their birthplace and identity; thus, men, women and children who identify themselves with the islands and/or cultures of Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu or are of other Pacific or mixed heritages.

Pasifika is a collective term used only in Aotearoa New Zealand to describe the diverse group of people of Pacific ancestry who have migrated to or been born in Aotearoa New Zealand. The term used in this country for this group of people can vary considerably, however. Examples include Pacific Island people, Pacific Nations person, Polynesian or Pacific Islander. The Ministry of Education uses the term "Pasifika peoples" for those who identify themselves as being of Pacific ancestry and who are based in Aotearoa New Zealand as a country in the Pacific region (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). Pasifika peoples are not a homogenous grouping, of course, hence the use of "peoples" rather than "people". Pasifika peoples accordingly refer to a variety of combinations of ethnicities as well as to recent migrants or first, second, third, fourth and subsequent generations of New Zealand-born Pasifika peoples.

As stated in the New Zealand Government's *Pasifika Education Plan 2008–2012* (Ministry of Education, 2008a) "Pasifika people have multiple world views with diverse cultural identities and may be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual" (p. 6). Understanding this diversity is critical when bringing together whole communities of learners, including students, teachers, school leaders, specialist teachers, academics, school advisers, key government agencies, families and communities to build the va'a (canoe) that will carry Pacific children on an educational journey destined to bring all of them educational success. Throughout my thesis, I specify school students as learners or students. I also specify school leaders, principals, teachers, academics, specialist teachers, community leaders and government agencies as such. As the well-known adage says: "E aofia fa'atasi le nu'u i le fa'afaileleina ma le a'otauina ole tamaiti'iti" | "It takes a whole village to raise and nurture a child."

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Prologue

The dawning of a new day in the village, signalled by the crowing of roosters, the chirping of birds and the sun's rays emerging from the horizon, symbolises for me the beginning of a new journey or, as it is known in Samoan, o le taeao afua (the new morning). During my childhood and early adult years, I often captured the sun rising from my place of birth—le Tolotolo i Utufiu (the Cape of Utufiu, depicted in the above image), a place so often epitomised for me by these words: "E lele le toloa ae ma'au ile vai" / "Birds fly everywhere but always return to where they belong". I know that wherever I go in the world, I will always return to my roots, to my birthplace of Utufiu.

Samoa is the home of my "cultural soul", the epicentre of all that I have experienced, and all there is to live for in life. It is the place that I connect to culturally, genetically, socially, spiritually and emotionally. My tupuaga (ancestors) are laid to rest on this land. I grew up immersing myself in, listening to and feeling their spirits. They were the source of comfort, strength and motivation for me throughout my childhood. Here, I learned to love, respect, persevere, serve with humility and do all that I do from the heart. And here is where I was taught the importance and centrality of all that. Looking back, I wholeheartedly acknowledge my upbringing. I acknowledge the learning I received during that early education in life from my matua (parents), augatama (forefathers), and all those who nurtured me to become the person I am today. This learning from the heart and the root of my Samoan epistemology connects to my philosophical and ontological views of the world; and to my cultural soul, in the traditional Samoan ways of doing things. In the here and now, I continue to feel prepared, motivated and confident to go out into the wider world, and to put into practice what I have learned.

As I continue to face the reality of the challenge that is my doctoral work, I bring to it, and to the here and now, all that I have from home, so not just myself but also my family, village and people. My hope is that together with them I can go on meeting this challenge, for it is they who will always play a part in weaving the fala (mat) of success.

Now, the sound of the conch shell echoes throughout the village.

The sound takes me back to growing up in Utufiu. I remember the urgency of that sound in the early hours of the morning, a sound that reminded the people of the village that a fono (meeting) was about to begin. My task in the morning was to prepare food to take to the fono and then to follow my father to it, just as other young men were doing with their fathers.

I sat at the back of the fale (house), listening and watching. I observed my father in all that he did and said, for the fale is where tautua (service) is observed, learned and practised. The fono is also where I learned more about and captured the spirit of love, humility, sense of community, and the integrity and respect shown for each Matai (chief) as they dug deeper into sharing their wisdom and the important knowledge integral for seeking solutions to concerning issues.

Now, I must leave what I am doing and follow the villagers to the fono.

Throughout this thesis, I refer to the chapters as Foafoa (the conch shell), to emphasise the importance of leaders and their leadership as the "callers of hope" for a better future.

The sound of the Foafoa is one I will always hear as I continue my journey, until such time as Pacific children are fully supported, through education, to achieve all that they are capable of.

I can hear the sound now.

The sound of the Foafoa—the call of hope. The young man blowing the Foafoa is my son, Lehman Taleni (Utufiu, Vaiafai, Iva 2022).

Foafoa 1

Fa'atomuaga

Introduction: The Voyage Begins

Ua sausau fia lele le manu nai Utufiu

The bird that belongs to Utufiu flaps its wings ready to fly

© Foafoa image Tātai Aho Rau CORE Education

1.1 Setting the Scene

"While this journey has come to an end, it is now the beginning of another." These, the concluding words of my 2016 Master's thesis, connect deeply to the Samoan alagaupu (traditional saying) above, which is rooted in my fanua (land of my birthplace), Utufiu. The flapping wings aligned with the beginning of another journey, my doctoral studies. I am honoured to use these words again as I embark on the part of the journey that is writing my doctoral thesis. As I begin, I do so to the sound of the blowing of the Foafoa (the conch shell), a sound that declares this precious work has begun.

The ancient Polynesian custom of blowing the conch shell requests the attention of both God(s) and peoples for direct communication between community, place and spirit. The call of the conch shell, ili le pū (to blow), opens ethical and philosophical encounters for people, spirit and place. The physicality of the shell–ocean–air–breath–life is empowering. Consequently, in this thesis, I explore the sound of the conch shell to logologo atu (let others know) of its utility as a vehicle for communication (Matapo, 2016), one that conveys a message of hope. Blowing the conch shell symbolises "coming to know the self in connection with others, past and present, the cosmos, fanua (land), sami (sea), vaomatua (forest) and lagi (sky),

and is done within a Pacific understanding of itself as part of a greater whole" (Meyer, 2014, quoted in Matapo, 2018, p. 1).

The echoing sound of the conch shell around the village, whatever the time of day, presents this whole notion of capturing and rejuvenating knowledges and philosophical beliefs belonging to the people, their families and culture. I value this knowledge, and I rely on it to guide and navigate me through this important research for my people and the world. It allows me to reflect on my journey, in connection with the bird of Utufiu as it flaps its wings ready to fly.

In 1985, I left my birthplace of Utufiu for the first time for my new adopted home, Aotearoa New Zealand. Like the bird of Utufiu, I was excited. I left my people with respect and honour, promising them that I would return one day with something to contribute, to give back to the fabric of our community. Like the bird of Utufiu, flying away to explore the world and other environments yet always returning to its habitat, its home of Utufiu, so, too, would I.

I am not only inspired by the strong sense of spiritual and emotional connection that the sound of the Foafoa brings to documenting my research in this thesis but also guided by the idea intrinsic to a metaphor known as 'o le talatalaina o le upega lavelave - the "untangling of the tangled net". As I write this, my ears are tuned to my late father's voice. "We cannot," he would say, "catch fish with a tangled net; we must first untangle it before setting out to sea." This metaphor lies at the heart of my research, which has sought to untangle the complexity of the net of educational disengagement and underachievement among Pacific students. What I do know is that when everyone involved in untangling the net of Pacific student underachievement manages to do this, the issues that cause the tangled nets of poverty, high unemployment, low income, poor health, high rate of youth suicide, poor housing and more will also untangle.

1.2 Study Context

1.2.1 Pacific Students in Aotearoa New Zealand

My doctoral research is set within the educational context of Aotearoa New Zealand and the New Zealand Government's commitment to ensuring education success for diverse learners who identify as Pacific. The government has invested in achieving the vision set out in its *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030*, specifically that "diverse Pacific learners and their families feel safe, valued and equipped to achieve their education aspirations" (Ministry of Education,

2020a, p. 4). The vision is underpinned by recognition that systems-level change is necessary if the persistent educational inequities that have dominated Pacific learners' school experience are to be reduced and eliminated. It is my hope that learnings from my doctoral research will contribute to this necessary change and thus help support the realisation of the action plan's vision.

Educational disparities and inequities have dominated Pacific learners' school experience in Aotearoa New Zealand ever since Pacific peoples began migrating to New Zealand in large numbers in the 1960s. Although Pacific peoples viewed Aotearoa New Zealand as a place of "milk and honey" (Bell et al., 2017) replete with opportunities, particularly in terms of employment, education and health, Pacific students have tended to underachieve within Aotearoa New Zealand's English-medium learning contexts. Despite having many strengths and talents, these learners have been labelled as "underachievers", "priority learners", "the bottom stream", "achievement tail", "kids-at-risk", and "students lagging behind" (Alton-Lee, 2003; Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Chu et al., 2013; Houghton, 2015; Ministry of Education, 1995, 2001, 2009a, 2013, 2015a, b, 2019; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999, Nash, 2000). Many Pacific teenagers leave school with no formal qualifications, a situation that continues to contribute to the ongoing patterns of student underachievement and unemployment associated with more and more Pacific families living in poverty in this country (Burkett, 2014; Carpenter & Osbourne, 2014; Taleni, 2017).

A Ministry of Education report on best teaching practices for Pacific students states, as have other reports before it: "One of the key objectives of the education system is to help every child and young person to attain educational achievement to the best of their potential (Education Act, 1989). Accordingly, participation and achievement of Pacific learners is fundamental to meeting the objectives of the Act. However, there have been longstanding concerns that, while gains have been made, significant disparities remain" (Ministry of Education, 2020b, p. 2).

Various reasons have been suggested for Pacific students' underachievement. A lack of English proficiency because of interference from the students' first language (subtractive bilingualism) and cultural differences are just two of them (Hill, 2017; May, 2020). Deficit thinking about Pacific learners' bilingualism and other aspects of their home backgrounds may therefore have an adverse effect on teachers' expectations of these students (Fowler, 2023). As May (2020) points out, bilingual students, including Pacific students, have been consistently over-represented in Aotearoa New Zealand's so-called "literacy tail" (see also, Jones, 2017;

Videbeck, 2021). Irving (2013, p. 2) observes that "Pasifika people have been an important part of New Zealand society and economy over the last sixty years, and they are a fast-growing group of our society. They are over-represented in poor education results, poor health statistics and have low median incomes. As an education system within that society, we need changes to effect improvements for this significant and important cultural group."

For May (2020), Aotearoa New Zealand's increasing demographic diversity highlights the importance of changing these persistent patterns of educational inequality for bilingual learners. Demographic projections indicate that, by 2043, because of New Zealand's fast-growing Pacific population, "almost one in five New Zealand children 0–14 years (18%) and one in eight workers under 39 years will be Pacific" (New Zealand Treasury, 2023, p. 10). These figures add to the imperative for Pacific students to experience high-quality learning to increase their chances of performing better at school, in the workplace and in life so they can fully contribute to New Zealand's social equity and economic goals.

The continuing reality, however, seems to be that no matter how much the New Zealand education system puts into realising this aim for Pacific students, the educational status of these students continues to be lower than that of non-Pacific students (Hill et al., 2019; Kenny, 2021; Taleni, 2017; Videbeck, 2021). The narrative on the need to lift Pacific student educational engagement and achievement has existed for at least the past six decades and has been a major remedial priority of New Zealand's education system throughout the first decades of the twenty-first century (see, for example, Ministry of Education, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015b, 2018a, 2020a; Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2022; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 1999).

Among the most recent of the remedial initiatives is the government's 2022 action plan that includes the document *Tapasā; Cultural Competency Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2018a) and *Takiala Pasifika 2020–2023* (New Zealand Qualifications Authority [NZQA], 2020). The particular focus of these initiatives has been on supporting Pacific students to gain the school qualifications they need for full engagement in society and the economy in order to substantially lift Pacific peoples' health and wellbeing.

These numerous initiatives have yielded some positive shifts in achievement across the education system for Pacific students. These include early learning participation, acquisition of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 2, and growing participation in vocational education (NZQA, 2020). Schools' and teachers' understanding of what works for Pacific learners is also growing thanks to more research in this area and regular community engagement. While these are positive outcomes for Pacific learners, children,

family and community voices and data show that the education system is still not sufficiently focused on facilitating and fostering the factors most likely to support these learners' success in educational engagement and achievement (Ministry of Education, 2020b). These factors pertain to belonging and inclusion and therefore signal the need for all levels of the education system to embrace the cultures, languages and identities of Pacific students.

Also on a more positive note, more recent research is producing a clearer picture of the specific factors that continue to undermine Pacific learners' educational attendance and engagement (Ministry of Education, 2020b). These include systemic barriers such as racism, discrimination and bullying, low expectations from teachers, and learners feeling they cannot relate to teachers (Fowler, 2023). Factors also include learners not having enough food, not having the correct uniform and not having money for transport to early learning settings or school (Martin, 2023). Some Pacific learners continue to experience challenges associated with accessing NCEA opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2018b, 2020b), given that the pathways to these opportunities are not equitable for all learners. Teachers' low expectations, students' inequitable access to subjects and standards and students being streamed into pathways and subject choices that do not lead to University Entrance (UE) are all at play here. Another problem is associated with the many initiatives that have been implemented in schools over the years to help improve educational outcomes for Pacific leaners. Frequently, the implemented changes are slow to progress, with many more needed (Ministry of Education, 2020b).

Although the number of Pacific learners entering tertiary education is increasing, some of the same barriers impeding Pacific students' progress in early learning centres and schools are also apparent in this sector of the education system. These barriers again include low educator expectations, a lack of Pacific educators and administrators within tertiary institutions and a lack of appropriate financial and mental health support (Anae et al., 2020; Ministry of Education, 2020b). Factors such as these are contributing to Pacific students being more likely than non-Pacific students to leave these institutions before completing their courses or to them not attaining passing grades.

All of these are significant issues, and they are not negated by the more positive developments mentioned above. Rather, their ongoing significance, despite the many efforts to address them, indicates an urgent need for research that can imbue new policies and plans with clear understandings of what hinders and what helps the achievement of educational aspirations for Pacific learners. Such research is required at all levels of the education system. Long

interested in the role that leadership plays in supporting shifts in educational practice, I decided to focus my doctoral research on this role as part of advancing these understandings.

1.2.2 The Deficit Discourse

Emerging out of the milieu of deficit labels that abound in the deficit discourse regarding Pacific students is this one: priority learners (Education Review Office [ERO], 2012; McKenzie, 2018). Tili is one such learner. Seven years old and of Samoan ancestry, Tili grew up in a traditional Samoan cultural environment in Aotearoa New Zealand. He stood strong in his culture, Samoan language and identity, but school was a different story.

> *One morning, Tili arrived at school with his younger brother. The two boys went to their respective classrooms. On this particular day, Tili was angry. His first language was Samoan, and he was struggling with English. His teacher told the class to finish writing their story. But Tili was not doing his work. He kept making excuses to go outside, to leave the classroom. His teacher became frustrated and sent him to the principal. The principal said, "Look at me, Tili. Look at me when I speak to you." Tili folded his arms. He looked down. The principal became frustrated and told Tili to write a letter of apology to his teacher. Tili became confused and was still angry. He went outside and took off. The principal glanced out the window and saw Tili walking through the school gate with his head down. The principal turned away from the window and carried on working.*

Tili, whose story I pick up again later in this and another chapter, is representative of many Pacific students whose educational achievement tends to be lower than the achievement of their non-Pacific counterparts (Kenny, 2021; Nakhid, 2003; Spiller, 2013). The equity gap, between the two groups has been significant, reaching between 10 to 20 percentage points across all curriculum subjects and generally increasing at higher levels of the education system (Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Johnston, 2022). The discourse on this gap says it is fuelled by and contributes to social and economic factors external to education, namely socioeconomic status, lower paid jobs, higher unemployment rates, poorer health outcomes, concerning youth suicide rates, and poor housing (Hirsch, 2007; Marriott & Sim, 2014). Part of facilitating a system shift within education beneficial to Pacific learners is to change the prevailing deficit-focused discourse to one that focuses on facilitators of success for Pacific learners. This positive discourse would highlight not only where and in what ways our Pacific learners are thriving within our educational context but also the factors that influence such success.

The term discourse refers to thinking and "talking" in either spoken or written text about an issue from a particular perspective and belief system. The historical deficit discourse in relation to Pacific learners is about ways of thinking, believing and acting that brand Pacific students as unsuccessful and failing within their education. Like Foucault (1980), I consider discourses are closely linked to power. Consequently, I see the deficit discourse applied to Pacific children as a reflection of the power and dominance of Western culture. Foucault posits that the words and phrases used within a discourse become "truths" and that the boundaries of that discourse constitute a "battlefield".

Having been confronted with this historical and contemporary deficit discourse for many years, I have been constantly disheartened by the many stories and experiences of Pacific students' underachievement in schools that continues to add to the ongoing narrative of deficit construction (Taleni, 2017). One of my aims in conducting my doctoral research has been to help change this deficit narrative to a positive one that positions Pacific children as a strength to their communities and the world. These children have profound potential that needs to be unlocked, for they too are contributors of the knowledges and ideas that form the woven fabric of society.

Educational underachievement is full of complexities, trials and challenges. Over the years, teachers and educational leaders have struggled to find ways to untangle them. For example, a best evidence synthesis (BES) conducted by Adrienne Alton-Lee in 2003 explored factors contributing to Pacific students' educational achievement. One major such factor was educators' misunderstanding of Pacific students' cultures, which led to a pedagogical mismatch with and decontextualisation of Pacific students' learning (Alton-Lee, 2003). More specifically, Pacific students' underachievement was associated with the educational sphere of pedagogical downfall wherein teachers either misunderstood or ignored a student's social, cultural, spiritual and psychological milieu because they (the teachers) were not familiar with it. Not surprisingly, researchers and commentators concerned about this matter, such as Averill and Rimoni (2019), stress the urgent need for the education sector to recruit teachers and school leaders who have a strong knowledge of Pacific communities. These researchers and commentators also emphasise the need for commensurate quality professional learning and development for all other teachers.

1.2.3 The Role of Effective Leadership

While government policies and plans to foster educational success for Pacific learners offer various ways forward, they barely consider the role that school leadership can play in implementing strategies cognisant of the cultural and learning targets of Pacific learners (Averill & Romani, 2019). The importance of effective leadership in educational institutions, and in all societies and organisations for that matter, cannot be underestimated. Effective leadership is essential for organisations' long-term survival, especially when problems confront them (Cabeza-Erikson et al., 2008). Effective leaders take responsibility, use their knowledge and skills to influence their organisation's success, and motivate others by strengthening a positive, inclusive culture (Moo Jun Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015). Research stretching back two decades shows that effective leaders within educational settings can help facilitate positive educational outcomes for low-achieving students (see, for example, Bishop, 2011; Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Bush, 2003; Fletcher & Nicholas, 2017; Glynn et al., 2010; Lashway, 2006; Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley et al., 2007). As an Education Review Office report (ERO, 2012, p. 26) put it: "Leadership (has) to be one of the most frequently identified indicators of school effectiveness and student achievement."

Within schools, the main leader is, of course, the principal. Korkmaz (2007) used path analysis to explore the effects of principals' leadership style on school functioning. He found that leadership style is highly influential in shaping the school's learning climate, the quality of relationships among staff, and teacher morale. A study by Bishop (2011) supported Korkmaz's findings. Bishop teased out a number of school leadership characteristics associated with reducing educational disparities among students. These characteristics included ability to establish and develop specific measurable goals, promote and support pedagogical reform, redesign the institutional and organisational framework, develop the capacity of people and systems, and take ownership of the educational programme.

While these characteristics are very likely favourable in leading learning for Pacific students in Aotearoa New Zealand, I consider it essential that they also incorporate the traditional Pacific leadership qualities embedded within cultural values, such as fa'amaoni (integrity), alofa (love), tautua (service), fetausia'i (reciprocity), fa'aleagaga (spirituality), fa'aaloalo (respect), ta'ita'i (leadership), and fa'asinomaga (belonging). By valuing, using and weaving these qualities into their educational leadership, leaders can effectively navigate the types of educational change that advance Pacific students' learning and achievement (Taleni 2017).

The process by which leaders inspire and motivate others has been a particular focus of research attention in recent years. From my perspective as a Pacific educator and researcher, the main leadership contributor to advancing Pacific students' educational achievement is that of inspiring and motivating teachers to foster effective relationships with those students through enactment of culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogical practices for learning (Taleni, 2017). Principals also have a central role to play in connecting and engaging Pacific parents and communities with their school by, for example, actively involving them in school activities and decision making (Jacobson et al., 2005; Ylimaki, 2007).

Horwitch and Whipple Callahan (2016) identified 33 characteristics of effective inspirational and motivational leaders. The authors grouped these characteristics under four types of action: building inner resources, setting the tone, connecting with others and leading the team. Pivotal to all of these groupings was an ability that the authors termed "centredness", which requires a person to engage all parts of their mind so they are fully present in the moment; that is, mindful. According to Horwitch and Whipple Callahan (2016), centeredness is a necessary component of effective leadership in any organisation. They also deem it the most important leadership quality for inspiring and motivating others. Centredness appears to be at the core of one of the major leadership actions portrayed in the education leadership research cited above. This action features a commitment to changing learners' low achievement by way of gaining understanding of how students' cultural backgrounds intersect with their learning and of ensuring that school funds are available for staff professional development in this area.

Tili's experience at school, told in the vignette above, reveals a school leader whose response to this young boy being sent to his office is the antithesis of this commitment. Not only the principal's actions but also those of Tili's teacher exemplify the reality of ineffective school leadership and its filtering down into poor teaching practices. The urgent need for leaders to move away from such leadership has been taken up by Pacific leaders and communities. Poor leadership emphasises a reality for Pacific students, which is that they are not "failing" the school system but rather that the school system is failing them (Taleni, 2017). Effective transformational educational leadership for Pacific students is leadership that ensures the implementation and facilitation of pedagogical practices and cultural resources that enable these students to experience success in being Pacific.

1.3 Research Focus

A primary focal intent of my research has been to give strength and robustness to the urgent need to refocus educational discourse and research regarding Pacific students' success and achievement. A key question that Pacific communities commonly ask is this: Why is it taking so long for the educational achievement of Pacific students to improve? Pacific parents are fully motivated by the need to lift their children's education for a better future, but this question and related ones about the complexity of improving these young people's achievement remains unanswered. I am adamant that one answer lies in school leaders actively recognising the need for Pacific students' respective cultures to be at the heart of these students' school contexts. As Bernstein (1970) eloquently stated, "the culture of the child cannot enter the classroom until it has first entered the consciousness of the teacher".

Many other researchers, academics and educationalists have captured the importance that recognition of students' culture plays in their learning. Pedro Noguera (2003, p. 1) spoke for many of them when he said, "All the evidence shows that unless we change the culture of schools, nothing changes. That is—no matter what curriculum we introduce, or how many structural changes we make to the organisation—if we do not transform the beliefs, the norms, and the relationships … nothing will change."

All of this suggests that school leaders must strongly model and advocate the culturally responsive practices that best fit with school goals for advancing Pacific students' educational attainment and wellbeing. In summative terms, the role of principals within this educational context is to motivate and inspire all teachers to value and understand Pacific students' cultural values and principles.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, evidence of this valuing and understanding is evident in teachers' ability to contextualise their teaching so that Pacific learners can see themselves in the content being taught. As Professor Helu-Thaman, a Pacific academic in Tonga, reminded educators some years ago, "We must continue to better contextualise our teaching because the content of the curricula that we are often asked to implement is so alien from the realities of our students that their success will depend on the extent to which we as teachers are able to make learning meaningful for them" (Helu-Thaman, 2000, p. 8).

Bishop and colleagues (2002, p. 123) have similarly emphasised the need for meaningful curricula: "It is clear that the major influence on Māori and Pasifika students' educational achievement lies in the minds and actions of their teachers. Changing how teachers theorise

their relationships with students and how they relate to and interact with them in the classroom can have an impact upon students' engagement, their learning and their academic achievement." Essentially, as Rae Si'ilata and her colleagues emphasise (see, for example, Si'ilata, 2014: Si'ilata et al., 2017), leadership and teacher practices must happen within a holistic context that cares about students' physical, social, cultural, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs. When these are well looked after, school leaders and teachers contribute effectively to students' school-based learning, health and wellbeing.

1.3.1 A Better Start: E Tipu e Rea—A National Science Challenge Strategy

My research into the role that effective school leadership can play in lifting the achievement of Pacific learners has been partially supported by the earlier mentioned National Science Challenges initiative, *A Better Start: E Tipu e Rea*, funded through the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment New Zealand (Grant No. 1502688). The overarching aim of *A Better Start,* National Science Challenges is to improve efforts to ensure young New Zealanders have a strong start in life and go on to lead healthy, successful lives. My involvement in the initiative has centred on understanding strengths-based positive ways to ensure educational success for Pacific learners. One such recent understanding, or rather confirmation of what is already known, is that wellbeing support for Pacific children must embrace the context of their families and family backgrounds (Maessen et al., 2023).

A major research theme within the Better Start challenge is the link between children's learning experiences and their overall wellbeing. The *Better Start Literacy Approach* (Gillon et al., 2019, 2020, 2022) is an outcome of this theme. The aim of this culturally responsive, strengths-based approach is to ensure all learners develop strong foundational oral language and early literacy skills that support comprehensive literacy skills. It has already proven effective in accelerating early literacy learning, including for Pacific learners (Gillon & McNeill, 2022; Scott et al., 2022).

My research ties into the aims and contexts of the Better Start research programme, notably in terms of my working collaboratively with Pacific families and communities, drawing together different knowledges and research methodologies, and taking a holistic approach to supporting the wellbeing of our children. The research context of *A Better Start* also motivated me to focus my research on the earlier years of learning, as children's experiences during this time contribute to how well they fare during their schooling years.

Another feature of the Better Start research programme that attracted my focus was the deep thinking required of researchers and educational leaders involved with it. It is probably fair to say that while many school leaders and teachers of Pacific students are well aware of the need to "change the tide" by injecting and implementing positive changes into educational provision for these learners, they may not know how to do this in practice. Consequently, I decided to draw on the voices of not only school principals but also Indigenous Samoan leaders and Pacific community leaders and use them to create a vision for Pacific children's educational success and to offer strategies on how to achieve it. Given my conviction that school principals are at the heart of effective change, it was particularly important for me to capture these leaders' ideas on how to unlock Pacific students' potential.

1.3.2 My Journey as a Researcher

Throughout this journey, my research position as a Samoan has been driven by my "cultural soul" and my deep relationship with Fa'a-Samoa. That imperative in tandem with a critical stance informed, in part, by Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed and education for their emancipation (Biesta, 2017) led me to question and challenge the deficit construction of Pacific learners trapped in an environment of educational underachievement (Taleni, 2017). My quest for answers relating to this seemingly intractable educational underachievement narrative has been strongly inspired by and motivated by the birds of Utufiu flapping their wings ready to fly.

Utufiu is my fanua (land), my birthplace where I grew up and the place that I left as a young man. It is where my placenta is buried, where I inhaled my first breath. It always reminds me of my close connection to the land belonging to my ancestors who are laid to rest there. Utufiu is also the place that belongs to my generation, that nurtured my cultural soul. It is the place where I grew to love and admire my aiga and nu'u. It prepared me to become a future someone shaped by the heart and soul of my educational journey and my leadership aspirations.

That journey calls to mind to another Samoan alagaupu (proverb): "E felelei manu ae mapu i o latou ofaga" | "The birds fly everywhere but always return to their nests." Wherever I go, I must always return to my roots, my belonging and identity. I value the "flapping of the wings" and the "flying" because that knowledge helped prepare me for my educational va'a (canoe) journey to Aotearoa New Zealand, the country where my experience of home merged with my research aims.

As a Samoan Matai (chief), born and brought up in the village of Utufiu, I observed and experienced my own father's effective leadership as a parent, church leader and a Samoan Matai. I learned that leadership roles were influential in the weaving of malamalama'aga fa'ale-aganu'u (cultural understanding), iloa ma le silafia (knowledge), agava'a fa'apitoa (wisdom), and tomai maoa'e (expertise and experiences), and that this weaving produced effective solutions to critical and challenging issues affecting the everyday lives of people in the village.

My father was significant in the growth and maintenance of family and village developments. He made a huge impact on the lives of his family and village. I also have the benefit of having learned from other great leaders in the village whose effective leadership qualities embraced the key Samoan cultural values and principles of alofa (love), tautua (service), fetausia'i (reciprocity), fa'aaloalo (respect), agalelei (compassion), fa'asinomaga (belonging), fa'ale-agaga (spirituality), and aofia fa'atasi (inclusion). These are always at the heart of Indigenous Samoan leadership and are embedded in the Samoan notion that "O se ta'ita'i toa ose ta'ita'i alofa" | "A leader with courage is also a leader of great love and compassion for the people."

My motivation to conduct a study focused on the role of leadership in educational outcomes for Pacific students was strongly compelled not only by my life in the village but also by the ongoing stories that Pacific families and communities have shared with me over the years. Growing up in the Pacific, I daily saw and experienced poverty and struggle. That time taught me a very important lesson—the value of making a difference in children's education. The stories Pacific people have shared with me about their experiences of poverty, high unemployment, poor health, high youth suicide rate, poor housing and more have also had a profound impact on me. These stories, more than anything else, encouraged me to reflect on my education philosophy and to place education policies and plans to improve educational outcomes for Pacific children within the "realm of the heart". Educational failures have, and do, hurt Pacific families, as community leaders at community fono (meetings) continue to attest. Their voices have also inspired and motivated me to contribute to creating a vision for the positive future of Pacific education in Aotearoa New Zealand. This research is my contribution to realising that vision.

1.3.3 The Place of Indigenous Leadership in My Research

The qualities of Fa'a-Matai leadership are epitomised by Nafanua, one of Samoa's greatest leaders (Kneubuhl, n.d.). Also known as the great Toa Tama'ita'i, Queen Warrior or Warrior

Princess of Samoa (Cox & Freeman, 1997), she hailed from the Sa Tonumaipe'a clan and took four pāpā titles, the leading Ali'i (chiefly) titles of Samoa. Nafanua was renowned for her courage, perseverance and love for her people. Her leadership encapsulated all that is Samoan. Her actions modelled Samoan cultural values and practices, thus influencing people in a positive way, whether for the achievement of goals or the means of survival. Nafanua's people also achieved a great military victory under her leadership.

After her death, Nafanua became a goddess in Polynesian religion; many historical and mythological traditions continue to be associated with her. According to Samoan mythology, she was the daughter of Saveasi'uleo, also considered a god, the Ali'i of <u>Pullout</u>, which was both a historical place and a place of the afterlife for the warriors of Samoa. Nafanua and her era continue to provide a remarkable narrative for all time. Her legacy has been captured and nurtured throughout the fabric of Samoan society. It therefore offers much to the present and future leaders of Samoa**.** I learned about Nafanua at a very early age.

The Samoan Indigenous leadership system known as the Fa'a-Matai (chiefly system), coordinated and led by a council of Matai (chiefs), has been one of the most significant forms of leadership in the Pacific region for many decades. Fa'a-matai is at the heart of Fa'a-Samoa leadership, the purpose of which is to maintain and perform all developments and practices in the village. The effectiveness of plea Fa'a-Matai (the Matai system) is determined by highly valued knowledge and experiences of culture. A Matai who makes invaluable contributions to the village fono is seen as a leader with broad wisdom and mana, as someone who has experience and expertise of Fa'a-Samoa (Samoan culture). Matai integrity and position in the chiefly hierarchy are elevated and endorsed by tautua (service). Other forms of leadership in the village are branches of the Fa'a-Matai system. They include the Komiti a le Aualuma (women's committee) and the Komiti Fa'ale-Aumaga (untitled men's committee). Leadership is maintained and sustained in these committees within the village, which also play an integral part in children's education and wellbeing.

I determined that my research work would embrace Soalaupulega, an epistemology deeply rooted in Samoan culture. It defines what existence is and the interrelationships between all of what is, for survival. Soalaupulega is a spiritual, emotional process that digs deep into the cultural soul; it is a healing of the soul. Soalaupulega dictates the moulding of other epistemologies, a process that in turn directs action and ways of acting. In many ways, Soalaupulega is akin to sociocultural theory, which emphasises the learning arising out of the interactions humans have with one another and their environment. In aligning my research with

Soalaupulega, my aim has been to promote an Indigenous research theory—Soalaupulega Samoan Research (SRR). Reference to this theoretical construct, I believed, would allow me to conduct my research in a manner authentic to my Samoan heritage and identity and provide room for the inclusion of qualitative research methodologies and methods.

Becoming a researcher has taken me many years, from childhood to now. The shift has happened in parallel with my growing consciousness about education to metaphorically flapping my wings to carry out research to emancipate Pacific children from educational underachievement. My research position is seeded in my spiritual and emotional connection and ties to my fanua, where the birds flap their wings. That connection remains an unbroken chain that links me, no matter where I go in this world, to the spirits of my forefathers and my return to my fanua.

The strength of being a researcher for me ties into a growing appreciation of what research that values Indigenous knowledges can do for Pacific learners. Valuing Indigenous knowledges has enabled me to bring together and *hear* the voices of my family, village, Pacific education family, Pacific community leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand, Samoan Indigenous leaders (Matai), school principals, academics and leaders of health and education government agencies. My commitment to these diverse people and organisations "kicked" me into being a researcher while simultaneously connecting me to my "cultural soul", my way of being and my role as a parent, family Matai, tertiary educator, academic and community leader. I continue to grow into this research space with passion, knowing that the role of research is a fa'amanuiaga (blessing) that favours the opportunist and the vaifofo (solution seeker). Research is also a gateway to opening up problems and issues and creating solutions for them.

As a traditional Samoan, I endorse the cultural experiences, knowledge and wisdom that I bring to this research. It has given me the opportunity to weave my cultural experiences into the compilation of Samoan epistemology. It has allowed me to draw on the experiences of Nafanua so that I could work to the greatest extent possible in an authentic way while bringing in other qualitative methodologies to my work: critical theory, Talanoa theory, Kaupapa Māori theory, sociocultural-historical theory, Fa'afaletui and phenomenology. Nafanua's courage, perseverance and love for her people has been an anchor to my va'a (canoe) and given me the strength to do this research. The major pivotal outcome always in sight as I have navigated this voyage is school leadership of a kind that promotes and enables the educational achievement of Pacific students, if not all students.

1.3.4 Research Aims

My research set out to address two broad questions:

1. What are the key educational leadership qualities that facilitate successful educational and overall improved wellbeing outcomes for Pacific learners in schools?
2. What are effective strategies that principals implement to inspire and empower teachers to improve Pacific students' learning in culturally responsive and strengths-based ways.

1.3.5 Thesis Outline

One of the challenges of this thesis for me has been to "situate" the many threads of my research. These include my researcher role as a Samoan Matai, born and bred in Samoa; Pacific learners in Aotearoa New Zealand and their families and communities; Pacific, community and school leaders; and the deficit discourse surrounding Pacific students. I offer the seven chapters of my thesis as Foafoa, conch shells, the blowing of which herald my descriptions and accounts of and discussion about these various threads and their eventual weaving together to provide answers to my research questions.

In Foafoa 1, this present introductory chapter, I have spoken to the winds that blew me to Aotearoa New Zealand. I began by setting my Samoan scene, that is, "home", where my research journey started. I used metaphor to tell of my upbringing and my connection to my fanua (birthplace) and tupuaga (ancestors). I wrote of leaving Samoa and my work since in Aotearoa, of picking up the Pacific non-achievement story and my fervent desire to help change that narrative. Key aspects of this Foafoa include the purpose of my research and why I embarked on it. I then addressed the main thrust of my research, which is to explore the role of school leaders and leadership in facilitating better education, health and wellbeing outcomes for Pacific students. From there, I briefly addressed the place of Indigenous leadership in my research and ended by setting out my research questions.

In Foafoa 2, I present my review of literature relevant to my research. The review begins with a look at the lived learning contexts of Pacific students in Aotearoa New Zealand today and leaves me asking, "Where are the school leaders?" I spend time endeavouring to find answers to this question in extant research that focuses on the role and characteristics of educational leaders and on the urgent need for these leaders to have the leadership skills and knowledge necessary to guide better outcomes for Pacific students. This examination prompted my research questions. This Foafoa is also framed around the concept of talatalaina o le upega lavelave, the untangling of the tangled net of student disengagement and underachievement

for better educational outcomes. Current global literature firmly acknowledges that informed research practice must untangle the tangled net of Pacific student underachievement in schools.

Foafoa 3 sets out my research methodology, which features a newly developed research methodology termed Soalaupulega. This methodology is rooted in and has emerged from Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST). I discuss the evolution of SST and of Soalaupulega as an ontology. Soalaupulega also provides the qualitative anchor for the other qualitative theories in va'a that further informed my research position.

In *Foafoa 4, Research Methods*, I ask you to meet my research aiga. This is where I introduce my research participants and how they came to be involved in my doctoral studies. I also outline my fieldwork methods with them. I furthermore explain my research method, which I term lalagaina, a word that means the art of weaving. I also explain the connection between Lalaga and Soalaupulega.

Foafoa 5 presents my research findings, drawn from and emphasising the voices of my research family (participants).

In *Foafoa 6*, I provide a deep, comprehensive discussion of the research findings. Here, I offer multiple interpretations of effective educational leadership, always with reference to Pacific learners. My discussion also includes the use of cultural metaphors to contextualise and crystalise the meaning and interpretation of the selected analysed themes.

My final chapter, *Foafoa 7, Conclusion*, focuses on the potential implications of my key findings for future policies, strategies and research directed towards benefiting Pacific students' educational achievement. I also outline the strengths and limitations of my research and offer recommendations for future research. While the conclusion marks the end of my thesis, it does not mark the end of my research journey and my commitment to Pacific students, their families and communities.

I shift now to Foafoa 2, to the blowing of the conch shell that signals the literature that has gone before me and helped me to form my research questions, methodology and methods.
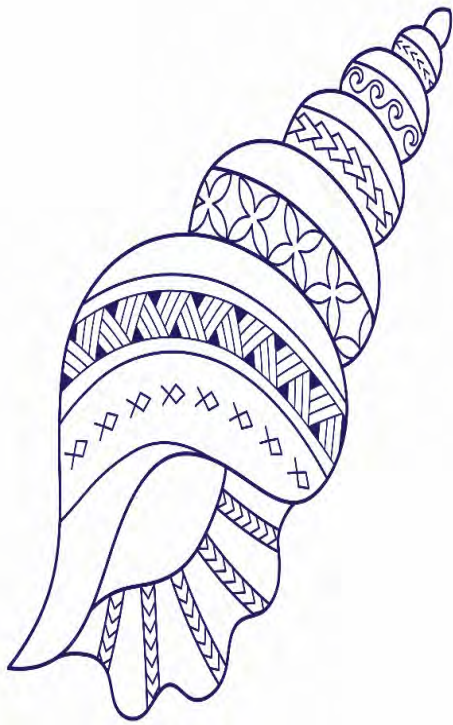
Foafoa 2

Tusitusiga Mai Sa'ili'iliga

Literature Review

O le upega e fili i le po ae talatala i le ao.
The net that became tangled in the night will be untangled in the morning.

2.1 Introduction

Any discussion focused on determining the education leadership qualities effective in enhancing students' learning inevitably holds within it the complex task of 'talatalaina o le upega lavelave'— the untangling of the tangled net. The upega (net) matters in the daily lives of Samoan people in their villages because of their need to use it to catch fish for sustenance. Fishing requires not only good knowledge of the task itself but also understanding of what constitutes effective leadership, collaboration with everyone in the village, and hard work. But first the net must be untangled, for only then can it be used properly. Untangling the net aligns in my doctoral research with "untangling" the research literature (both national and international) relevant to my study, a process in turn that I envisage will help untangle the tangled net of educational underachievement for Pacific learners in Aotearoa New Zealand.

To this end, part of my rationale for this research was to extend my work on effective leadership outlined in my Master's thesis (Taleni, 2017). That work focused on what school principals had to say about lifting the engagement and achievement of Pacific learners, and it grew out of my interest in prior research showing a strong association between principals' direct support of teachers and improved student learning.

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However, I consider the fact that I talked only to school principals at this time as a gap in my Master's work. Consequently, I wanted to fill that gap through my doctoral work by presenting the combined voices of diverse leaders both within and outside schools to gain a fuller and richer understanding of leadership practice valuable to the educational achievement and wellbeing of Pacific students. I suspected that gathering this knowledge and wisdom would provide critical information from which to further inform effective educational leadership in schools.

In this Foafoa, I draw on literature to explain the necessity for ongoing research into the relevance of school leadership characteristics and practice for the educational achievement of Pacific students in Aotearoa New Zealand. I also present international and national literature exploring the links between school leader characteristics and practices and student achievement. I furthermore explore educational leadership capacity within two specific contexts: the importance of grounding research involving Indigenous peoples in Indigenous epistemologies, and the need to change, alongside other remedial initiatives, the prevailing negative discourse about Pacific learners.

2.2 The Importance of Leadership Research Relative to Pacific Students' Achievement

My research responds to the urgent need for effective school policies and strategies to change Pacific students' educational experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand from ones of underachievement to ones of achievement and success (Taleni, 2017). Pacific learners' poor school performance is decades long, having first surfaced during the post World War 2 era when New Zealand needed a high influx of labourers. New Zealand's consequent immigration policies led to many Pacific peoples migrating to Aotearoa New Zealand to fulfil that demand and their children entering New Zealand schools (Ferguson et al., 2008).

The ongoing underachievement of Pacific students in New Zealand classrooms evident back then has continued down to the present day, regardless of many government initiatives to provide these learners with successful school outcomes. Numerous reports and studies over the years have continued to show Pacific students experiencing high levels of "educational disparity" (see, for example, Alton-Lee, 2004; May, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2019, 2020a, c, d; New Zealand Qualifications Authority [NZQA], 2020).

Several decades ago, Anzaldua (1987) claimed that the New Zealand education system relegated Pacific learners to the classroom borderlands where they struggled to learn. Data from national and international assessments of educational achievement, such as the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), (Ministry of Education, 2019: OECD, 2019) and the International Association of Educational Achievement (IEA) studies in reading (Mullis et al., 2023) and science and mathematics (Mullis et al., 2020), show little has changed over the years. Pacific students also continue to be classified according to a plethora of negative labels such as underachievement, disengagement, the bottom stream, achievement tail, priority learners, children at risk, students lagging behind, vulnerable, difficult to reach, and achievement disparity (Allen et al., 2009; Alton-Lee, 2003; Amituanai-Toloa et al., 2010; Benton, 1988; Clay, 1985; Education Review Office [ERO], 2012; Fergusson et al., 1991; Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998; Harker, 1978; Jones, 2017; Kenny, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2015b, 2019; Mullis et al., 2023; Nash, 2000; Tamasese et al., 1988; Taleni, 2017; Videbeck, 2021). The urgency of changing this situation for Pacific learners became especially urgent when these learners began adopting these labels to describe themselves. Jacobo Matapo (2016, p. 46), born in Aotearoa and of Samoan Dutch heritage, for example, spoke of herself as a:

Priority learner.

I'm a priority – that's what I'm told,

from the time, my mother held me in her arms, my father on his shoulders I stood,

always trying to look beyond the horizon.

I'm a priority… learner, that's what I'm told, lowering my head, lower statistics

reveal. This dichotomy is my story.

Priority learner to lift the outcomes of success, yet when I hear my grandfather's

words, I am a success in his eyes no less.

I am his story, and he is mine, sensing more than education outcomes to define

me.

Effective solutions to alleviate this pattern of underachievement are long overdue. As I outlined in Foafoa 1, terms like deficit imply a deficiency, and it alarms me and other researchers and commentators that this discourse will likely remain unchanged if the education system does not change (ERO, 2012; Harris, 2007; Taleni, 2017). This concern takes on even more urgency with the realisation that Aotearoa New Zealand's demographic profile is becoming ever more diverse ethnically and culturally, with this development including an

increasing population of young people of Pasifika cultural ancestry (ERO, 2019; May, 2020; New Zealand Treasury, 2022, 2023).

The 2018 New Zealand Census indicated that Pacific people made up 8.1 percent of the Aotearoa New Zealand population, with 64 percent of them based in the Auckland area Aotearoa New Zealand's Pacific population is also a youthful one, having a median age of 23.4 years compared with 35.9 years for the overall population (StatsNZ, 2023). In 2020, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples forecast that New Zealand's Pacific population would be in the vicinity of 444,000 to 480,000 people by 2025 and in the vicinity of 530,000 to 650,000 in 2038 (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2020).

The New Zealand Treasury (2022) has also documented these demographic developments, first in its *Pacific Strategy* launched in 2016 and then in the modified form of that strategy published in 2022.

> In 15 to 20 years, one in five New Zealand children will be Pacific, and one in eight workers under 39 years will be Pacific. The young age structure presents an opportunity. Between now and 2026, MBIE [Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment] estimates that 98,000 young Pacific people will become part of the working age population. They will replace 16,000 Pacific people who will turn 65 and move into retirement age. We recognise however that the latter tend to be lower skilled. (New Zealand Treasury, 2022, p. 3)

Treasury also advised in this strategy report "that the engagement of Pacific New Zealanders in all facets of the economy and society is necessary for the New Zealand of the future to have a robust, sustainable and competitive economy, with strong and independent families and communities" (p. 1).

Figures and advice such us that just cited leave no doubt that if the school system does not change to meet the learning needs of Pacific youth, these young people will continue to underachieve and leave school without qualifications, and in greater numbers than they do at present. This situation would likely contribute to the ongoing patterns of unemployment among Pacific people in this country, patterns that include more and more Pacific families living in poverty (Burkett, 2014; Carpenter & Osbourne, 2014; Taleni, 2017). As Harris (2007) pointed out 16 years ago in relation to educational achievement among Māori learners, one way forward is to change the prevailing deficit discourse regarding "underachieving" students from a "students-at-risk" discourse to a (to use Harris's term) "students-at-promise" discourse.

When, as Taleni (2002) documented, Pacific families moved to Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1960s and 1970s, they came to this country with the belief that their children would be students-at-promise. While they probably did not think about their children in this specific way, their aspirations and dreams for their children's educational success and their anticipation of prosperity, good health and wellbeing for their families were entwined in the promise of the beautiful lei—the Pacific Islands flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers. The lei represents generosity, relationship, unity and a sense of working together for the betterment of the community (Taleni, 2002). However, those beliefs and dreams became fragmented within an education system that has contributed to the family hardships of poverty, unemployment or poorly paid jobs, poor health conditions and, at times, youth suicide (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2020). In the early days of their migration to New Zealand, Pacific peoples' health conditions were not as compromised as they eventually became (Arora et al., 2019; Rush & Rusk, 2009). Obesity, diabetes and the many other chronic diseases that inhabit Pacific people's lives today were formerly unknown (Hawley & McGarvey, 2015; May, 2020).

Researchers and commentators have suggested various reasons for Pacific students' educational underachievement, with a lack of English proficiency caused by interference with their first language (subtractive bilingualism) being just one of them. As May points out, bilingual students have been consistently over-represented in the so-called "literacy tail". Teachers therefore, said May, tend not only to perceive Pacific students' bilingualism as a detrimental influence on their learning but also expect them to be "poor" learners. Other reasons include cultural differences, family issues (parents' and families' poor engagement with schools), children's lack of motivation to learn due to mismatches between their experiences and what they are taught, and socioeconomic contexts (Fletcher et al., 2008; Hill, 2017; May, 2020). These reasons add fuel to the deficit-discourse fire about Pacific learners because the labels associated with these terms create a self-fulfilling prophecy in which students perform in accordance with those labels (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

Bilingual research shows that while children learning to speak and read in their second language English do so at a slower rate than monolingual English-speaking children, they do, given time, learn to speak and read fluently in both (Fletcher & Nicholas, 2016; Harris, 2007; Hoff & Core, 2015). However, the education system unknowingly demands that Pacific children are "boxed in" with monolingual children's development trajectory and are consequently assessed as poor readers because they do not keep up with performance standards

set against chronological age (May, 2020). While the bilingual argument as a cause for Pacific students' poor performance might seem valid, it is not based on research. In fact, as the studies cited in this paragraph attest, Pacific learners' reading progress is normal for bilingual children who are learning two languages simultaneously.

Pacific communities are now *critically* responding to their children's continued school underachievement, and are asking this yet unanswered question: Are Pacific students failing the system, or is the New Zealand education system failing Pacific students? Several years back, that question for me led to another: When is the New Zealand education community, going to get this right? (Taleni, 2017)—right in terms of policies and practices that make school achievement a reality for *all* learners.

Research is urgently needed to answer these two questions. The educational achievement lei is in serious need of repair not only in primary schools but also in secondary schools and tertiary institutions, given that a student's achievement pattern at primary school usually follows the same achievement trajectory at these later stages of education. As the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2020) emphasises, improved educational outcomes for Pacific learners would improve their families' and communities' social, economic and health wellbeing by enabling access to improved labour opportunities, higher incomes and higher living standards and thus lowering the threat of long-term welfare dependency.

2.3 Government Remediation Initiatives

As noted earlier, the New Zealand Government's commitment to endeavours to support Pacific learners has been longstanding, extending for over two decades. Among the many government initiatives implemented over the years are the Pasifika education plans of 2001–2005, 2006–2010, 2008–2012, 2013–2017, and 2020–2030 (see Ministry of Education, 2001, 2006, 2008a, 2013, 2020a) and the Education Review Office's *Pacific Strategy: Driving Success for Pacific Learners 2019–2022* (ERO, 2019). Ministry of Education reports have documented the monitoring of the effectiveness of these plans. See, for example, the Pasifika education plan monitoring reports for 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009–2012, 2010, 2013, and 2015 (Ministry of Education 2007, 2008b, 2009b, 2011, 2012, 2015a and 2016). In addition, researchers have compiled "best practice/evidence" strategies for schools that have informed these plans or been identified from the monitoring of them. Examples include a literature review of "Pacific education issues" conducted by Coxon et al. (2002), Alton-Lee's (2003) best evidence research

synthesis titled *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling*, and Gorinski and Fraser's (2006) *Literature Review on the Effective Engagement of Pasifika Parents and Communities in Education*.

Despite all of this, the Ministry of Education monitoring reports continue to show Pacific students over-represented in poor school performance indices. The Ministry of Education's annual report for 2013, for example, stated that one in six Pacific students had not achieved basic literacy and numeracy skills by the age of 10 (Ministry of Education, 2013). Almost one in five had left school without any qualifications; another one in five had left with the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Level 1 only; and approximately one in five with NCEA Level 2. One in 10 had become disengaged from education, employment or training by the age of 17.

Similarly, and more recently, the NCEA Evidence Framework Update (NZQA, 2018) documented that, in 2017, 10 percent of Pacific Year 11 students did not progress through any of the typical year-level pathways and had experienced some disruption to their progress. Also, 25 percent of Pacific students left school before the end of Year 12. May et al. (2019), reporting on the OECD's Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA) findings for 2018, noted that New Zealand 15-year-olds' average reading scores continued to be above the OECD international average in reading, but their performance had dropped significantly overall since 2000. Also, as May et al (2019, p. 3) observed, "Compared to the New Zealand averages, Māori and Pacific students had lower average achievement." May and his colleagues furthermore noted in relation to the 2018 PISA findings that some Pacific learners were achieving very well at primary and secondary schooling. However, he then observed that the general rate of improvement had flattened in recent years and many Pacific students were still in the "classroom borderlands", enduring disparities in educational achievement.

According to data presented in the Ministry of Education's (2020b) *Best Practice for Teaching Pacific Learners* report over the previous decade, Māori and Pacific learners showed the greatest improvement among all learners in the areas of early learning participation, NCEA Level 2 achievement and vocational education participation. However, education inequities for Pacific students were still strongly evident at NCEA Levels 2 and 3 (the latter being the qualification required for entrance to universities). In 2018, 28 percent of Pacific 18-year-olds had yet to achieve NCEA Level 2, the minimum level considered suitable for life out of school readiness. Less than a third of Pacific students had gained University Entrance, whereas over

half the European/Pākehā students had attained this qualification. Pacific students also tended to achieve an NCEA qualification later than other students.

In general, the successful attainment of high school and tertiary education qualifications is associated with a range of indicators related to social and economic wellbeing, including improved labour-market opportunities, higher incomes and living standards, lower risk of long-term welfare dependency, and improved health outcomes (Scott & Masselot, 2018). In relation to health outcomes, effective learning supports positive health and wellbeing; good levels of health and wellbeing, in turn, support effective learning (Education Scotland, 2014). Sir Harry Burns, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, spoke of this link in 2011: "What is also clear from the relentless widening of the gap between rich and poor is the fact the origins of health inequalities are complex and that they are to be found in the many interactions between social, economic, educational and environmental determinants" (Burns, 2011, p. 3).

The ongoing and still serious discrepancies in educational performance for Pacific learners despite government remedial initiatives beg questions as to why these learners continue, on average, to maintain their position at the very bottom of educational achievement rankings. These questions are ones constantly echoed by community leaders in my home village of Iva in Samoa and in Aotearoa. They are especially concerned as to why constant government attempts to transform Pacific learners' education experiences have not remedied this situation. More focus on finding "real answers" to the situation is needed. One of my aims in conducting my doctoral has been to add to a body of evidence able to provide those real answers.

2.4 What is Known About What Works?

In an encouraging way, schools' and teachers' understanding of what *does* work for Pacific learners is growing, with positive outcomes for Pacific learners, children, families and communities. This understanding emphasises the need for a strong focus in schools on attitudes and practices that recognise and celebrate the cultures, languages and identities of these students to provide them, the families and communities with a strong sense of belonging to and inclusion in educational provision (Alton-Lee, 2003; ERO, 2016a). However, research evidence shows that the education system as a whole often fails to nurture these students in these ways. Amituanai-Toloa et al. (2010), for example, found that changes in schooling

systems aimed at supporting Pacific learner tend to be slow to progress. This situation, as Taleni (2017) found, had changed seven years on.

In 2020, the Ministry of Education published a research synthesis of best teaching practices for Pacific students that mentioned the New Zealand Education Act 1989: "One of the key objectives of the education system is to help every child and young person to attain educational achievement to the best of their potential." It went on to state: "Accordingly, participation and achievement of Pacific learners is fundamental to meeting the objectives of the Act. However, there have been longstanding concerns that, while gains have been made, significant disparities remain" (Ministry of Education, 2020b, p. 2). The synthesis reflected the particularly heightened awareness over the previous few years of the necessity to meet these education requirements for Pacific learners and, in a positive way, signalled the need to keep progressing. That awareness contributed to the development of more robust education plans based on research evidence. These included *Tapasā: Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2018a) and the *Action Plan for Pasifika Education 2020–2030* (Ministry of Education, 2020a).

Both of these plans referenced the government's earlier stated strategy for educational success for Pacific learners, namely that these learners are secure in their identities, languages and cultures, are participating, engaging and achieving in education, and are contributing fully to Aotearoa New Zealand's social, cultural, and economic wellbeing (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 3). *Tapasā* (Ministry of Education, 2018a) was rigorous in its outline of key cultural competencies necessary for supporting school leaders and teachers to help Pacific learners engage and succeed in education at all levels.

2.5 The Role of Effective Leadership

Of interest with respect to my doctoral research is that neither *Tapasā* (Ministry of Education, 2018a) nor the *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030* (Ministry of Education, 2020a) include guidance specifically related to the important role of education leadership in helping transform Pacific students' school success from underachievement to achievement. This omission is one that could compromise the success of both plans, given the large body of international research which shows that effective education leaders can bring positive change to educational outcomes for low-achieving school students (see, for example, Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Bush, 2003; Eaker et al., 2009; Fullan, 2001; Jacobson & Bezzina, 2008; Lashway, 2006;

Leithwood et al., 2009; Marzano, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008; Sergiovanni, 2007; Sun & Leithwood, 2016).

This research compendium sheds light on the variety of leadership characteristics evident in schools that help transform students' low achievement to achievement. These characteristics include an unwavering commitment to change students' education outcomes; a drive for all staff to understand students' cultures; and provision of continuous staff professional development. Also evident in this body of literature is the influence that effective leaders have on teachers' commitment to improving student achievement. This leadership influence is characterised by sound strategic decision making built on a strong vision of educational success for students; effort to increase teacher motivation and teaching quality, which had a subsequent positive impact on student achievement; and the facilitation and development of a collaborative culture where staff members work together in interdependent teams to pursue common goals.

The collaborative culture mentioned in the last of these findings is one where teaching and learning is very much a whole-school collaborative approach. Here, for example, teachers change their instruction based on feedback from other colleagues in the school or outside it, colleagues challenge and discuss one another's beliefs about education, and staff and students celebrate achievements (Leithwood, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2019). Leithwood and Sun's (2012) review of research relating to the nature and effects of school leadership documented the many studies which found significant correlations between school leadership and teachers' willingness to "go the extra mile" in their teaching. According to research conducted by Eaker et at. (2009), the stronger the collaborative culture created by school leaders (depicted in Figure 2.1), the more likely teachers were to understand and contribute to the development and growth of the school. As teachers' willingness to put more effort into school development increases, so too does their commitment to teaching. That commitment, in turn, has a positive impact on student achievement.
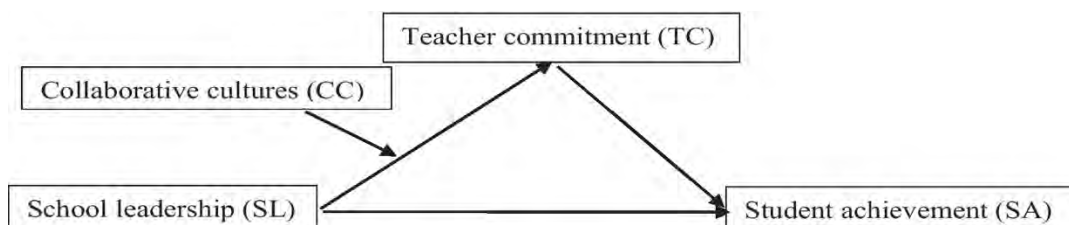
Source: Leithfield & Sun (2012).

Figure 2.1. The links between leader-facilitated collaborative cultures on teacher commitment and student achievement.

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Jacobson and Bezzina (2008) likewise considered leadership a highly important component of successful schools. They found that effective schools typically had principals who worked persistently to create safe, orderly learning environments, set clear instructional objectives, expected high performance from teachers and students through increased time on task, and developed positive home–school relationships. Jacobson (2011) later identified "instructional leadership" as the linchpin between effective principal practices and heightened student achievement.

Bredeson and Johansson (2000) identified four areas where school principals can have a substantial impact on teacher learning to improve students' outcomes. The first of these positioned the principal as an instructional leader and learner. The remaining three areas revolved around creation of a learning environment; direct involvement in the design, delivery, and content of professional development; and assessment of professional development outcomes.

In the Australian state of New South Wales, a Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2015) report endorsed the premise that school leadership plays a key role in creating successful schools: "Principals have a substantial impact on student outcomes. Their impact may be less direct than teachers', but their effectiveness is felt by all students in a school. The most effective principals have a sustained focus on improving teacher quality and student learning" (p. 1). A study carried out in public schools in the United States' city of Chicago by the UCHICAGO Consortium on School Research (Allensworth & Hart, 2018) reported two key findings: first, that principals most influenced successful student learning through the fostering of strong learning climates; second, that principals fostered these climates by supporting teacher leadership in realising   schoolwide goals.

The association between effective leadership qualities and educational achievement has attracted surprisingly little attention in research conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand (Matapo, 2017) and in government policies. The omission in *Tapasā* (Ministry of Education, 2018a) and the *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030* (Ministry of Education, 2020a) are just two examples of this government lack. Yet, a number of researchers claim that effective leaders are critically needed in schools to transform the challenging historical and contemporary predicament of educational underachievement (Allen et al. 2009; Khalifa et al., 2016; McKenzie, 2018; Patuawa et al., 2022). This ongoing lack surely signals an indisputable need for research at multiple levels to inform new policies that include effective leadership strategies

directed towards helping Pacific learners achieve educational success and participation in all facets of the economy and society.

Despite the dearth of Aotearoa New Zealand research exploring effective leadership in schools, what research there is concurs with the international research finding that a commitment to improving student achievement is a central facet of high-quality leadership (Bishop, 2011; Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Bishop et al., 2012). One example of this New Zealand-based research comes from Te Kotahitanga, a research and professional development programme formed in 2001 and focused on supporting teachers and school leaders support Māori students' learning. Timperley et al. (2007) considered Te Kotahitanga in their best evidence synthesis of research relating to teacher professional learning and development. They confirmed that a commitment among teachers to improving student achievement combined with explicit academic goals pertaining to a student-centred vision formed an essential component of student achievement. Timperley and colleagues also concluded that the quality of the school leaders' leadership can make a marked difference to teachers' motivation and the quality of teachers' teaching for student engagement and achievement. Their conclusion supports the findings of other researchers, notably Fullan (2001), Leithwood et al. (2004), Marzano (2005), and Sergiovanni (2001). Further, these indirect effects of high-quality leadership appear to be especially important in schools serving students from low socioeconomic who are generally at greater risk of academic failure (Scheerens & Bosker, 1997).

In 2016, the Education Review Office concluded that effective educational leaders improve performance for all learners in the following ways: working collaboratively with staff to develop and pursue the school's vision, goals and targets for equity and excellence; ensuring an orderly and supportive environment conducive to student learning and wellbeing; ensuring effective planning, coordination and evaluation of the school curriculum and teaching; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; building the collective capacity of teachers to conduct evaluations and inquiries for sustained improvement; and building relational trust and effective collaboration at every level of the school community (ERO, 2016a, b).

This last leadership practice, building relational trust, was highlighted in an Education Review Office publication from the previous year titled *Educationally Powerful Connections with Parents and Whānau* (ERO, 2015). The report stated that developing or improving relationships with parents and whānau was typically triggered when leaders recognised that

what their school had previously been doing was not good enough and that it was time to try something different. Leaders also recognised that to be educationally powerful, relationships with parents and whānau needed to go beyond regular communication. Instead, the school and its students' parents needed to work together more effectively to support future student success.

Recent research by Taleni et al. (2023) on children's transition from early childhood education to primary school captured the importance of strong leadership for the effective transition of Pacific children. The study identified key teacher and leader practices that facilitated effective transitions for these children and their families. The practices included understanding and incorporating the children's cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) into early childhood and school programmes; maintaining children's identity, language and culture; establishing effective relationships between schools and families; and strengthening partnerships between childhood centres, schools and the children's families and communities.

2.6 The Relevance of Indigenous Epistemological Frameworks

While a body of global research has identified leadership characteristics that support transformation of low-achieving learners' educational experiences, much of it has been framed by and conducted according to Western epistemologies. Various researchers have called for the development and use of alternative epistemologies in research involving people whose ethnicities and cultures are not those of the West. Bunda et al. (2017), for example, argue for Indigenous methodologies that seek to ensure the research is culturally safe through recognition of Indigenous worldviews, respect and accountability. They make the point that research involving Indigenous peoples is increasingly no longer on or about these peoples but rather is research by, for and with Indigenous peoples. Hogarth's (2018) strong advocacy for the rights of Indigenous people in education in Australia connects to the importance of Indigenous epistemologies being used to inform practices across the disciplines and contexts of "classrooms" and research frameworks, methodologies and methods. Hogarth aligns this need with the issues of educational access, equity and equality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their struggle for self-determination.

In addition to the work by Russell Bishop and his colleagues cited earlier, international and national bodies of research have the potential for further utilisation of Indigenous epistemologies in design and/or exploration. Strongly aware of this, I developed and used an

Indigenous Samoan theoretical and methodological framework from which to conduct my doctoral work (discussed in Foafoa 3). The need for Indigenous research frameworks links with the need for culturally safe Indigenous leadership and pedagogical practices in schools. As the cultural competencies framework for teachers of Pacific learners, *Tapasā* (Ministry of Education, 2018a), emphasises, staff development is an important tool for helping teachers reflect on and develop deep understanding of culturally inclusive practices with their students and colleagues and thus gain the ability to enact these practices. Culturally effective leaders, according to *Tapasā*, are those who ensure their teachers have the professional development and support they require to ensure they are culturally competent teachers. Allen et al. (2009) emphatically stated this need for cultural competency when they reminded teachers of Pacific learners that "In order to teach you, I must know you." With this in mind, Taleni initiated a professional development project for teachers and principals called the Pasifika Education Initiative: Samoa Malaga (documented in Allen et al., 2009). This educational initiative gave teachers and leaders in schools the opportunity to experience the culture of the Pacific students they were teaching. The initiative was set up in a rural village in Samoa, and it was here that teachers and leaders experienced authentic cultural experiences found at the heart of family traditions, church, cultural celebration ceremonies, stories and narratives and much more. Teachers and leaders gained considerable knowledge and understanding of the Samoan cultural values and principles critical for planning and implementing effective classroom practices for Pacific learners.

Culturally competent and safe teaching and leadership is also that which is informed by a range of perspectives from the people or peoples who are from or who identify with the cultures under consideration, such as those of the Pacific Islands. Scrutiny of these perspectives also provides guidance on how to develop and implement more culturally effective Ministry of Education school leadership plans. In my Master's thesis (Taleni, 2017), I acknowledged and endorsed the voices of Pacific community leaders and Indigenous leaders for their wealth of knowledge with respect to effective education leadership in New Zealand. Their cultural understandings, experiences, narratives, and worldviews represent Pacific epistemology influencing every aspect of leadership. Certainly, my understandings about effective educational leadership came in part from reflection on my father's leadership, which he conducted according to Indigenous Pacific custom and paradigms.

My father was sitting in the fale fono (meeting house) with a large group of village Matai (chiefs) from our village, taking part in the village fono. The meeting had gone on for a

long time and those gathered were finding it difficult to reach a consensus. Several Matai from my little village stood up and walked out of the meeting house. My father remained inside the house throughout the Fa'afaletui (dialogue). He called out to our village Matai to return to the meeting house and take part in the soalaupulega (dialogue). "We haven't finished," he said. "We haven't reached a conclusion. Do not walk away without resolving our differences."

That my father always stayed true to Nafanua's legacy of a strong Indigenous leadership model for the Pacific (see Section 1.3.3 of this thesis) was inspirational to me during my research work.

To turn again to my Master's thesis (Taleni, 2017), the principals who participated in that research identified a "true and effective leader" for Pacific students as a person with high integrity (mana, aloaia) and standing, who is driven by culturally responsive principles, values, aspirations and the worldviews of the students. This person's personal approach is humanitarian in complexion and he or she has the self-belief, courage, determination and perseverance to wholeheartedly allow students to fulfil their learning potential, from where they are currently in their learning to where they need to be.

As I also pointed out in my Master's thesis (Taleni, 2017), valuing and weaving traditional Pacific leadership qualities embedded in cultural beliefs motivates learners and their aiga. These qualities include fa'amaoni (integrity), alofa (love), tautua (service), fetausia'i (reciprocity), fa'aleagaga (spirituality), fa'aaloalo (respect), ta'ita'i (leadership) and fa'asinomaga (belonging). If students do not see the spiritual and emotional aspects of the leader as a person, the result can be disconnection from that person and their leadership.

Students lose interest and motivation, just as Tili did when he was told to report to the school principal to explain why he was not engaged in the writing task (Section 1.2.2 of this thesis). Tili arrived at school feeling angry but at no point did his teacher or the principal connect with Tili's emotions to help him regain his emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Work by Beare et al. (2018) has relevance here. They discussed, amongst other achievement indices, the impact that school leaders' awareness of students' cultural backgrounds has on those students' educational outcomes. Tili needed a principal who understood his cultural needs. Beare and his colleagues went on to discuss the influence of the school's culture itself, observing that it is influenced by the school's history, context and community. Leaders, it seems, need to reflect not only on and understand the cultural identities of their students but

also on the cultural ethos of their schools and the congruence or lack of congruence between those identities and that ethos.

Like Indigenous Pacific leaders, Indigenous leaders around the world continue to advocate for their worldviews and traditional knowledges to be valued and recognised as essential to the fabric of multi-ethnic societies. They want their cultural knowledge and beliefs to be retained and maintained for their identity and cultural soul as Indigenous citizens. The concept of explicit ownership in Alaska, for example, must utilise the knowledge of Indigenous Alaskan leaders (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005). Gorman (2017) and Trudell (2020) both describe Alaskan leaders according to the following qualities: courageous, resilient, inspirational, compassionate, frank, determined, strong willed, adaptable and pioneering. The Indigenous Alaskan leadership qualities align with the key leadership qualities of te ao Māori, captured in the Ministry of Education website Educational Leaders (Ministry of Education, 2023). These qualities are manaakitanga (leading with moral purpose for the people, whānau and community), pono (self-belief), ako (being a learner), and āwhinatanga (guiding and supporting one another).

While conceptions of effective leadership qualities are similar across Indigenous peoples, and particularly Pacific leaders, some of these conceptions differ within and across Pacific nations. Consequently, it is critical that any Indigenous epistemology remains true to its culturally based perspective. The narrative surrounding Nafanua (see Section 1.3.3 of Foafoa 1), for example, is intrinsic to Pacific cultures and cannot be ignored. Nafanua was one of Samoa's greatest leaders, known as the great Toa Tama'ita'i, Queen Warrior or Warrior Princess of Samoa, and her service to her people left leaders of Samoa and across the Pacific with a legacy of effective leadership (Cox & Freeman, 1997). Nafanua's people bestowed on her all four major Ali'i (leadership) titles of Samoa, which made her a Tafa'ifa, that is, a Samoan Matai with the four major chiefly titles. Her leadership, imbued not only with spiritual strength, evident in her connection to her fanua (land) and fa'asiniomaga (identity), but also with emotional strength, embedded in respect, service and love, encapsulates all that is Samoan.

2.7 Changing the Discourse

Just as Nafanua took action to defend her people, so is it time for effective education leaders to support and defend Pacific students from ongoing underachievement at school. In the Pacific, effective leadership can navigate the choppy sea of educational challenges for

Pacific learners and motivate students to recognise their strengths as people of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (the Pacific). As Epeli Hauʻofa (1993, p. 2) reminds us: "We should not be defined by the smallness of our islands but in the greatness of our oceans. We are the sea we are the ocean. Oceania is us."

Teachers and leaders in education also need to be reminded about Pacific children's abilities and potential as learners, as captured in this strategy statement from NZQA's *Takiala Pasifika* action plan for 2021 to 2023:

> Pacific learners are descendants of skilled Polynesian navigators, experienced astronomers, discoverers and innovators who traversed distant horizons across the vast Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa to fulfil their dreams and aspirations. This same dream continues to guide Pacific people and it is upon this foundation that we navigate, to ensure that the New Zealand education system can fully realise the potential of all Pacific learners in Aotearoa. (NZQA, 2020, p. 2)

At this crossroads of perceptions of Pacific students as underachievers versus understanding of these young people as competent learners who are being failed by the education system, I think it is important to connect the literature threads that validate the need for my doctoral research. In focusing on the educational leadership qualities needed to ensure effective schooling for Aotearoa New Zealand's Pacific students, this review confirms, as has so much previous research and commentary, of the urgent need for ongoing research that provides clear and effective guidance on changing the decades-long pattern of educational underachievement and lack of school qualifications for these young people to a pattern of school success and qualifications. This change must also be accompanied by, if not driven by, effort to change the current deficit discourse to a discourse of adequacy or abundance, so that instead of "students-at-risk" we have "students-at-promise" (Harris, 2007). Two other reasons can be given for the need for ongoing guidance-related research. First, despite the established significance of effective leadership qualities in education, this type of leadership has received minimal attention in New Zealand research (Matapo, 2017). Second, these qualities are absent in government policies. That absence alone warrants this research.

Pacific parents and communities continue to be part of the art of "lei-making" and "fala (mat) weaving" because they want their children to be a critical part of the fabric of society. They want their children to be connected to an education system that genuinely cares about their educational needs, that values their identities, languages and cultures, that guarantees their

sense of belonging. They want to see a discourse that recognises what they know of their children, namely that they are competent learners and learners of promise. All that Pacific parents want for their children reminds me of something a Pacific elder said when she shared her voice at a Pacific community fono I coordinated: "As a Pacific parent, I have high expectations for my grandchild to perform well academically without losing his or her identity, language and culture in the process of achieving." Her words clearly echo Pacific parents' strong desire for their children to achieve well academically while retaining and maintaining their identities, languages and cultures.

The concepts of "boxification" and "deboxification" also have relevance here because they contribute to the discourse on underachievement versus achievement (Connection Institute, 2021). Both terms implicitly feed into the self-fulfilling prophecy of labelling learners (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Boxification (putting "learners in boxes") is a destructive movement in which learners from subordinate groups (generally cultures) in society are controlled by those from the dominant groups. Putting these learners in boxes or streaming them into classes based on prior underachievement or on perceptions these students cannot achieve is unacceptable. These practices and attitudes inevitably have a negative impact on students' motivation to engage in their schooling, which consequently affects their motivation and ability to succeed and achieve. The literature explored in this Foafoa suggests that effective leadership throughout the education system can facilitate acts of deboxification for Pacific learners by, for example, removing streaming practices or no longer forcing Pacific children to take subjects that do not resonate with them culturally or with their interests and life goals. Again, as the research in this Foafoa indicates, effective leadership offers a key to unlocking these boxes, thereby helping Pacific students to succeed in their learning.

With all this in mind, I positioned my doctoral research as an inquiry centred on two key questions:

1. What are the key educational leadership qualities that facilitate successful educational and overall improved wellbeing outcomes for Pacific learners in schools?

2. What are the effective strategies that principals implement to inspire and empower teachers to improve Pacific students' learning in culturally responsive and strength-based ways?

2.8 Chapter Summary

Because educational attainment is one of the main markers for wellbeing throughout life, it is important that no child is left behind at the beginning of their school life. According to the Public Health England website (Public Health England, last updated 19 May 2021), a major aim is to ensure every child has the best start in life by being "ready to learn at two and ready for school at five". That goal is just as relevant in Aotearoa as it is in England, so it is not surprising that it is at the heart of New Zealand's National Science Challenge initiative *A Better Start*, which has as its vision implementing best practice strategies to help all children gain early success in their learning and commensurate wellbeing ("Early learning success builds children's wellbeing," 2019; see also Section 1.3.1 in Foafoa 1). The initiative is therefore committed to leading and carrying out research that provides evidence for the development of effective initiatives and programmes to improve students' learning from an early age. This national challenge contributed to the goal of the Ministry of Education's action plan for 2020–2030, which is that diverse Pacific learners and their families feel safe, valued and equipped to achieve their education aspirations (Ministry of Education, 2020a).

Effective educational leaders imbued with the leadership characteristics and capacities identified in this literature review are critically needed both within and outside schools to help lead the attitudinal, policy-based, pedagogical and discourse changes required to transform the predicament that is underachievement for Pacific students to a situation of achievement. The anticipated marked increase in the Pacific population of children and young people over coming years makes imperative an education system wherein these young people can achieve the qualifications that will help them contribute positively to society and the economy.

As I bring this Foafoa to an end, the Samoan concept of "saili matagi" | "seeking the winds" comes to mind in relation to the role of effective leadership in guiding students' learning voyages towards the destination of educational achievement and long-term wellbeing. The winds push the va'a (boat or ship) forward but the direction the vessel follows relies on the Tautai (Master Navigator) setting the sails to that direction. As is said in Samoa, "E le mafai ona tatou suia le ala matagi, ae mafai ona tatou suia le la o lo tatou va'a" | "We cannot change the direction of the wind but we can change the sails of our ship". Everyone in the va'a (boat or ship) relies on the Tautai using his or her skills and experiences to adjust the sails so that the vessel follows the direction required to safely reach its destination. The following example of

Indigenous leadership knowledge signals the immense contribution that this knowledge can make to the development of culturally responsive pedagogies for Pacific students in schools.

> *My grandfather's immense knowledge of the ocean and navigation gave him the tools to prepare thoroughly for the next folauga (sailing). For example, he knew that to get through the rips just offshore to the open ocean he would have to first count seven waves. It was at this point he could enter the space between the rips safely into the open ocean. My grandfather could read the direction of the winds, and he floated coconuts on the ocean currents and examined the movement of the clouds before deciding to launch the va'a. His application of this local knowledge was well respected by all the villagers whenever they wanted to journey to another island.*

For me, the excitement of moving into the next three Foafoa, which lead to the "pearls of knowledge" offered by my research participants' voices, is like celebrating the safe end to a long, hard-fought voyage in the sea. Just as my grandfather prepared for his folauga (voyage) and readied the va'a, I have needed to build my knowledge and tools to prepare for the next crucial part of my research. That preparation, in the form of this literature review, allows me to now move on to Foafoa 3 and 4, where I outline and discuss the methodology and methods I used to collect my research data.

The sound of the Foafoa continues!
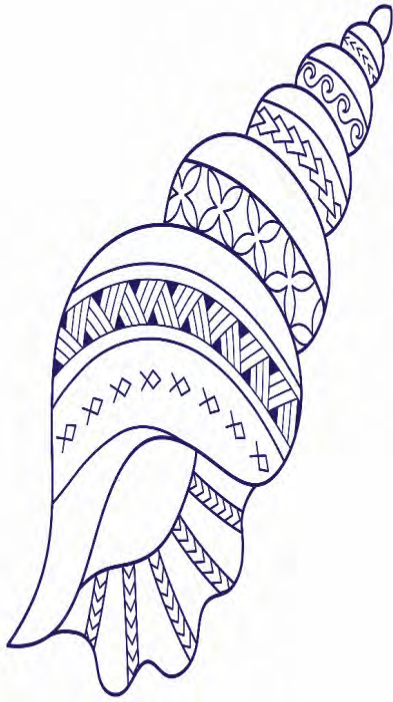
Foafoa 3

Fa'atofalaiga o Sa'ili'iliga

Research Methodology

E vave taunu'u le malaga pe a tatou alo
fa'atasi
Our destiny is within sight when we paddle
our va'a (canoe) together

3.1 Introduction

In this Foafoa, I introduce a new research methodology—Soalaupulega Samoa Research (SSR), or simply Soalaupulega, which is underpinned by Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST). My research position for this thesis is deeply embedded in the Samoan cultural values that influenced my shaping of SST and then SSR. I therefore developed this Indigenous Samoan methodology from my knowledge and life experience of being Samoan and also from my position as a Samoan Matai (chief). The SSR methodology forms a space or framework that simultaneously reflects and enriches my "cultural soul" and connects me to my fanua (land), birthplace, and nu'u (village).

I decided that the Pacific research methodologies developed to date, such as Talanoa (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Prescott, 2008; Prescott & Hooper, 2009; Vaioleti, 2006, 2011, 2012), did not provide a close enough "fit" for my research goals. I wanted a methodological framework that not only tied in with my personal perspectives, cultural soul and thinking but also encapsulated other deeper meanings within Samoan cultural values and beliefs.

I furthermore wanted a framework that would deeply contextualise and crystallise the importance of my research mataupu (subject) within my Samoan epistemological perspectives and views. Using this knowledge to construct my research methodology would be my way of reciprocating the Samoan cultural learning I received from my father and many others in the village when I was growing up there. Developing this methodology would also enable me to show respect for their sharing of their measina (treasures), knowledge, wisdom and experiences.

Within the large and broad context of Pacific research, the shaping of Soalaupulega as a research methodology responds to Tualaulelei and McFall-McCaffery's (2019) call for a much-needed "dialogue" about Pacific research. Their call is embedded in resistance to hegemonic colonial practices in the Pacific, especially in education and health, and in the renaissance of Indigenous Pacific research frameworks over the past few decades. Pacific research communities have claimed a space, just as Māori did during the 1990s with the development of Kaupapa Māori theory and research (Harris, 2007; Smith, 1990; Tuhiwai Smith, 1997). The broader global research community has likewise seen the construction of "Indigenous research methodologies", especially in Australia, North America and Canada (Kovach, 2010, 2017; Ryder et al., 2019).

Academics such as Gegeo (2001) have championed the Indigenous Pacific researcher and academic space. In his 2001 article, Gegeo wrote an excellent and thorough response to Subramani, supporting Pacific epistemologies as a vehicle for decolonisation of pedagogies and Western research. (Subramani is a Fijian author, essayist and literary critic whose essays have focused on multiculturalism, education and cinema.) Adamant that the global research community should accept Pacific theorists and researchers writing literature in their Indigenous languages, Gegeo argued: "[W]e need, once and for all to eliminate the Anglo-European categories that still tend to imprison us in outdated, meaningless terminologies that divide us rather than unite us, as well as determine our discursive practices" (Gegeo, 2001, p. 178). Although Gegeo made this comment over two decades ago, I considered it still had relevance, Consequently, it, too, was a reason for my construction of Soalaupulega research methodology from the cultural practices associated with SST, which is rooted in the heart of Samoan Indigenous epistemological perspectives.

3.2 Soalaupulega

3.2.1 Meaning of the Word

The Samoan word Soalaupulega comes from the words soa-lau-pule or fa'asoa lau pule (authority), meaning to share your knowledge, have a say, voice an opinion or, simply, to contribute to a talanoaga (consultation). The term also derives from the two basic words fa'asoa and pule. Fa'asoa means to share, to give or to voice; pule refers to a personal opinion or knowledge. The formulation of pule references the experience and wisdom gained from, and that others see is gained from, service and hard work. Matai attend a soalaupulega to collaborate and share their personal opinions, expertise, perspectives and knowledge—their pule. The sharing of this knowledge elevates the meaning of pule to that of authority, because knowledge is authority. Those who contribute knowledge earn considerable respect and are also seen as people of integrity. The remaining root word in the term soalaupulega, that is, soa, means partner, to combine with, and in pairs. In the context of Soalaupulega methodology, it refers to sharing an idea, opinion or a voice. It also refers to the act of making a valuable contribution.

3.2.2 Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST)

Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST) embraces the Samoan way of life in two major ways. First, when written with an upper-case S, Soalaupulega refers to a *whole* way of life. Second, when written with a lower-case s, soalaupulega refers to a formal community meeting where the agenda is known before the meeting. Although this formal meeting is led by a Matai, others can attend it. A soalaupulega differs from a talanoa, which is a meeting without an agenda and therefore more casual. SST thus encompasses Soalaupulega and soalaupulega. It also drove my formulation of the Soalaupulega Samoa Research (SRR) methodology. While SST informed my construction of SSR as an all-encompassing Indigenous methodology, a diverse set of Euro-western methodologies also shaped my thinking and research design and became an interwoven part of SSR. These methodologies included qualitative theory, critical theory, phenomenology and the Indigenous methodology Kaupapa Māori.

In essence, SSR reflects a rigorous cultural practice, the sole function of which is to explore solutions for concerns that threaten the wellbeing or survival of a community. To express this idea another way, SST connects to philosophical views of the world that shape leaders' thinking. It enables them to think more widely as well as deeper and beyond their own

personal contexts and experiences. Matai view this solutions-based process as one of the most exceptional processes of Samoan culture because it builds and sustains the foundations of a community or village. SST validates practices that work to resolve conflicts and disagreement within families and the community and thereby strengthens their bonds. It contributes to maintaining peace, unity and harmony, builds partnerships between schools or government agencies and the community, and restores the solid foundation and fabric of society. The process is captured in the Samoan saying "E teuteu lava i upu—o a ni fa'aletonu ma ni maseiga, e fofo lava ele alamea le alamea" | "Words can be used to smoothen the differences and complications between people and nurture relationships."

SST can be viewed as a restorative process imbued with a cultural vitality characterised by a conservative, intensive, well-executed way of problem-solving. Filoiali'i and Knowles (1983) provide an example of this process in their discussion of the Ifoga practice of forgiveness, which they position as a strong arm of Soalaupulega. This practice involves people meeting together prepared to fofola le fala ma talanoa—to spread out the mat and talk. People come into the fale (house), spread the mat and fully involve themselves in untangling the tangled net of serious issues that detract from the wellbeing of the family. Engagement is open and deep-seated, with everyone comfortable speaking their mind because Soalaupulega gives validity to their voices. Samoan people consider SST to be a Fa'afaletui (Sua'alii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014), that is, a joint opportunity to share deep knowledge of their culture in ways that allow them to solve matters likely to have a deleterious impact on the lives of people within the community.

A contemporary example of a major threat to Samoan community wellbeing is the political storm resulting from the highly pressured Samoan national election of 2021. Practices reflecting SST were in high demand throughout villages and districts to ease the tensions challenging the well-woven fabric of unity and a more responsive stable government. Samoa survived this upheaval primarily through the role of Soalaupulega, which allowed Matai to voice their perspectives. Their experience helped untangle the tangled net of major political issues confronting Samoa at this time. Although the dialogue during a Soalaupulega may not always guide a smooth process and therefore take longer than anticipated, its purpose in creating solutions is what matters. The effectiveness of a Soalaupulega requires the full presence of the well-articulated practice of Fa'atofalaiga a Matai—a space for sharing Matai wisdom and knowledge.

An example of SST in practice in Aotearoa New Zealand is visible in the emergence of a response to the need for a robust approach to tackling the impact of poor education on Pacific students. Poor education presents a major threat not only to the students but also their families and communities (Taleni, 2017). The threat manifests as poverty, poor health, low-paid jobs, high unemployment, and youth suicide, and it is what makes deployment of SST so timely.

Figure 3.1 likens the SST framework to a fale tele, built according to Nafanua's narrative, which is deeply entrenched in effective leadership. As recounted in Foafoa 1 of this thesis, Nafanua was a Samoan woman renowned for her exceptional leadership during Samoa's civil war. The foundation of the framework of the SST fale in Figure 3.1 is made up of Nafanua's four strong weapons of war: Tafesilafa'i, Ulimasao, Fa'auliulito and Fa'amategataua. These four weapons, collectively known as "O La'au a Nafanua" (Nafanua's weapons), were vital to her effort to end the war (Cox & Freeman, 1997). The weapons' Indigenous names reflect the richness and depth of meaning of Samoan culture and are integral to effective Indigenous leadership qualities.

Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 3.1: The Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Research Framework (SSTRF).

- *Tafesilafa'i* refers to a leader who values the importance of building relationship or teu le va fealoa (nurturing the space between people to build relationships). Building relationships among people is a critical foundational practice for any family, village, organisation, church group, school or community. Although a key foundation of Pacific communities, Tafesilafa'i has applicability for communities beyond these Pacific ones. Building relationships relies on nurturing and honouring the va (space) between people (Surtees et al., 2021). Tafesilafa'i reminds leaders of the importance of nurturing relationships so that people get on well with one another while working together for the common good of the community and society (Airini et al., 2010).

- *Ulimasao* signifies a leader who values optimism and positivity. These attributes are, like those associated with Tafesilafa'i, important components of communities, schools, families, groups and organisations committed to the wellbeing of their members. A leader who is positive about the future of a community engenders motivation and good spirit in the people of that community and encourages them to work together to build something special for it. Leaders with a positive mindset can influence young people to work hard and persevere. They are certainly the kind of leader young people need when faced with challenging times and situations. Pacific students' education needs positive leaders who really see the potential of Pacific learners; who see ways of unlocking the true potential of these young people and following them with guidance and support throughout their education.

- *Fa'auliulito* signifies a visionary leader. Visionary leaders value people's aspirations for the future. These leaders have the same attributes of optimism and positivity that Ulimasao leaders do. Our education system needs leaders who are highly motivated to elevate schools and communities to higher ground in terms of student achievement standards and performance for a better future. Pacific children also need leaders with the vision to take them through their respective educational journeys. Fa'auliulito reminds visionary leaders of how vital it is to guide students through the educational pathways that the students decide for themselves with the support of their families and the other adults around them.

- *Fa'amategataua* denotes a leader who values and exhibits high expectations for the success of others and is fully aware of the hard work and perseverance required to get there. Schools, organisations and communities need leaders whose high expectations,

built on motivation and visions for outcomes, enable them to set and oversee goals focused on achieving success in life. Fa'amategataua is perhaps the most important of the four foundations of the Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Research Framework (SSTRF) because Pacific children need to have the type of support that gives them the positive encouragement and motivation to push themselves to achieve their educational goals. The essence of Fa'amategataua—the way it is carried out and practised—is captured in simple phrases I heard when I was growing up in the village. Among them were "Fa'amalosi ma tu'u i ai le loto atoa" | "Work hard and give it everything"; "Aua le fefe" | "No fear"; "Fa'atino mea uma i le fatu" | "Do everything from the heart"; and "Manatua le tapuaiga a ou matua ma lou nu'u" | "Remember your parents and village are with you all the way."

Figure 3.1 (above) also shows the nine pillars, the Tofa (proficiencies), known as "o La'au a Nafanua" (Nafanua's weapons of war, made from the wood of the Toa tree). The Tofa hold up the roof of the SSTRF fale: Tofa Manino, Tofa Mamao, Tofa Fetala'i, Tofa Saili, Tofa Mau, Tofa Loloto, Tofa Liuliu, Tofa Tatala and Tofa Paia. The pillars represent the wisdom or proficiencies of Fa'a-Matai (chiefly) leadership and are critical to the effective practice of Soalaupulega. Matai are expected to have these proficiencies so they can make in-depth contributions to the Soalaupulega process.

The term Tofa is an important concept in the Fa'a-Matai system and therefore in the context of this methodological framework and doctoral research. Its meaning relates to the deep wisdom and epistemological insight that Matai hold and share with others. The people who become Matai accrue this wisdom as a result of tautua (service) and the embracing of all other Samoan values. The values connect to fanua (land), tagata (people), lagi (sky), agaga (spirit), le vaomatua (forest), talatu'u (stories), tala'aga (history), and cultural metaphors and alagaupu (proverbs). They also connect to "faia o aiga ma nu'u"—the relationships and bonds between families, villages and districts.

During the Soalaupulega or Fa'atofalaiga (deep consultation) process, we often hear a paramount chief say, "Aumaia se 'Tofa' mai i'ina," | "We are waiting for the sharing of your Tofa." At a deeper level, what the Matai is saying here is that we are waiting for all the other Matai in the fale fono (meeting house) to share their wisdom so it can be woven into solutions. Should the Soalaupulega continue for a long time during the fono (meeting) without any solutions being explored, then Matai are called on to exercise deep Tofa, to dig deeper into their knowledge and wisdom to find solutions. This digging deeper to find solutions is the

bedrock of Tofa and hence the means by which the nine Tofa (pillars) of the fale in Figure 3.1 remain upright and steady.

The nine Tofa proficiencies can be defined as follows:

- *Tofa Manino* refers to clarity, to Matai who have a clear vision underpinned by clear thoughts and ideas. These leaders also have a clear understanding of the subject discussed and the implications of any decisions.

- *Tofa Mamao* refers to broad thinking, to leaders who are always thinking this way and have a broad vision about the future of the village. These Matai also have a good understanding of the issue that is being discussed and are prepared to contribute suggestions and recommendations. These leaders do not rush into a decision; they always think things through first.

- *Tofa Saili* is about seeking knowledge. These Matai seek and acquire knowledge and expertise from other Matai and share these attributes as appropriate. Matai who do this show respect to other Matai and a valuing of their expertise.

- *Tofa Fetala'i* denotes open-mindedness. These Matai maintain an open mind about the perspectives of others. They show respect for the Matai who is giving voice because that person and all others present know that everyone's contribution is amanaia (is valued and is being taken into account).

- *Tofa Loloto* is about deep thinking. Matai who are deep thinkers typically come to fono with good ideas that contribute to solutions. They are able to bring all their experiences from other settings and apply them to their thoughts and ideas about the matters under discussion.

- *Tofa Mau* represents confidentiality and commitment. These Matai not only exercise these attributes in general but "stick" to a conclusion once everyone has agreed to it.

- *Tofa Liuliu* signifies adaptability. These Matai have the ability to adapt to a situation and to provide or honour opportunities for revisiting matters requiring further dialogue.

- *Tofa Tatala* is the ability to speak up. These Matai are not afraid to voice personal opinions that they consider important to the mata'upu (matters being discussed).

- *Tofa Paia* refers to deep spirituality. It relates to the concept of agaga (spirituality), which recognises the role of spiritual beliefs in relation to worshipping Almighty God and also our spiritual connection to the cosmos, the land, the environment we live in, our stories and our ancestors. The wisdom that Matai share during Fa'atofalaiga and Soalaupulega

reflects Tofa Paia. This Tofa brings to discussions the special spiritual dimension that is sometimes needed to demystify complex issues.

The foundation (leadership qualities) and pillars (Tofa) of the SSTRF also connect to the sociological, emotional, spiritual, psychological, physical, cultural and intellectual dynamics of life. The foundational weapon of war Tafesilafa'i (relationship) has a strong connection with the sociological, emotional, spiritual, psychological, physical and cultural dynamics. Ulimasao (optimism and positivity) strongly aligns with the sociological, emotional, intellectual and psychological dynamics, while Fa'auliulito (visionary) links into the sociological, emotional, spiritual, psychological and cultural dynamics. Fa'amategataua (high expectation) is associated with the emotional, spiritual, psychological, cultural and intellectual dynamics.

For me, the nine pillars (Tofa or proficiencies) of the Soalaupulega framework also tie into the above seven dynamics. For example, Tofa Manino (clear vision), Tofa Mamao (broad vision) and Tofa Loloto (deep thinking and vision) reference all of these dynamics within ways of supporting children in their learning, health and wellbeing. The connection that the foundation and pillars of Soalaupulega makes to all these dynamics of life solidifies the strength that this framework brings to my research.

Figure 3.2 complements and expands on Figure 3.1 by capturing all of the key aspects underpinning the SSTRF. In connecting all these aspects together as one family, the depiction of Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST) in Figure 3.2 shows that, just as occurs in family relationships, each contributing aspect is interconnected with all other aspects and is therefore impacted in some way or another by them. This feature of SST reminds us that SST is a multifaceted, multidisciplinary approach that can be extensively used to find solutions to untangling the tangled net of serious issues affecting Samoan communities and particularly their young people.

Unique to Samoa, SST brings a cultural authenticity to the work of Pacific researchers. As a research methodology, it contributes to the growing body of work by Pacific researchers centred on negotiating a meaningful Indigenous pathway that also offers infinite possibilities to combine with Western research methodologies and methods.
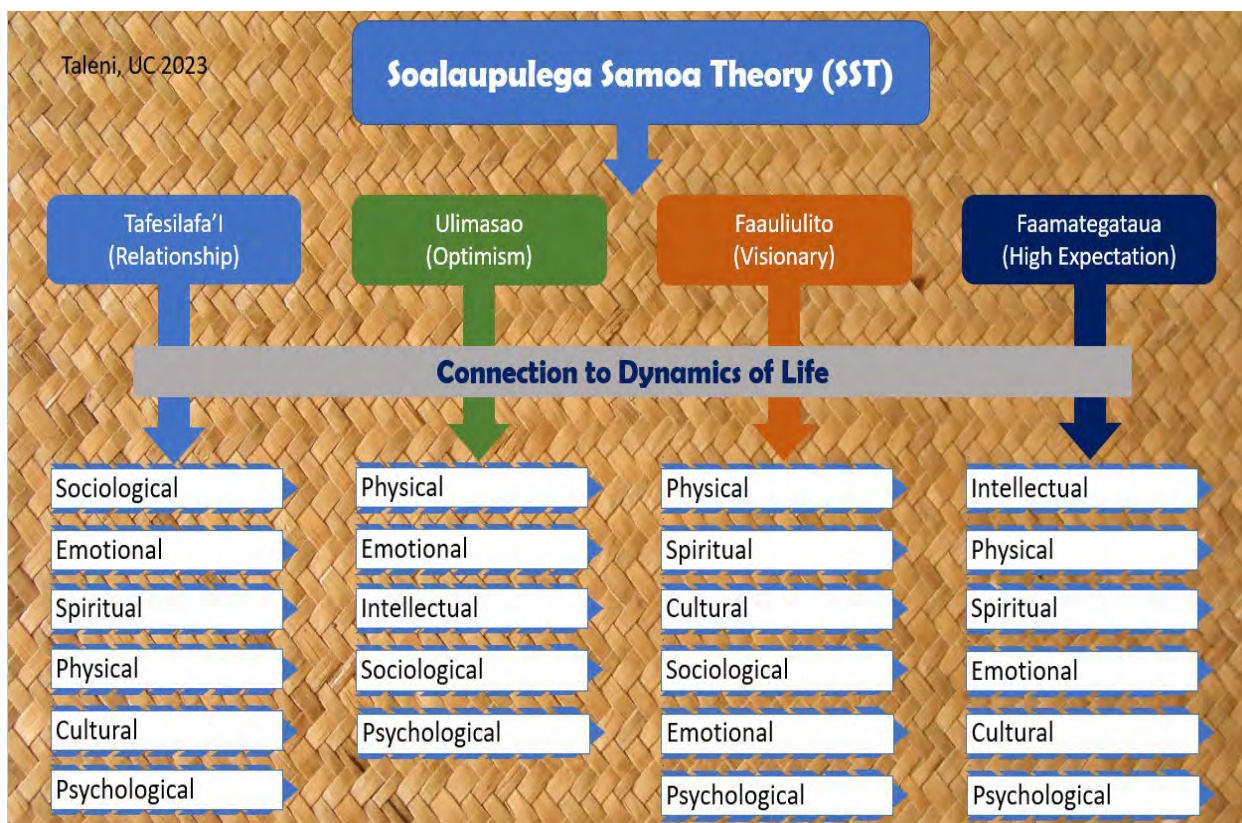
Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 3.2: Key features of Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST).

3.2.3 Soalaupulega Samoa Research (SSR)

In keeping with the emphasis articulated in my doctoral research proposal and ethics application, researchers using SSR methodology must connect with the qualities of effective leaders. These qualities, exemplified by the four "weapons of war", form the foundational qualities of the SSTRF (refer Figure 3.1). Accordingly, researchers will be well aware that *Tafesilafa'i*, which is about teu le va (a nurturing relationship), is integral to ensuring the wellbeing of their research participants. Having acknowledged the importance of maintaining good relationships, researchers will demonstrate this throughout their respective studies by nurturing respect and reciprocity, the key values of Fa'a-Samoa (Samoan culture).

Adherence to *Ulimasao* means researchers will show genuine optimism and confidence about the research subject, especially because they know that their research is important to Pacific students, their families and communities. For example, during my doctoral research (and my writing of this thesis), I knew that I had to show awareness and understanding of the issues associated with the impact of poor education on Pacific students, their families and communities, an understanding also evident in my research proposal. *Ulimasao* also required

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me to be positive and secure in my knowledge of how my research, which was also informed by reference to current research literature, would contribute to the wellbeing of Pacific students, families and communities.

Fa'auliulito calls for farsighted leaders with vision for the wellbeing of their communities. Researchers demonstrate this vision in their research proposals and ethics applications. My vision regarding the aims and potential outcomes of my research are evident in Foafoa 1 and my two research questions**.**

Of the four foundational leadership qualities, Fa'amategataua is the pivotal one because it requires researchers to set high expectations of themselves and their research work so as to obtain successful outcomes. Consequently, researchers know they must bring to their research tasks the necessary skills, experiences and knowledge needed to accomplish their vision for this work.

SSR also requires researchers to combine the foundational qualities with the nine Tofa proficiencies of the framework.

1. First, researchers must express a clear research plan (*Tofa Manino*). The plan is built on reviews of relevant literature that clearly link to the research objectives and questions.

2. Next, they must demonstrate broad thinking (*Tofa Mamao*) that includes use of cultural metaphors and perspectives, enabling them to contextualise the ideas and knowledge used in the research. For example, they may use an Indigenous epistemology to develop a research framework/methodology and use metaphor to develop and design their research methods.

3. Third is the need for researchers to demonstrate the importance of seeking and acquiring knowledge and ideas from communities of learners so as to strengthen all aspects of the research (*Tofa Saili*). These communities include teachers, school leaders, academics and community leaders.

4. The fourth proficiency, *Tofa Fetala'i*, requires researchers to be flexible and remain open-minded about recommendations and suggestions contributed by others. These may come from, for example, supervisors, colleagues and community leaders. Tofa Fetala'i opens up opportunities for researchers to accept new ideas that can strengthen and refine their research.

5. *Tofa Loloto*, the fifth proficiency, reminds researchers to engage in and express deep analytical and strategical thinking when analysing and interpreting their research data. The thoughts and ideas that researchers express as a result of this process must reflect

their true cultural soul and thinking and capture the true meaning of the research participants' voices.

6. *Tofa Mau*, confidentiality (the sixth proficiency), reflects researchers' respect for the research participants and the communities they represent by keeping their identity and integrity intact. The researcher demonstrates adaptability in the way knowledge is shared and contributed.

7. During their research, researchers also need to demonstrate *Tofa Liuliu* (proficiency seven) by, for example, utilising feedback and feed-forward to constitute strong, precise research statements, recommendations and conclusions.

8. The eighth proficiency, *Tofa Tatala* (adaptability) calls on researchers to demonstrate opportunities to open up about their own knowledge and perspectives. Researchers also see these opportunities as a time to bring new perspectives and ideas to other people involved in the research. These perspectives and ideas may be ones drawn from research literature or take the form of research questions, research design and/or the research methodology/framework.

9. The ninth proficiency, *Tofa Paia* (spirituality) is about demonstrating the connections between the research and spiritual perspectives and contexts. Spiritual proficiency embraces cultural, social and emotional considerations, all of which guide and influence the way the researchers conduct their work. The spiritual value refers not only to religious beliefs but also to the land and environment to which each researcher belongs.

All of these key Fa'a-Matai (chiefly leadership) proficiencies weave into the Taleni Soalaupulega Leadership Framework (TSLF) depicted in Figure 3.3 and newly developed for this research. As the figure makes clear, the effectiveness of Soalaupulega and Fa'atofalaiga depends on the wisdom, knowledge, and experiences that each Matai brings and contributes to the untangling of the net of issues affecting the wellbeing of their communities. The Fa'a-Matai proficiencies guiding the leadership framework are, from the Fa'a-Samoa Indigenous epistemological perspective, highly regarded leadership qualities. Because these qualities provide strength and set a benchmark for quality contributions to the collaboration, they are at the heart and soul of effective Soalaupulega.

During my thinking about the TSLF, two metaphors came to mind. The first was the aoa tree, and the second was he awa whiria (a braided river). The aoa tree is native to Samoa. It stands tall and strong, and its large spread of branches shelter and protect. The tree is like the

Matai who play a key role in taking care of families. When translated into SSR, SST becomes the aoa tree sheltering the Western research methodologies included in my methodology.
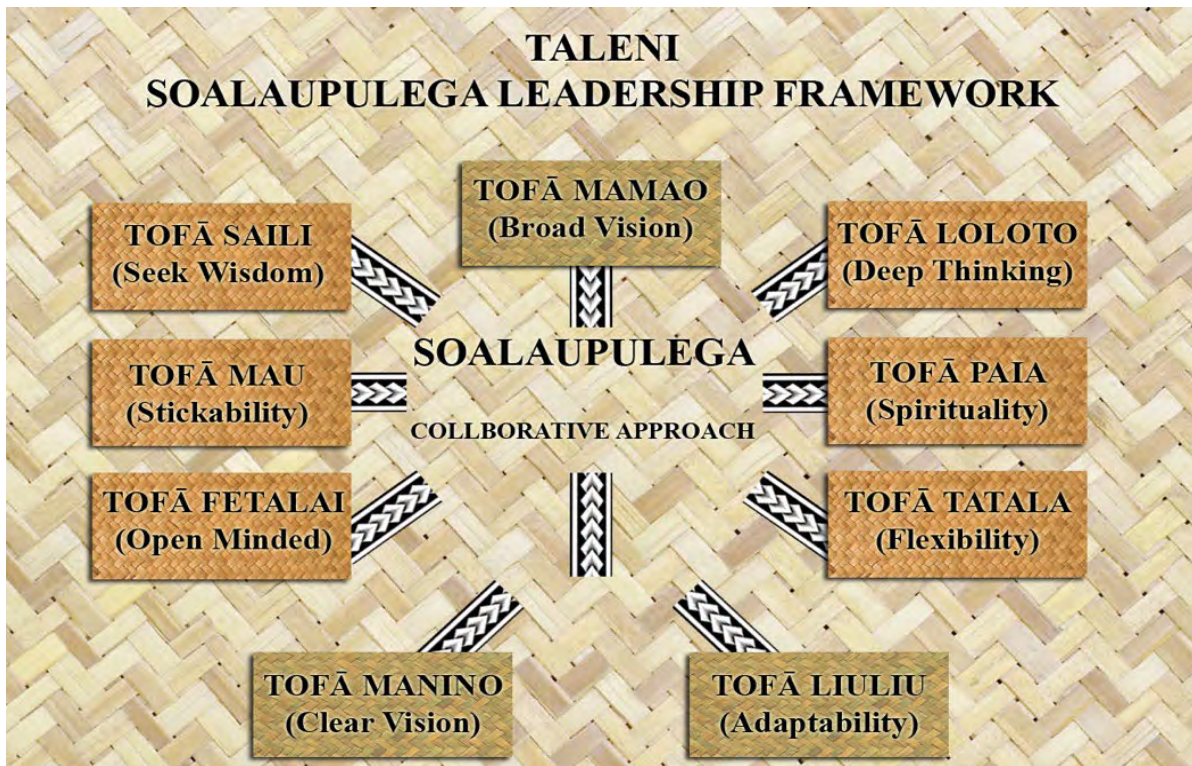
Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 3.3: The Taleni Soalaupulega Leadership Framework (TSLF).

3.2.4 Integration of Other Research Methodologies

The notion of the braided river within research methodology comes from the work of Angus and Sonja Macfarlane (Macfarlane et al., 2015). The Macfarlanes see Western and Indigenous bodies of knowledge as river channels running alongside each other and of equal strength until they blend like the channels of a braided river as they merge into the main channel of that river. The "water" of the channel may therefore be a blending of, for example, qualitative theory, critical theory, sociocultural-historical theory, phenomenology, the Fa'afaletui approach and Kaupapa Māori theory. The braided river fits well with the Soalaupulega approach because it blends knowledge, experiences, wisdom and perspectives. Matai bring their own braided river ideas to Fa'a-Matai by referencing and exhibiting the Tofa that come from their own epistemological perspectives and which they consider will best contribute to the Soalaupulega of solutions for the betterment of their communities.

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3.2.4.1 Qualitative research methodology

This form of research employs a systematic method of gathering data and then constantly scrutinising both the process and the collected information to ensure methodical rigour. Qualitative research is about meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things; it is not about the statistics and measurements of quantitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As a form of social inquiry, it emphasises exploration of and experiential discovery about the world in its natural form and its least intrusive state. More specifically, it explores the ways people interpret and make meaning from their experiences in the world (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Because the bases of qualitative research lie in descriptions of participants' lived experiences and an interpretive approach to social reality, the information that research participants offer is what matters. Good qualitative data are therefore information rich so that in-depth understandings can be drawn from the events and issues that people face and experience. In short, qualitative methodology brings meaning to defined contexts through the sharing of research participants' experiences and stories. The research of Shirley Brice-Heath in the 1980s demonstrates qualitative research in its exemplary form (Brice-Heath, 1983).

According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), qualitative researchers view human behaviour as dynamic. The two researchers therefore advocate for studying human behaviour in depth but within a specified timeframe. Because qualitative research approaches explore people's lives, their behaviours and perspectives, they provide particularly useful research tools during times of change or conflict. My research suited the incorporation of qualitative research methodology, first because it is an enquiry that is exploratory in nature (Moore, 2017), and second because it is the most culturally appropriate way to work with Indigenous Pacific peoples. Its very design presents ways of doing that matter in the hearts of Pasifika people, such as Soalaupulega and Talanoa. In addition, Pasifika epistemology is expressed according to qualitative concepts, such as observation and talanoa (conversations or interviews). SSR aligns with qualitative research because it, too, takes a naturalistic interpretive approach that aims to gain meaning from people's experiences and voices in real-life contexts and to help people understand how they act and manage their day-to-day situations in particular settings (Myers, 2020).

3.2.4.2 Critical theory

My thesis mata'upu fits with the emancipatory goal of critical theory, which is to understand the social reality of individuals and groups as part of effort to free them from suppression or oppression or, as Horkheimer (1982, p. 244), put it, "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them". This notion of liberation is central to Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), which he formulated in line with his desire to see the emancipation of people living in poverty-stricken environments in Brazil. Freire considered that people who are oppressed need to come together to critically examine and act on the root causes of oppression as experienced in the here and now. Freire referred to the process whereby individuals and communities develop a critical understanding of their social reality through reflection and action as conscientisation.

The emancipatory pedagogical process that Freire developed out of his thinking is designed to teach students, through critical literacies, how to negotiate the world in a thoughtful way that exposes and engages the relations between the oppressor and the oppressed. Having discussed and become fully aware of what oppresses, they are equipped with the knowledge to engage in what he termed transformative praxis.

For Graham Hingangaroa Smith (Smith, 1999), Freire's thinking had much to offer Māori struggles to dehegemonise colonial forces in Aotearoa New Zealand. He reconfigured Freire's process of transformative praxis into the transformative cycle depicted in Figure 3.4. A person enters the cycle by way of conscientisation, wherein they become aware of their oppression, its causes and how it presents in reality. Conscientisation is therefore a path to liberation that seeks the humanisation of life, and the cycle is one that enables individuals and communities to resist and eventually overcome the limiting situations (oppression) in which they find themselves.

Freire's and Hingangaroa Smith's work resonated strongly with me because of my aim to help free Pacific students from constrained learning and underachievement outcomes in education and the unemployment, poverty and ill-health associated with this constraint. The emancipatory underpinnings of critical theory, and thus of critical pedagogy, align with SST's goal of solving and eliminating the conditions and occurrences that threaten the wellbeing of communities. Because both theory and pedagogy validate challenges to the hegemonic forces perpetuated by education systems, they are integral to Kaupapa Māori theory.
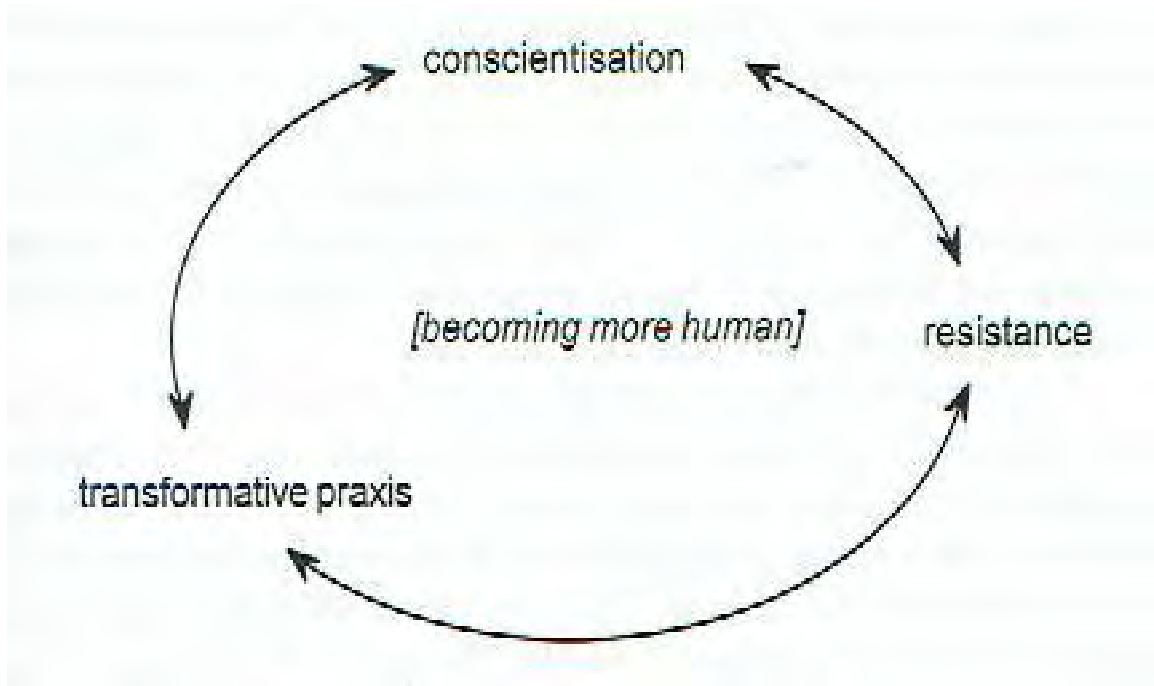
Figure 3.4: Graham Hingangaroa Smith's (1999) cycle of transformation, adapted from Freire (1970).

At this point, it is relevant for me to reflect on the main theme of my research, denoted in the title of my thesis—"O le Fa'atamasoali'iga a Tautai Matapalapala" | "A Soul-Searching and Far-Reaching Voyage of a Master Navigator"—because it captures how the role of leaders intersects with the emancipatory aims of Paulo Freire's and Graham Hingangaroa Smith's critical pedagogies. The title is all about leaders—the Tautai or master navigators of the title—who give their all for the betterment and wellbeing of their people.

Leaders who demonstrate forms of tautua (service) known in Samoa as tautua toto and tautua matavela are symbolically engaged in the giving of sacrifice. They give of themselves because they want to serve the "thing" that is most important in the world according to the well-known Māori saying: "He aha te mea hui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata" | "What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people."

The soul-searching and far-reaching voyage of a Tautai encapsulates the notion of digging into the moana loloto o mafaufauga (ocean of deep thinking) to capture the pearls of wisdom that will allow this master navigator to guide the voyage through choppy sea. If the Tautai struggles during the voyage, the struggle compromises the sailors' ability to ensure the safety of the voyage. When community leaders and educational leaders, or any leader for that matter, give all they have to their leadership role, the people they serve prosper. This is what

strong, effective leaders do. They help free people from constraining environments so they can see not only where they can head but also where they *want* to head in life and how to get there.

3.2.4.3 Sociocultural-historical theory

Sociocultural-historical theory emerged from the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who believed in the critical role of culture in children's psychological development. According to the sociocultural perspective, children's psychological growth is guided and nurtured, in part, by people in their lives who are in mentor-type roles, such as teachers, leaders, parents and caregivers. Cultures develop values and beliefs through people's interactions within social groups or by participating in cultural events. Sociocultural theory focuses on how mentors and peers influence individual learning, and on the way that cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning takes place. Soalaupulega Samoa theory is a cultural process; its connection with sociocultural-historical theory provides cultural strength and authenticity to the cause of this research in the same way that Kaupapa Māori does so for Māori.

3.2.4.4 Phenomenology

Phenomenology emphasises the importance of personal perspectives, meanings and interpretations about a phenomenon, within the context of personal knowledge, experience and subjectivity. My approach was to "illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation" (Lester, 1999, p. 1). Aware that the perceptions "actors" have about certain phenomena can bring rich data to a research project, I was keen to include this aspect of phenomenology methodology in my doctoral research.

The actors in my study included a variety of leaders—Indigenous Samoan leaders, Pacific community leaders and school principals. I wanted to explore and understand the meanings inherent in these leaders' views on the leadership qualities that they consider foster Pacific students' school success. I also wanted to gain meaning and understanding from the perceptions school principals have about Pacific cultures and how to incorporate cultural values and practices into their schools for successful learning outcomes. For me, it was the leaders' points of view that mattered, and also their own consciousness about the meanings inherent in their perceptions of the supports needed to enhance Pacific students' learning.

The phenomenological approach to research also aligns with Soalaupulega because the latter offers a traditional way in Samoan culture of thinking about, gaining understanding of and finding solutions to matters causing concern in a community. The poor educational achievement of Pacific students in Aotearoa New Zealand is an obviously serious matter

because it threatens the community wellbeing of Samoan people. Having leaders focus on this issue and how they can contribute to resolving it also fits with Soalaupulega.

Furthermore, according to Soalaupulega principles and practice, a researcher such as myself needs a well-articulated approach that can contribute to the change processes that will help resolve this threat. Such an approach is informed by understandings gained from the wisdom of others, such as that found in research literature. I recognise that I am, like the leaders who participated in my research, a research participant too in the phenomenological sense. This is because in addition to discerning meaning from the participants' perceptions of and reflections on the issue at hand, I bring my own perceptions and derived meanings to the collected data and data analysis, as I discuss in Foafoa 4.

3.2.4.5 Fa'afaletui approach

Compared to Talanoa, Fa'afaletui is a more intensive, conservative form of methodological approach (Sua'alii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014, p. 334). Fa'afaletui, the act of weaving together different stories and pieces of ancestral Samoan knowledge, is deeply embedded in the centre stage of the village, for it is here that the weaving of knowledge drawn from Fa'a-Samoa discourses, such as oratory, oracy, history and genealogy, occurs. Fa'afaletui, along with Talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006), Kakala (Thaman, 1988, 2007) and other Indigenous methodologies, provides researchers with culturally specific and safe methods of eliciting information from participants, and then analysing this information into a culturally relevant narrative (Sua'alii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). Researchers working from a Samoan perspective have been advised by research colleagues and others in their communities (see, for example, Tamasese et al., 2005) that if they wish to gather information of a serious nature, it is preferable for them to use Fa'afaletui rather than Talanoa.

3.2.4.6 Kaupapa Māori theory

Kaupapa Māori theory and research emerged during the past three decades as a result of a growing consensus that research by and for Māori needed to be conducted in ways that relate to the Māori worldview. Embedded in the need for research practices emancipatory in their aim of freeing Māori from hegemonic practices in education and health, Kaupapa Māori legitimises the Māori worldview and utilises Māori principles and practices in the research process (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) documented key principles for researchers activating Kaupapa Māori methodology. They include whakapapa, te reo Māori, tikanga Māori,

whānau and tino rangatiratanga. She also outlined critical questions to guide research conducted according to these principles:

- What research do we want to carry out?
- Who is that research for?
- What difference will it make?
- Who will carry out this research?
- How do we want the research to be done?
- How will we know if this piece of research is worthwhile?
- Who will own the research?
- Who will benefit?

These questions emanating from Kaupapa Māori theory along with Angus and Sonja Macfarlane's (2015) braided river concept gave me the incentive to shape an Indigenous Samoan theory and research framework, just as Māori did in the 1990s.

3.2.5 Intertwined Methodologies

Methodologies developed from qualitative, sociocultural-historical, critical, phenomeno-logical, Fa'afaletui, and Kaupapa Māori theories provided me with "methodological strands" that I could comfortably weave into Soalaupulega Samoa Research (SSR) methodology. Methods associated with all of these methodologies can be readily enacted within the sheltering aoa tree space of SST.

Figure 3.5 shows the connections between these theories and approaches and Soalaupulega methodology. Like braided river systems, the sets of knowledge generated through use of these methodological approaches can flow along their own channels but eventually merge into the main channel, creating a strength of knowledge and understanding that can lead to effective action. Thus, might such flows of knowledge and wisdom help Pacific children gain in their learning, health and wellbeing.
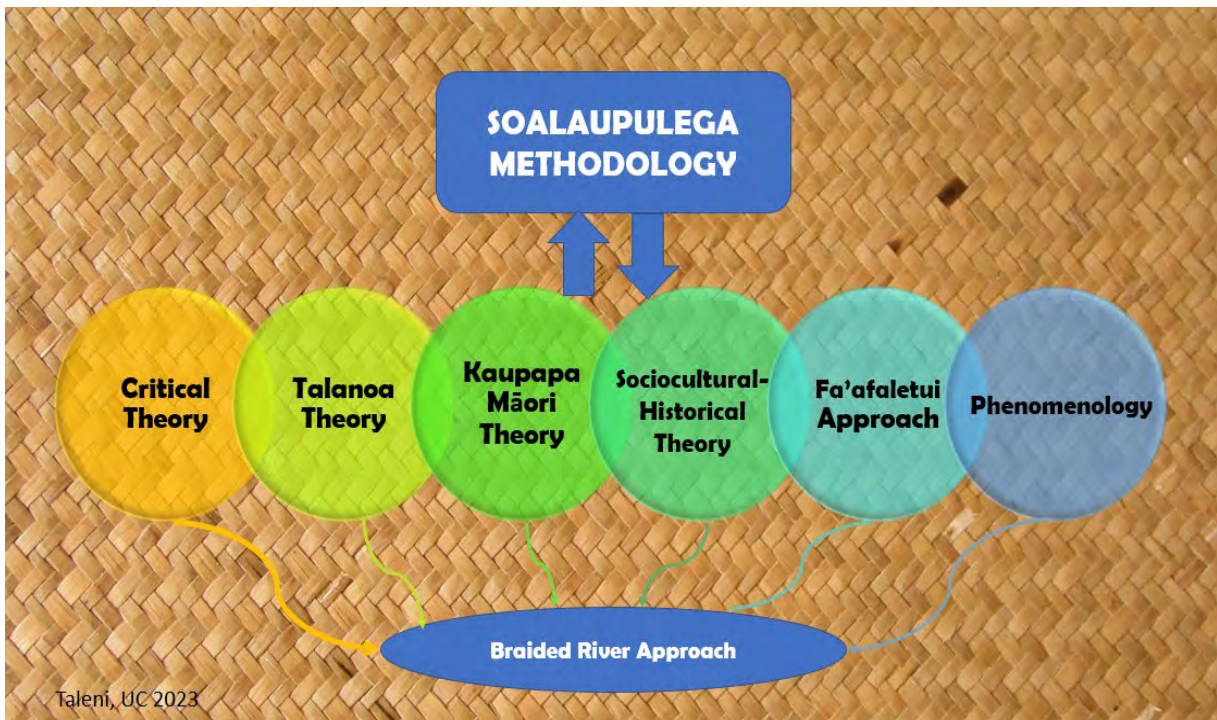
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Figure 3.5: Soalaupulega methodology.

3.3 Chapter Summary

In summary, Soalaupulega Samoa Research (SSR) is a qualitative research paradigm imbued with the authenticity that allows the expression of people's truth from their lived experiences. This expression is the integral attribute of SSR because it generates the depth of meaning and empowerment that comes from the application of the cultural soul. The validity that Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST) gives to shaping an Indigenous Samoan research methodology stands strong and vibrant in the face of Western qualitative research paradigms. Such vibrancy exists because Indigenous Pacific epistemologies recognise and adhere to the interconnections between humans, all other animals, the environment in its entirety—air, land, water (sea, rivers, lakes), weather, plant life, and the whole universe (Tamasese Tui Atua Efi, 2010).

And now the sound of the Foafoa (conch shell) heralds Foafoa 4 (Chapter 4). In this next chapter, I present the Lalaga or Lalagaina o le 'Tofa Manino ma le Tofa Mamao, the weaving together of the ideas, wisdom, knowledge and experiences that inform SSR research methods and the ones I used to collect and analyse my research data. As the next Foafoa makes clear,

Lalaga is a framework for making the methods clear; it is where the strands of the research fala (mats) are woven and moulded together.

As I move to Foafoa 4, I keep reminding myself of my key research questions:

1.   What are the key educational leadership qualities that facilitate successful educational and overall improved wellbeing outcomes for Pacific learners in schools?

2.   What are the effective strategies that principals implement to inspire and empower teachers to improve Pacific students' learning in culturally responsive and strength-based ways?

The sound of the foafoa continues to echo throughout the village.
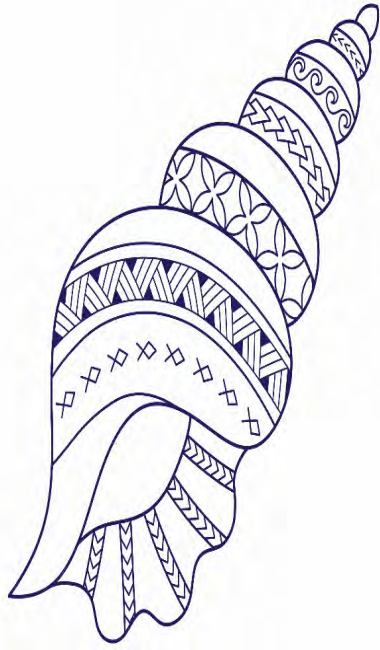
Foafoa 4

Fa'atinoga o le Saili'iliga Research Methods

Lalagaina o le Tofa Manino, Tofa Mamao ma le Tofa Saili

The weaving of wisdom, knowledge and perspectives for the betterment of the community

4.1 Introduction

My research methods were framed within Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST), discussed in Foafoa 3. These methods also drew on the concept of Lalaga (also called lagaga or lalagaina), which means the "art of weaving". Lalaga is a Samoan term, also known in other Pacific nations but with different spellings, such as raraga in Cook Islands Māori and lalanga in Tongan. I broadened my use of the term within my research context so that it captured the weaving of deep, broad knowledge and wisdom searched for and explored by others, thus "Lalagaina o le Tofa Manino, Tofa Mamao ma le Tofa Saili."

The Lalaga concept also aligns with the Fa'afaletui approach, a Samoan research framework that means "'ways of' [fa'a] 'weaving together' [tui] deliberations of different groups or 'houses' [fale]. It is derived from the Pacific epistemology of connectiveness and a collective holistic approach" (Goodyear-Smith & Ofanoa, 2021, p. 34). This type of weaving fits well with the weaving of my research aiga (participants') ideas, wisdom, knowledge, perspectives and experiences into a research fala (mat). Their voices are of utmost importance in a process that weaves solutions for the good of the community.

For me, weaving brings strong memories of my mother while I was growing up in my village.

At a young age, I followed my mother around our home and village, watching and observing her daily chores. Mum spent hours and hours weaving hats, fans and baskets, as well as plates to serve our food on and mats of all kinds. Her weaving was beautiful.

My mother, Valaei Faloa'i Pritchard Taleni, fala (mat) weaving.

The completed fala (mat).

4.2 The Art of Lalaga (Weaving)

Weaving has traditionally been considered part of women's role at home and within the village. Mat-weaving is the most common type of weaving because we use mats to cover the floor for people to sit on, for decorating the house when visitors come, and for use in bedrooms, where the mats are called fala moe, that is, sleeping mats. Ietoga, fine mats, are woven for special occasions and traditional ceremonies. They are often exchanged as gifts and during weddings, funerals and the dedication of new buildings, for example.

4.2.1 Relationship Between the Lalaga Research Method and the SSTRF

The relationship between the Lalaga research method and the Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Research Framework (SSTRF; see Figure 3.1 in Foafoa 3) is a strong one. This is because both have the same purpose. The SSTRF is all about articulate, wise people working collaboratively to "weave" together ideas, expertise, knowledge and experiences with the goal of finding ways to resolve issues affecting the lives of people in the community. The Lalaga method likewise seeks to weave together ideas, knowledge, expertise and different perspectives into solutions centred on the betterment of society. This method informed all aspects of my research work because it is this constant weaving together of key ideas and perspectives that creates Soalaupulega.

4.2.2 Falalalaga—the Village Women's Weaving Institution

While digging down to gain understanding of the Lalaga research method, I was reminded of the "weaving institution" in my village known as the falalalaga, a word that means the weaving of mats. Falalalaga is when the women of the village gather together to do weaving. Although the falalalaga is ostensibly for the weaving of mats, it achieves many other objectives that contribute to the fabric of the village, particularly those relating to the wellbeing of children and young people.

During their falalalaga conversations, the women often challenge and critique how the village is operating from their perspectives as women. Their challenges come from a place of fa'aaloalo (respect) and integrity (aloaia) as well as a place of tautua (service) and alofa (love) and are concerned with the desire to see village children lead healthy, prosperous lives. The essence of falalalaga is that of nurturing leadership capacity, such that leaders can work together to weave the ideas, knowledge, perspectives, experiences and wisdom that ensure the

effectiveness of Soalaupulega. Just as falalalaga can be understood in terms of an approach that sits within the Lalaga research method, so too can it be understood as a means by which to identify and challenge government educational policies in Aotearoa New Zealand. The challenge also relates to practices emanating from government policies that do not accord with the social structures of the villages and the value systems woven into them and are therefore unlikely to benefit the education of Pacific children.

4.2.3 The Role of the Fala within Soalaupulega Samoa Research (SSR)

The fala provides a space for collaboration. People can come in at any time, sit on the mat, be part of the dialogue and contribute to the weaving of the mat and, in metaphorical terms, the fabric of society. It is a space for Talanoa, conducted in the spirit of true respect for one another; for teu le va (nurturing the space and building relationships); and for showing alofa (love), feeling mafanafana (warmth for and from others), and displaying a good sense of humour. A saying in both Samoa and Tonga captures the character and purpose of the fala: "Fofola le fala se'i ta talanoa" (Samoan) | "Fofola e fala kae talanoa e kāinga" (Tongan) | "Roll out the mats so the family can dialogue."

4.2.4 Correspondence Between Lalaga (Mat-Weaving) and the Lalaga Research Method Process

The process of growing and preparing the flax and weaving its fibres into mats provided the basis of my Lalaga research method. Figure 4.1 captures the correspondence between the Lalaga mat-weaving process and the Lalaga research method process. A fuller description of the process and its corresponding research process follows.

1. **Totoina ma le teuina o laufala ia ola lelei** (nurturing and looking after the pandanus plants): *This stage focuses on the research participants and building relationships with them.*

   Lalaga starts with planting and nurturing the pandanus plants to make sure they grow well and produce flax of the quality needed for weaving. Part of the nurturing involves removing weeds from the pandanus and cutting out any dead leaves on the plant. I saw my mother doing these tasks many times in the village. She efficiently and effectively looked after the plants until they were ready to use for weaving. My siblings and I frequently helped my mother with these tasks after school.
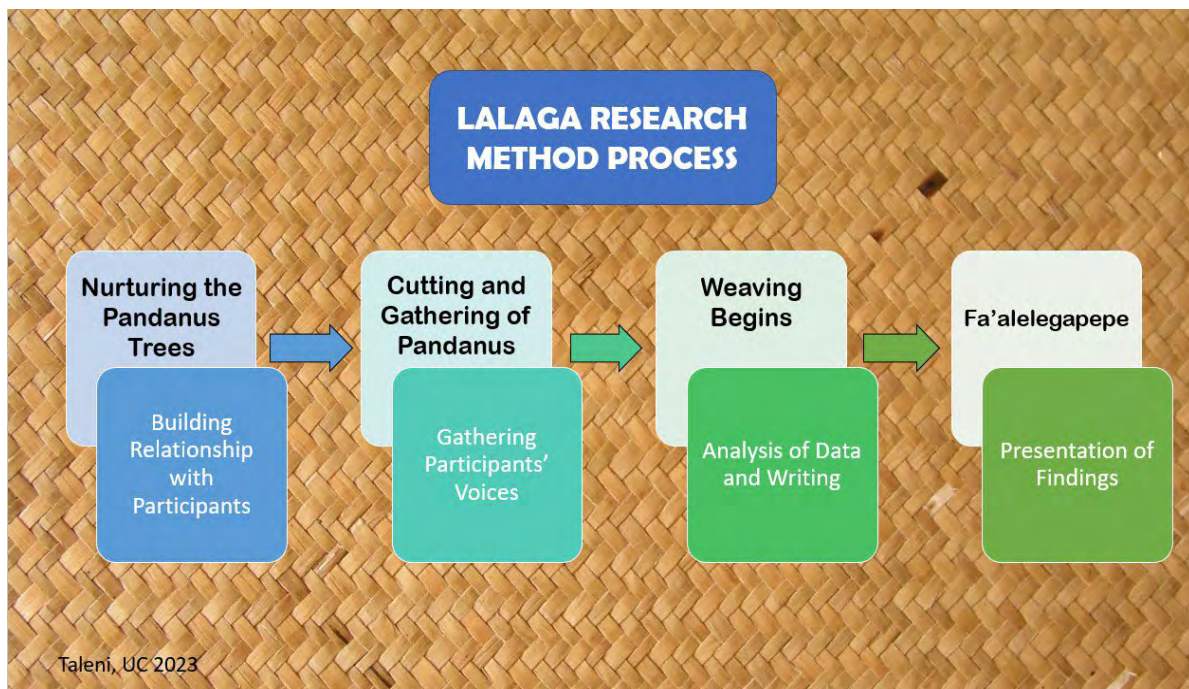
Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 4.1: Correspondence between Lalaga (mat-weaving) and the Lalaga research process.

2. **Taina mai o laufula** (cutting and gathering the pandanus flax): *This stage centres on data gathering, which includes the fieldwork task of interviewing, that is, Talanoa.*

   When it is time for weaving, villagers cut the flax from the pandanus trees and take them to the village for cleaning and drying them out in the sun in preparation for stripping to specified lengths and sizes. My siblings and I also helped our mother gather the pandanus leaves. This task often took a whole day to complete.

3. **Amata na Lalaga** (weaving begins): *Writing begins during this stage. It involves a weaving together of the data and analysis and interpretation of the data.*

   Weaving the fala begins when all the flax has been prepared. The weaver has a plan for the weaving. The plan includes deciding on the type of mat to weave and the sizes and lengths of the pandanus strips to use. The plan furthermore determines the time needed to complete the weaving, especially when mothers are busy with other responsibilities. There is always much to consider and do during this important stage of the process.

4. **Fa'alelegapepe** (presentation of the completed mats): *This critical part of the weaving process relates to the presentation and celebration of the research findings, which provide the answers to the research kaupapa.*

   The presentation of the woven mat is called fa'alelegapepe (showcasing and displaying of mats) and is the celebration of their completion. I saw many fa'alelegapepe events in

the village when I was growing up. The day is a special one for women as they come together to present their woven, completed mats—mats of all kinds and sizes. The day involves traditional dance and food, all part of showcasing and celebrating the importance of the gift of art and crafts and caring for families through the provision of woven mats for everyday use.

4.3 The Lalaga Research Stages

4.3.1 Totoina ma le Teuina o Laufala ia ola Lelei | Planting and plant care

(Planting and nurturing the pandanus plants): *Identifying, selecting and engaging with the research participants*

After reading my topic literature, forming my research questions, determining the characteristics of the people I hoped would participate in my research, and deciding on the tasks I wanted to complete with their support, my next step was to identify and select people who might participate in my research.

This process equated to the planting and nurturing of the pandanus plants. Just as it is vital to ensure the plants are well cared for from sapling to harvesting of their leaves for weaving, teu le va (a nurturing relationship) and its connection with fa'aaloalo (respect) and tautua (service) were critically important at this stage of my research work. Looking after the plants connects to the value of respect—of showing care for plants and their environment. This part of the weaving process also connects to many important aspects of life, particularly health, wellbeing and education and the intersection of these aspects with how tamaiti (children) are prepared from a young age for their formal education (Taleni et al., 2023).

My method of selecting participants was essentially purposive sampling, a popular sampling system in qualitative research (Patton, 1990). This approach worked well within the context of my study because it allowed me to concentrate on people whose experiences made them the best people for providing the information required to answer the research questions. Purposive sampling is also known as judgement, selective or subjective sampling because it allows researchers to rely on their own judgement when choosing participants.

My Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Research Framework (SSTRF; see Figure 3.1 in Foafoa 3) also suited purposive sampling because the main intention of Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST) is to involve people who can share invaluable ideas, experiences, expertise and knowledge, which in my case concerned the qualities of effective leaders as part of the solution

to resolve Aotearoa New Zealand education system's failure to serve the educational and wellbeing needs of its Pacific students.

Soalaupulega's clearly defined purpose for dialoguing differs from the free-flowing conversation of the Talanoa approach, which has neither an agenda nor a structure. Soalaupulega required me to identify people who could bring to the dialogue all nine Tofa, the proficiencies of Fa'a-Matai that combine wisdom, knowledge, experiences, and skills (refer Figure 3.1). Soalaupulega furthermore aligned with the commitment and intention of Pacific community leaders and Indigenous leaders to share their wisdom and perspectives during the weaving of solutions for the critical and important mataupu (subject) of Pacific student achievement in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Given my clear purpose for my participants, I knew I had to make the right judgement on whom to invite. I therefore wanted to approach people with mana, aloaia (high integrity and good standing in the community), wisdom and knowledge. I knew that such people would all have something special to contribute, as evident in the Samoan saying, "Ole tuamafa lava na fili i malae" | "Choose the best wood pigeon to feed important guests." In other words, I needed to identify and approach people who had the knowledge and expertise to contribute with wise and fair judgement.

I identified three groups of people I hoped would participate in my research: Indigenous Samoan Matai (chiefs, leaders) who were born and grew up in Samoa; Pacific community leaders from various Pacific nations but resident and working in Aotearoa New Zealand; and education leaders, that is, principals in schools.

When identifying, inviting and engaging with the participants, I used a different approach for each of the three groups (see Figure 4.2). I did this because I had to be sure that their respective backgrounds, experiences and roles accorded with the guiding concepts of SSR (see Foafoa 3) and reflected Samoan values, wisdom and the principles of fa'aaloalo (respect), fetausia'i (reciprocity) and teu le va (nurturing relationships) (Airini et al., 2010; Taleni, 2017). All of these attributes were vitally important for ensuring that my research participants were people who could help me gather authentic Samoan data, that is, data imbued with those same attributes.

I adopted a Fa'afaletui approach, akin to paepae among Māori, when inviting people to be part of the Indigenous Samoan leaders group. This approach involves a relatively conservative, traditional form of dialogue that is carefully guided from the epistemological perspective by Tofa (deep wisdom). The approach I used when inviting and engaging with

Pacific community leaders in Aotearoa was that of Talanoa (wānanga for Māori). I adopted a Fa'atalanoaga approach (hui for Māori), an interview form of conversation, to invite and engage with the school principal leaders.
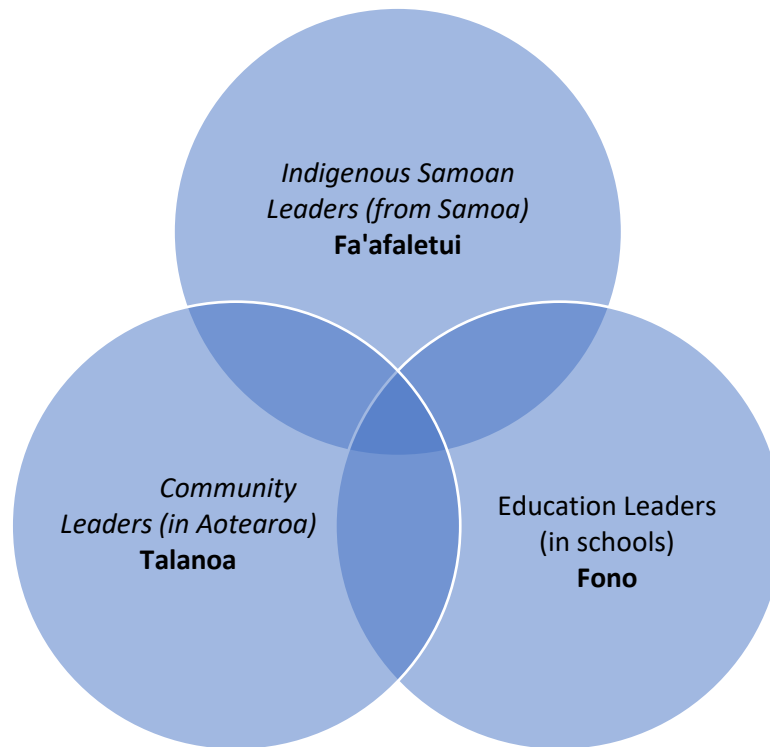
Figure 4.2: My research family—the three participant groups and approaches used to select and engage with them.

The three different approaches were ones I considered best suited the background and nature of each of the three groups. I used the Fa'afaletui approach (Sua'alii-Sauni & Fuluaiolupotea, 2014) with the Indigenous Samoan leaders group because it is the formal way to dialogue in a traditional setting in a Samoan village (Goodyear-Smith & Ofanoa, 2021). The approach was therefore culturally appropriate for this group of participants. It also acknowledged their way of sharing ideas and knowledge.

The Talanoa approach to dialogue suited the Pacific leaders group because the members of it came from different Pacific nations and not all of them were fluent in their native language. Some were born in New Zealand and others in the Pacific Islands. The members of this participant group were all familiar with the Talanoa approach because it is a common way of conducting dialogue in Pacific ways of doing and Pacific settings.

The Fa'atalanoaga approach used to gather data from the school leaders suited these participants because they were most comfortable with one-on-one conversations. The leaders who agreed to participate were all school principals. This group of participants were vital to

my whole study because of their close proximity to the heart of its kaupapa, a primary aim of which was to assess whether and how school principal leadership contributes to better educational outcomes for Pacific children in Aotearoa New Zealand.

4.3.1.1 The participant groups

Participant Group 1: Indigenous Samoan leaders

Ten Samoan Matai (high chiefs) agreed to participate in the Indigenous leadership group. I had wanted the Matai to be people living in Samoa and to meet with and gather data from them in Samoa. However, the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic required a change of plan, which saw me drawing on the expertise of Matai in Canterbury, Aotearoa New Zealand. This change was a real disappointment for me as a researcher because it meant foregoing the cultural authenticity that would have better captured the indigeneity of Fa'a-Samoa settings in Samoan villages.

I began the Matai participant selection process by meeting individually with ministers of six Samoan aulotu (churches) in Canterbury to discuss the purpose of my research and to ask them to identify and ask two Matai from their respective churches if they would be willing to take part in my study. I provided a Samoan language copy of information relating to my study and discussed ethical considerations pertaining to it with the ministers (see Appendices 2 and 3). I also showed them the consent form (Appendix 4) for Matai participation.

Five of the ministers each selected two Matai based on their cultural knowledge, their leadership experiences as Matai and the importance of their standing in the Samoan community and their families. The remaining minister was not able to provide me with the names of possible participants, which meant I had 10 rather than 12 Matai to approach. My next step was to set up a Fa'afaletui to discuss my study with these Matai and to seek their agreement to participate, in accordance with Fa'a-Samoa. This meeting was important in building relationships before the actual Fa'afaletui (collaboration) to gather their voices.

The Indigenous Samoan leaders identified by the church ministers agreed to participate in the study. They considered my research objectives a golden opportunity for them to give their voices to an initiative they considered worthwhile. The University of Canterbury Research Ethics Committee gave approval for the Matai to verbally consent to participate rather than sign a consent form. It is culturally appropriate from the Pacific perspective for Pacific people to verbally agree to participate in an endeavour that will benefit their own children, families and communities. My acceptance of their verbal agreement to participate showed my respect for these leaders and for their ongoing service to their people.

The Matai who agreed to participate in my study held Matai title for their aiga (family) and their high standing in the Samoan communities of Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand. They all held important positions in their church communities and were able representatives of their extended families within those communities. Well respected in Canterbury for their knowledge of Fa'a-Samoa (Samoan culture), their wisdom and their service to their aiga and lotu (church), they had a wealth of authentic Samoan leadership experiences and were well engaged in and connected to Samoan communities throughout Aotearoa.

Table 4.1 provides key details about the 10 Indigenous Samoan leaders. In addition to demographic information, the table identifies the main language of worship at the church each Matai attended, the place where the Matai title was bestowed on them and the type of Matai title they were accorded, either Ali'i (paramount chief) or Tulafale (an orator). For confidentiality reasons, each Matai agreed to be given a pseudonym, as evident in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Participant Group 1 profiles: Indigenous Samoan leaders

Suafa | Name*	Gender	Itumalo i niu sila | Place of residence	Atunuu Soifua mai ai | Birthplace	Gagana tapua'i | Language of worship	Form of Matai title | Ali'i (High Chief) or Tulafale (Orator)	Place where title bestowed
Poututoa	Female	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Ali'i	Samoa
Maota	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Tulafale	Samoa
Lalovi	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Tulafale	Samoa
Salemuliaga	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Tulafale	Samoa
Fititoa	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Tulafale	Samoa
Malotau	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Tulafale	Samoa
Va'asilitele	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	English	Ali'i	Samoa
Tufuga	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Tulafale	Samoa
Amoatu	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Tulafale	Samoa
Lualua	Male	Canterbury	Samoa	Samoan	Tulafale	Samoa

* Notes: All names are pseudonyms. ** Ali'i is a paramount chief; Tulafale is an orator.

Participant Group 2: Pacific Community Leaders

The 10 members of this group were all living in Christchurch and were respected members of their families, communities and churches. They also all held important roles in various government agencies. The 10 leaders were all community leaders. Six identified as Samoan, two as Fijian, one as Tongan and one as a Cook Islander. Of the Samoan leaders, two were working for the Ministry of Education, one was working in early childhood education, and one was an academic. One of the Fijian leaders was a truck driver and the other was a community leader who was a strong advocate for Fijian families in the community. The Tongan and Cook Islander leaders were tertiary education lecturers.

All 10 community leaders had active roles in their communities. These roles included Pacific representative on a school Board of Trustees, member of a Pacific advisory group, leading Matai in their aulotu (church), advocate for education and health in the community, and key drivers of Pacific community initiatives and programmes. The members of this group were well known to me through my roles in Samoan communities and Pacific education initiatives, programmes, advisory and reference groups. This important group of leaders had a wealth of leadership experiences and understanding of key Pacific issues in their communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. All were living their lives according to Pacific values: aloaia (integrity), alofa (love), tautua (service), fetausia'i (reciprocity), fa'aleagaga (spirituality), fa'aaloalo (respect), ta'ita'i (leadership), and fa'asinomaga (belonging) (Taleni, 2017).

Having identified these community leaders as potential participants, I visited each one individually to discuss my study, outline their possible involvement, discuss ethical considerations and invite their participation. I gave each leader a supporting information sheet (Appendix 5) and consent form (Appendix 6), outlined the process for gaining their agreement to participate and encouraged them to ask any questions. As with the Indigenous Samoan leaders group, the University of Canterbury Research Ethics Committee gave approval for the Pacific community leaders to give their participation consent verbally, which meant they did not have to sign the consent form. All 10 agreed to participate. Table 4.2 provides key demographic details about the participants as well as their roles in their communities. All elected to be referred to by pseudonyms.

Table 4.2: Participant Group 2 profiles: Pacific community leaders

Igoa / Name	Ethnic group	Gender	Place of residence	Birthplace	Roles
Sieni	Samoan	Male	Christchurch	Samoa	Early childhood education Community leader
Alofa	Samoan	Female	Christchurch	Samoa	Academic Community leader
Mareko	Samoan	Male	Christchurch	New Zealand	Ministry of Education Community leader
Filipo	Samoan	Male	Christchurch	Samoa	Ministry of Education Community leader
Finau	Tongan	Male	Christchurch	Tonga	Lecturer, University of Canterbury Community leader
Sione	Fijian	Male	Christchurch	Fiji	Truck driver Community leader
Tama	Fijian	Male	Christchurch	Fiji	Community leader
Vili	Cook Islands	Male	Christchurch	Cook Island	Lecturer, ARA Institute of Canterbury Community leader
Amosa	Samoan	Male	Christchurch	Samoa	Church minister Community leader
Makerita	Samoan	Female	Christchurch	Samoa	Health educator Community leader

* Note: All names are pseudonyms.

Participant Group 3: School leaders (principals) in Aotearoa

I invited eight principals from primary schools in Canterbury to participate. The principals varied in the extent of their leadership experience. Each school had a significant number of Pacific students on their school roll and all eight principals had engaged in Pacific professional development workshops or courses and had advocated for Pacific education initiatives in schools. Two of the eight principals had been part of the Pacific education initiative called Samoa Malaga in 2011. I coordinated and led this Pacific cultural experience opportunity for New Zealand teachers, school leaders and initial teacher educators. Each of these principals was known to me and I considered that all of them had much to contribute to my study. Table

4.3 presents demographic details about these principals as well as the type of primary school they were working in and how long they had been principals.

Table 4.3. Participant Group 3 profiles: School leaders (principals)

Name*	Gender	Language(s) spoken	Age bracket	Ancestry (ethnicity)	School level	Number of years as a principal
Melani	Female	English	50–60	Samoan/NZ European (Austria)	Primary	16
Paulo	Male	English	50– 60	NZ European (Ireland)	Primary	15
Mataio	Male	Māori / English	56–65	Māori NZ European (UK)	Primary	16
Pola	Male	English	50–60	NZ European (Scotland and Ireland)	Primary	15
Penina	Female	English	50–60	NZ European	Primary	14
Iulia	Female	English	50–60	NZ European	Primary	16
Maleko	Male	English	50–60	NZ European	Primary	15
Ropeti	Male	English	60–70	NZ European	Primary	13

* Note: All names are pseudonyms.

The Fa'atalanoaga (one-to-one meeting) approach guided my first meeting with each principal, during which we discussed my research plans, ethical considerations relating to it, and the supporting information and consent sheets that I gave them (Appendices 7 and 8, respectively). I sent the information sheet and consent form to each principal to read before the Fa'atalanoaga. During this first meeting, I also encouraged the principals to ask any questions or raise issues about the study and told them that in addition to realising the main research objectives, I hoped to gain an understanding of their views on Pacific students' learning at school. I also, during the Fa'atalanoaga, suggested to these potential participants that they think about the project some more or discuss it with their school's Board of Trustees before deciding to participate. However, all agreed to participate at the end of the Fa'atalanoaga and signalled their agreement by signing the consent form. They also filled out a form that asked them to provide some personal information (see Appendix 9). This information provided the profile details of each participant in Table 4.3 (above). As with Participant Groups 1 and 2, the members of Group 3 elected to be identified by pseudonyms.

4.3.1.2 Participant anonymity and confidentiality

As evident from the participant consent forms (Appendices 4, 6, and 8), I assured all participants that I would guarantee their anonymity and treat all information relating to them and their responses to my questions with confidentiality. While I gave the participants the option to be identified, all wanted anonymity and confidentiality. I therefore removed all personal information from papers, interview records/scripts, research notes and so on, and replaced them with numbers and pseudonyms.

The consent forms advised the participants that these forms, as well as records and fieldwork data, would be kept in a securely locked cabinet in my university office. I also assured them that the transcripts of all interviews would be kept on a computer file requiring a password entry. Lastly, I told them that records pertaining to the study would be retained and stored in line with the requirements of the University of Canterbury, and then destroyed on completion of the research.

I also kept the schools' identities and locations anonymous during the research process by referring to them as South Island schools and giving them pseudonyms. In addition, the person who transcribed the audiotaped conversations signed a privacy and confidentiality agreement prior to the work.

Participants also needed to know, as stated on the consent forms, that my research would be written up as a study for a doctoral degree and that the research process and findings might be used to inform change and improve, via effective leadership, Pacific students' engagement and achievement in New Zealand schools. I also let them know that the research process and findings would likely be presented at conferences, used in professional development courses, and written up as journal articles, book chapters and/or a book.

4.3.1.3 Ethical considerations

Understanding ethical issues in educational research is central to conducting it (Mutch, 2005). Because research often involves a great deal of coordination among different people in different disciplines and institutions, ethical considerations must promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect and fairness. According to Mutch (2005), "… ethics is a moral principle or code of conduct that actually governs what people do and it is concerned with the way people act and behave" (p. 76). Research ethics is specifically interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in research (Walton, 2001). The key objective of research ethics is to protect

human participants by ensuring that the research is conducted in a way that serves the best interests of individuals, groups and society, manages risks, ensures confidentiality and gains informed consent (Walton, 2001). When it comes to cultural practices, ethical issues become more complicated. However, with the right knowledge, researchers can understand how cultural practices assist them with formulating ethical standards appropriate to the nature of the research and the people participating in it.

For my study, the participation of 10 Indigenous leaders, 10 Pacific community leaders and eight school leaders (principals) made ethical considerations associated with Talanoa research paramount. My Indigenous Soalaupulega research methodology and methods aligned well with the Talanoa considerations and with the research-specific ethics provided by the University of Canterbury. Moreover, as I outlined in Foafoa 3, the need for research within a culturally based framework captured my own way of thinking, my Fa'a-Samoa knowledge and my cultural soul. It also represented who I am as a Samoan researcher. I saw all of this as advantageous to the ethical conduct of my research.

4.3.2 Taina Mai o Laufala | Weaving preparation

(Cutting and gathering the pandanus and taking it to the village for weaving preparation): *Gathering the data—fieldwork tasks*

4.3.2.1 Fa'afaletui with Participant Group 1: Indigenous Samoan leaders

The Fa'afaletui, the traditional Samoan form of dialogue (Goodyear-Smith & Ofanoa, 2021), included the 10 Matai, a research assistant and me. It took place in a community church. We maintained Samoan protocols throughout our time together. Accordingly, we began with a short devotional and then a speech from each Matai. During these speeches, the Maitai introduced themselves. They said who they were, which villages they came from in Samoa and their roles in the Samoan community, their aiga and church. I then explained the purpose of the research and the methodology I would be using, presented my two key research questions and identified the research tasks.

I also told the group the specific questions (delivered in both Samoan and English) I wanted to ask them (see Appendices 10 and 11) and said I would, with their permission, audio-record and later transcribe verbatim all dialogue. I also emphasised my commitment to keep each person's identity confidential. At the end of the Fa'afaletui, I expressed my appreciation for their time and the sharing of their invaluable knowledge before I closed with a tatalo

(prayer). Later, I conducted a thematic analysis of the transcribed dialogues (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.3.2.2 Talanoa with Participant Group 2: Pacific community leaders

Talanoa dialogue was a familiar form of discussion for the Pacific community leaders. People engaged in talanoa dialogue do not have a formal agenda of matters to discuss and they carry it out face to face. Talanoa is often referred to as a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking. It can be formal or informal, and it may or may not lead to serious matters. A breakdown of the word talanoa spells its meaning—*tala* means to inform, tell, relate and command, as well as to ask or apply. *Noa* means of any kind, ordinary, nothing in particular, purely imaginary or void. In a dictionary that Churchward (1959) compiled for the Government of Tonga, he described talanoa as "to talk (in an informal way), to tell stories or relate experience" (p. 447). He also broke down the two components of the word to give a stronger understanding of its meaning. He gave the meaning of *tala* as to command, tell, relate, inform and announce, and *noa* as common, old, of no value, without thought, without exertion, as well as dumb (unable to speak). The essential meanings of talanoa, then, are talking about nothing in particular and an unstructured, agenda-free form of conversation.

The Talanoa with the community leaders took place in a community church. I began it with a short devotional, followed by a welcome and an introduction from me as the researcher. I then asked the leaders to introduce themselves and to tell us about their community role/s. I then explained the research aims, questions, methodology and methods. The participants were invited to contribute to the Talanoa by asking questions and making suggestions about the research kaupapa if they wished.

The main part of the Talanoa focused on the specific research questions I had for this group (see Appendix 12). According to Talanoa protocols, I presented a question for the participants to respond to in their own time instead of going around the group in an orderly manner. I audiotaped the participants' responses for later verbatim transcription and thematic analysis. Towards the end of the Talanoa, the participants had time to add final comments and words of blessing for the research kaupapa. I ended the Talanoa with a prayer of blessing and thanked the participants for their time and input.

4.3.2.3 Fa'atalanoaga with Participant Group 3: School principals (semi-structured interviews)

The Fa'atalanoaga with the school principals suited the semi-structured interview style of collecting data (Vaioleti, 2006) because it enabled me to ask a predetermined set of questions designed to elicit discussion (see Appendix 13). This style of interviewing means questions can be asked in no specific order and there is opportunity for both interviewer and participant to engage in a free-ranging discussion and to explore responses or apparent emerging themes about a matter in greater depth. I conducted these one-to-one, semi-structured interviews during the school day and in a room away from distractions and interruptions. I started each interview with a brief introduction that included my identity and my university and community roles and how those roles intersected with the education of Pacific students. I also explained my research aims and how the Fa'atalanoaga would be conducted. I also asked each participant to introduce themselves if they wished to do so. The discussions were all audio-recorded and later transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis.

4.3.3 Amata na Lalaga | Beginning to weave

(Cleaning, refining and drying the pandanus flax in the sun, stripping them into fibres and sorting them into different lengths ready for **weaving**): *Collecting, analysing and interpreting the data in readiness for writing up the findings*

I used thematic analysis to analyse and interpret all of the participants' spoken contributions. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), initially used in psychology, is deemed an appropriate tool for qualitative research because it provides a way of drawing out meaning from what people say about the phenomena being investigated. It is particularly useful for subjective information such as a participant's experiences, views and opinions, which is why it is usually conducted on data derived from, for example, surveys, social media posts, interviews and conversations.

Thematic analysis is usually applied to scripts or texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher closely examines the data to identify themes—topics, ideas and patterns of meaning—that come up repeatedly and help answer the research question/s. This type of analysis is about more than simply summarising the data. A good thematic analysis makes sense of the text in relation to the phenomena under investigation. It can also be a beneficial way of analysing large amounts of qualitative data because it provides the researcher with a means of sifting, grouping and categorising the data so that it is easier to understand.

In short, thematic analysis is a good choice for researchers wanting to analyse a large amount of data (although the dataset does not necessarily have to be large), and researchers who are interested in subjective experiences. However, subjectivity is also a consideration during the analysis process because when an investigator reads or listens to a script, his or her interpretation of its content is inevitably coloured by his or her cultural beliefs, experiences, values and so on. Accordingly, if a different person analyses the same data, it is possible that he or she will draw out different interpretations.

When conducting a thematic analysis, the researcher uses coding to group the data. Two commonly used forms of coding are open and axial. During *open coding*, the investigator uses phrases, words, numbers and/or colours to identify and label broad concepts (larger themes) within the data and then to group them into categories and subcategories. Researchers read and repeatedly reread the scripts during this process to identify, highlight, check and double check the concepts and then the categories and subcategories. I used colour highlighting to differentiate the concepts and categories I identified through my thematic scrutiny of the participants' transcribed scripts. Appendix 14 provides examples of my open coding analysis.

After completing my open coding, I employed *axial coding*, which enables identification of the interrelationships and connections between and across the concepts and categories identified during the open coding stage. Axial coding was an important means of bringing rigour and robustness to my thematic analysis, especially as it helped me confirm whether or not an identified concept and its associated categories held across perspectives.

When doing the axial coding, I asked myself questions such as the following: What conditions caused or influenced the conceptual themes and categories? What was the social or political context? What were the associated consequences? What synergies were there between groups in the meanings they accord to qualities of effective leaders? What were the differences?

4.3.4 Fa'alelegapepe | Showcasing completed woven mats

(Presentation of the completed mat): *Completing the thesis (discussion, conclusions, and recommendations) and presenting it*

Like the presentation of a completed fala, my thesis is a fala that weaves together and presents, in addition to the introduction, literature review, accounts of research methodology and methods, all analysed data, interpretation and discussion of that data and concluding comments and recommendations. On completion of my research and its scrutiny by examiners, I will call all of the research participants together and present them with the findings, conclusions and

recommendations of my research. This important coming together and presentation demonstrates the two key Pacific values of respect and reciprocity.

This important occasion will also provide me with the opportunity to seek participant approval for the research I am about to share with the world. Fa'alelegapepe brings the whole village together to celebrate artistic work—the fine work of village women committed to weaving mats for the wellbeing of their families. This work is similar to the process of carrying out research. Once the research is completed, there is space and time for the community to celebrate this milestone. The researcher values this final gathering to acknowledge the invaluable contribution the participants have made to the research.

4.4 Some Reflections on Lalaga as a Research Method

Before ending Foafoa 4, I consider it important to offer some reflections on the meaning of Lalaga (weaving) within the context of this research. Weaving of the mat symbolises the act of doing all that leaders can do for the wellbeing of all children. Weaving is not seen as a disconnected and fragmented process but a united collaboration. School leaders must see and value Lalaga as an important cultural form and context that can weave into their teaching programmes to improve students' engagement. The same can be said for the work of the Ministry of Education in regard to lifting Pacific students' educational engagement and achievement by weaving these students' cultures into policymaking. The use of Lalaga as a research method allowed me the opportunity to develop a culturally responsive research framework that spoke for me, that represented who I am. Above all, it offered the quiet satisfaction of choosing a process that can really bring people together to weave a mat of success for children's learning, health and wellbeing.

The whole purpose of Lalaga is to weave a completed mat so that people in the nu'u (village) and aiga can come and sit on it and engage in talanoa. As captured in Figure 4.3 below, the "mat space" is a safe space for such discussion. Here, talanoa is imbued with fa'aaloalo (respect), alofa (love), mafanafana (warmth) and teu le va (a nurturing of the space), and it is here that talanoa fosters ongoing relationships and engagement for the wellbeing of everyone. Together, these four key qualities create productive conversations that facilitate solutions to concerning matters, such as untangling the "net of social issues" adversely impacting on the lives of children and families in the community.

Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 4.3: The woven mat and its key qualities for transformative dialogue.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This Foafoa highlighted the role of Lalaga or Lagaga (the art of weaving) in everyday village life, translated it into Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST) and from there into development of Soalaupulega Samoa Research (SSR). The close relationship between Lalaga and Soalaupulega Samoa Research (SSR) encapsulates the weaving of knowledge, wisdom, experiences and the diverse perspectives of my research participants. It also accorded with my intention to use a culturally inclusive research method that would allow me to carry out my data-gathering procedures with values that honoured the integrity of my participant aiga—teu le va. Among these values were fa'aaloalo (respect), mafanafana (warmth), tautua (service) and teu le va (nurturing relationships). I was confident that a culture-specific methodology would help expose needed solutions to ensuring Pacific children make a better start in their learning, health and wellbeing.

In the next Foafoa, I present the key findings from my research aiga. The fala is yet to be fully woven, but Foafoa 5 provides the laufala (threads) needed for the weaving. As the chapter shows, those threads, made of different words and culturally based understandings, bring the nuances of meaning and understanding that are woven into the final form.

The sound of the Foafoa / conch shell continues to hear throughout the village.
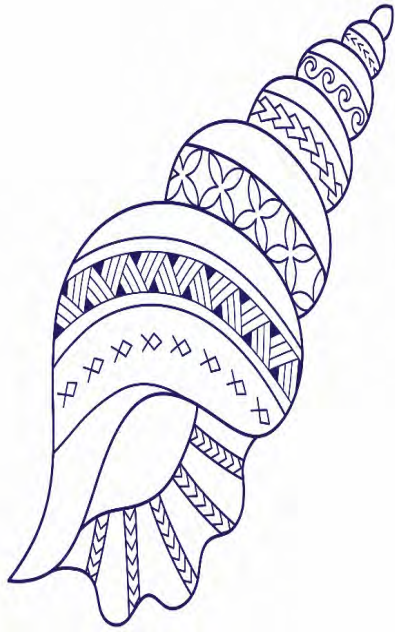
Foafoa 5

O Tali o le Saili'iliga

Research Findings

O le lupe na fa'ia mai i le fuifui

The pigeon that was selected from the rest

of the flock

This saying stands as a metaphor for articulated voices
becoming answers to the inquiry.

5.1 Introduction

The rich data captured in the transcribed scripts of the audio-recorded discussions with and interviews of my research participants shaped a complexity of ideas that coalesced into eight main themes aligned with the qualities of effective school leadership supportive of Pacific students' learning. This analysis and interpretation work was laborious and time consuming but rewarding and exciting in terms of the findings embedded in the transcripts. The participants were as fully engaged in participating as I was in capturing and analysing their voices. I soon recognised that their perspectives were truly measina (taonga, treasures). The eight identified themes were:

1.   Ta'imua (lead from the front)

2.   Tausimea (keeper of family treasures)

3.   Tautua (service)

4.   Teu le va (nurturing relationships)

5.   Fa'asinomaga (identity)

6.   Alafua (vision)

7.   Auala a'oa'o (pedagogy)

8.   Agaga ma le loto (emotional and spiritual connections).

In this Foafoa, I present the eight interpreted themes within three sections. The first of these focuses on the Samoan Indigenous leaders group, the second on the Pacific community leaders group, and the third on the school principal leaders group. Details about each of these groups can be found in Section 4.3.1.1 of Foafoa 4.

5.2 Themes Identified From Each Participant Group's Data

It was important for me to recognise that the three participant groups looked at and then answered my questions about what leadership meant to them through their respective lenses. This "look" through different lenses produced three themes held in common across the groups, that is, tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), fa'asinomaga (identity). The remaining five were either held in common by two participant groups or just one group. They were ta'imua (lead from the front), tausimea (keeper of family treasures), alafua (vision), auala a'oa'o tausimea (pedagogy), and loto ma le agaga (emotional and spiritual connections). My presentation of the findings for each group is set out in this Foafoa in the same order as the theme listings in Table 5.1. Quotes from the transcripts evidential of each theme accompany this presentation.

Table 5.1. Identified themes by participant group

Participant group	Themes
Samoan Indigenous leaders	Ta'imua (lead from the front)
	Tausimea (keeper of family treasures)
	Tautua (service)
	Teu le va (nurturing relationship)
	Fa'asinomaga (identity)
Pacific community leader	Tautua (service)
	Teu le va (nurturing relationships)
	Fa'asinomaga (identity)
	Alafua (vision)
School leaders (principals)	Tautua (service)
	Teu le va (nurturing relationship)
	Alafua (vision)
	Auala a'oa'o (pedagogy)
	Fa'asinomaga (identity)
	Loto ma le agaga (emotional and spiritual connections)

5.2.1 Indigenous Samoan Leaders

This section presents the findings from the 10 Samoan Indigenous leaders living in Aotearoa New Zealand who so willingly gave of their time to participate in my doctoral study. The findings are drawn from the audiotaped discussions and dialogue during our time together. Of the eight themes to emerge from my analysis of the transcriptions for all three participant groups, five were evident in the Indigenous leaders' transcripts. These were ta'imua (lead from the front), tausimea (keeper of family treasures), tautua (service) teu le va (nurturing relationships), and fa'asinomaga (identity).

5.2.1.1 Ta'imua (lead from the front)

The leaders spoke of the vitality and significance of the concept of "ta'imua", which refers to a leader who leads from the front in everything he or she does. This person is someone who sets the direction for people to follow. He or she also serves as an example of how to head in that direction and to keep following this path to its destination. Lalovi spoke of his role as a leader in his village and family. He valued this role and saw its essence as leading from the front:

> [M]y key role as a Matai in my village includes a responsibility for leading a
> village malaga [visit] to another village. That means I am taking a lead role
> in the malaga and that includes a speaking role on the behalf of our village.
> My Matai title is known in the village and the district as a Ta'imua—a leading
> Matai [chief].

Lalovi also pointed out that the role of a ta'imua is given to his or her aiga. This giving is a special acknowledgement of that family, and it forms a legacy that is carried from generation to generation.

Poututoa contributed her belief that the role of a good Ta'imua is someone who "sets good examples for new generations coming through—scaffolding them for the future." She also observed that a Ta'imua leader is not only a person of action but also a person who models these actions: "[H]ow I value my Matai title is to be with other Matai. I go where other Matai are. That's how I value me being a Matai. Matai not only talks but most importantly … show[s] actions through work."

Maota aligned his perspectives of a Ta'imua leader with the term Aualuma, a title that his village gave his family. The word has much the same meaning as Ta'imua: "Our family is

known in our village as the Aualuma. We call a Aualuma of males, not females, Aualuma. Our family is responsible for leading the Aualuma when we visit other villages."

Maota and Amoatu both mentioned honesty as one of the key qualities of a Ta'imua leader:

A Matai must carry out his/her responsibilities with honesty. Whether you start from behind the kitchen (cleaning taro and bananas, etc) and move into the house of chiefs, you must do your duties with honesty. A leader who is sincere in fulfilling his/her duties. An effective Ta'imua leader is honest and has courage.

Tufuga expanded on the idea of honesty when he said a Ta'imua leader leads from the front with great courage and by example and has a purpose for doing so: "A Ta'imua Matai is someone who has courage, someone who fulfils everything to the best of his or her ability, works hard and leads by example. He or she leads the village for a good future."

Malotau characterised his role as a Ta'imua through the Samoan words fa'aaoga le mafaufau, which means using one's initiative.

When I go to my family discussion, I go with the knowledge that I will play a leading role. As a Matai you set an example by walking the talk with actions, not just words. [You] must demonstrate your words through actions—allocation of resources is important, for example, money, ietoga [fine mats], meaai [food], etcetera. What you do is teaching the next generation about the importance of service with actions, not just words!

Va'asilitele discussed the role of the Ta'imua as a leader within the family and a person who creates ways to keep the family living in peace and harmony. Such a leader, said Va'asilitele, nurtures and strengthens the foundation of his or her family; a foundation that is strong and secure: "Good leadership contributes to the way families live in peace and harmony; also contributes to the wellbeing and prosperity of the family and children. A good Matai takes care of his or her family."

Salemuliaga likewise saw the Ta'imua role as guarding the family's safety: "As a Matai, I am a guard that guides and protects my family to be safe and to live in peace and harmony. To gather the family and counsel them to help and contribute to the things that are happening in the family." He also specified that a Ta'imua leader exercises the value of ola magafagafa (being thoughtful, a desire to do and achieve something):

O le tofa foi lea e iai e tatau ona iai le tofa magafagafa, e saili ai le filemu ma le nofolelei o le aiga, o le aua nei fa'apologaina le aiga.

To have the tofa magafagafa (desire to do and achieve something) that can bring/create peace and harmony in the family. Also, a good Matai does not create too much burden for the family.

For Maota, the Ta'imua role was one of doing your best. He also emphasised the importance of ensuring the role remains a respected one.

If you are given the opportunity to speak, to give a lauga [traditional speech], you give it your best. You perform to the best of your Matai credential because you are representing your church, your village and family. You prepare your speech using words that are appropriate to say, [words] that suit the occasion.

Respect is important in the culture—the young Matai must show the senior Matai respect. A saying in Samoan that comes from my fanua [birthplace] is "E fesili Mulimai ia Muamai" | "A young Matai must ask the senior Matai for direction and advice." A good Matai shows respect by allowing and sharing opportunity with others."

Va'asilitele concurred:

Respect is an important value in the Samoa culture. No matter how big your Matai title is, if you don't show respect, you are nothing. The key is respect. Ia tausi mamalu [keeping your integrity intact]. Think about the words that you share; when you speak, speak with honour. In this way, you are honouring the culture and nurturing the relationship. Maintain the va tapuia—the sacred space.

Va'asilitele also saw a Ta'imua leader as someone with the ability to think clearly when endeavouring to solve problems.

A good Ta'imua leader is someone who has clear thinking. If someone does something wrong, he or she will talk to the family. If his or her family is doing something wrong, the Matai will talk to them and find ways to solve these issues. A good Matai has a good understanding of family issues and has the ability to consult and resolve family matters. He or she thinks deeply about solutions and strategies to guide the family.

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5.2.1.2 Tausimea (keeper of family treasures)

The primary meaning of tausimea is that of a gatekeeper. In the context of the village, this role refers to a Matai who is a keeper of family resources, of measina or taonga (treasures). These resources include family lands, titles, genealogy, family stories, and so on. As Poututoa said, Matai responsibilities involve taking care of family "belongings". This responsibility, he continued, is important to the family: "The responsibilities of the Matai involve taking care of their family history, the village history and the history of titles pertaining to the family." Amoatu, Lualua and Malotau respectively added:

> The roles and responsibilities pertaining to a tausimea include looking after
> his or her family, family lands, taking care of the nu'u, the church—and
> more.

> A family caretaker means a leader must look after his or her family taonga—
> measina, treasures—for example, ietoga, Matai titles, lands.

> [M]y duties as a Matai—I am my family tausimea.

Reflecting on the role of a tausimea in the village and family, Va'asilitele made a connection with how that same role might play out in schools:

> He or she is a good leader. He or she oversees everything for the protection
> of their family, a keeper of his or her family treasures. He or she distributes
> things equally among his or her family members. In the context of the school,
> school leadership can do the same. Like [in accordance with] the Fa'a-Matai,
> [chiefly ways], they take care of the teachers, maintain their relationships
> with teachers, strengthen their relationships with children, all for the
> collective purpose of the safety, health and wellbeing of the children. This all
> contributes to children's success in their education.

5.2.1.3 Tautua (service)

The Indigenous leaders voiced at length the importance of tautua in their roles as Matai in their villages. They also discussed how they learned service and the other skills of a Matai. Poututoa spoke about tautua in the context of her family: "Three key things my father told me to do. First to get my malu [female tattoo] done. Second, return to Samoa to serve my aiga [family] and thirdly look after my Matai title because it belongs to my aiga."

During our discussion of tautua during the Fa'afaletui, Maota said he learned about the importance of service and how to serve in his village when he was growing up there, and before he attained the title of Matai. Now, as a Matai, he said he was very aware of his role: "[W]hen I moved to New Zealand, I was already familiar with my role as a Matai because I learned a lot when I was growing up in Samoa as a taulealea [untitled man]. I learned a lot by attending the Matai meeting in the village."

Tufuga tapped into Maota's comments when he said that a good leader is one whose learning focuses first and foremost on service and serving. Learning to serve, he reminded all of us at the Fa'afaletui, starts from a young age. This learning never stops but continues on into an old age. Learning how to serve, Maota said, comes through observation and in the actual doing of service: "I became a Matai when I was a lot older. I did a lot of service when I was growing up—served my family, my village, my church and the community. To become a Matai, you must first serve."

Fititoa also spoke about the importance of learning to serve: "I grew up learning to serve … I was taught that when the umu [food from the oven] is lifted, I take a basket of food to the church minister's house, then to my family's chief. I hear the words of blessing from the minister and the chief—it felt good; it motivated me to carry on." When sharing other of his experiences growing up at home and learning to serve, Fititoa said his love of his culture grew from these early years as he observed others and learned from them how to serve. He also learned the role of a Matai at a very young age.

> Home was where I learned to sit down and listen. This was where I built my confidence to move into doing other roles, such as serving Matai in the village. It started from serving my own parents and family Matai. I sat at the back of the chiefs' meeting house and listened, learned to distribute the ava drink, and learned many tasks pertaining to serving Matai. I grew my love of the culture from here. I also learned that a Matai must serve and fulfil his or her duties with love. A Matai that demonstrates love is not selfish—[he or she] treats everyone the same.

Malotau spoke of the honour associated with becoming a Matai in his family. He saw the role of a Matai as a privileged calling that is steeped in service. He shared some of his experiences in this regard.

> I almost have ten Matai titles—titles that belong to my family that I have the honour of holding and keeping them as true measina [treasure]. I learned the

role of a Matai at a young age; learned from my father and other Matai of my aiga.

I have Matai duties pertaining to my family. I go to Samoa many times because I have a lot of Matai duties pertaining to my aiga. My family relies on me, on my advice and for putting into practice the things that need to be done, for example, family weddings, family funerals, building a new family home, etcetera.

Salemuliaga picked up on Malotau's comments about the role of Maitai who live away from home. That role meant continuing to serve one's family back home, despite the distance. "We all experience poverty in Samoa; we are all poor. We grow up with very limited money to do things, to fulfil our Matai duties. We are grateful that we come to New Zealand and work here and help our family back home; help put into practice our Matai duties." Salemuliaga went on to say that blessings come from serving one's family diligently: "We now live in New Zealand; we find out that the life here in New Zealand is not easy. Without a job, we cannot live. It is hard, but we know that if we work hard, God blesses us, particularly when we continue to serve our family diligently."

Fititoa agreed that a good Matai always serves with the true value of love: "A good leader fulfils his or her duties with love. He or she is a servant of God to lead his or her family with kindness." Malotau stressed, at this point in the discussion, the importance of serving with actions not just words: "Do not go out and say to your family that you are a paramount chief, but you don't serve. Service is the ultimate of all, not just words. My service at the time … [I was] a young Matai was to take care of the ava [ceremonial drink]," a role that included "distributing the ava during the ava ceremony". Malotau said that one of his current service-related roles was that of president of the Samoan Catholic Church in his local parish.

5.2.1.4 Teu le va (nurturing relationships)

Fitiao raised the importance of teu le va (nurturing the space for developing better relationships) as a component of leadership when he discussed the concepts of va fealoa'i (social relations or nurturing relationships) and va feavata'i (honouring the reciprocal space, that is, the space between). Knowing where to sit in the meeting house and when to speak is a sign of knowing appropriate social relations and the appropriate boundaries between people, which, when honoured, ensure teu le va. "I am a Matai. That means I need to remember and value the importance of nurturing relationships. As a young chief, I must know where I sit when the

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meeting is held and also [when it is] my time to speak. Same goes if I am a high-ranking chief. I must also know where to sit in the meeting house. I must know my position in the community." This "where to sit" is captured in a saying I often heard when I was growing up in my village in Samoa: "E sili lou iloa ole mea ete nofo ai nai lo le fa'atonu atu o oe e sese lou nofoaga" | "It is better for you to know where you are supposed to sit rather than being told by someone that you are sitting in the wrong place."

Malotau signalled the importance of respect between chiefs and untitled men. This type of respect, he explained, is part of building and ensuring good relationships between these two groups in the village: "Same as the relationship between the untitled men and the Matai. If this relationship is understood, respected, all is going well." Va'asilitele reminded us that teu le va leadership is very much a feature of family life, and the quality of that leadership can either work to the benefit or to the detriment of the family.

> It means that Matai leadership maintains and nurtures relationships within the family. Nurturing the space within the family; also the space outside the family, there is a role to play by the Matai, for example, be a mediator between the family and the village and continue to keep and maintain relationships. Poor leadership also impacts on family dysfunction. A Matai that values love, loves all family members; love [of a kind] that nurtures relationships and respect for each other. This keeps the family in unity, taking care of each other and continues to maintain peace and harmony.

5.2.1.5 Fa'asinomaga (identity)

The following saying captures the meaning of this type of identity within Fa'a-Samoa: "O le tagata ma lona aiga ole tagata fo'i ma lona fa'asinomaga" | "A person not only belongs to a family, he or she also belongs to his or her fa'asinomaga (identity)." Knowing and valuing your identity contributes to your own leadership credential and capability. This knowledge, so valuable for Indigenous leaders, can direct educational leaders in the same way. More specifically, it is critically important for any educational leader to understand the importance of knowing students' cultural identities and to lead accordingly.

For Fititoa, part of his identity as a Matai and a leader in his family meant being a guardian of one's Samoan identity, born of Samoan culture and language. That guardianship meant actively protecting and promoting both of these measina: "I grew up in the culture. This makes me happy to continue to embrace the culture and language. As a Matai, I am keen to

promote the culture and language to children in schools and the Samoan community." Poututoa pointed out that a "Matai is also referred to as a woman of the family … we take care of the family, also promote the culture and to value our Christian values. We now use Christian values all the time in bringing up our children and also the children of our children. Culture comes from God. It's a gift from God."

Maota saw one facet of his Matai identity as being that of taking care of untitled men in the village because they eventually become future chiefs required to serve their aiga and village: "Growing up in Samoa, I played an important role in looking after our Fa'ale-Aumaga [untitled men]; these are the young men who have left school and begin their tautua [service] for their families and the village. They are the future Matai for their aiga." Tufuga also said that a Tu'ua, a paramount chief in the village, gains his or her identity from the specific aspects of his or her role in the village: "A Tu'ua's role is responsible for looking after the village. He or she prioritises things that are important to do for the wellbeing of the village." Salemuliaga added that leadership identity is also imbued with giving and sharing: "We are taught in the culture to give and share things with others. E tupu pea fa'alavelave, e fa'aoloaina foi le tagata e limafoa'i. We are taught that when we share and give things to others, we are blessed with rewards in return."

Tufuga introduced another facet of identity when he expressed concern about the generation of Samoan children growing up in Aotearoa New Zealand. These children, he said, tended not to be interested in what their parents had done and been brought up with in Samoa: "We are the leaders in our family. We need to work within our families. We now leave our families behind, and we are here in New Zealand; we always remember what our parents taught and did for us. We taught our children with what our parents taught us. The issue is that the children who are brought up here are not interested in the things we taught them with—the traditional ways." Tufuga continued by saying that the role of parents is key in preparing a home environment that enables children to grow up in the culture. Matai, he said, also play an integral part in ensuring children embrace their culture and language:

> The cause for children not [being] interested falls on the family and the way
> things are led. E mafua mai lava la i le lotoifale o le aiga, mea lea tulou a le
> gagana, peitai e tatou te amata mai lava i se afiafi, fa'amaopoopo usu le pese
> o le lotu i Samoa, na feola mai ai. The way the Matai is leading the family [is
> vital]. Families often gather in the evening, sing hymns and say prayers. We
> were brought up this way.

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Salemuliaga also emphasised, as part of ensuring cultural identity, the importance of family members coming together to talk and for parents to model to their children the good things they did and learned when growing up:

> We bring our family members together and talk. We model this to our
> children. In the future, they will do the same. There are many changes we see
> here in New Zealand with our children growing up here. It is not easy. [We
> need to] continue to get connected with the children … [to see that] they grow
> up continu[ing] to maintain their cultures and traditions—the way we were
> brought up.

Poututoa agreed. She, too, spoke of cultural values and how she and the people she grew up were influenced and guided on how to live their lives: "We must be guided by our cultural values. These cultural values guide us and help us to be honest and do the right thing [and] at the same time perform cultural practices in the right way—[to] act with humility, not rely on your own knowledge but consider knowledge from others." She also echoed her earlier comments about Samoan culture being a gift from God, thus emphasising the importance she attributed to this aspect of Samoan identity. For her, God imbues every aspect of Samoan life: "Continue to connect with your family effectively. We are selected by our family to be Matai. It doesn't mean that we take full control of everything. Culture is a gift that comes from God; it is part of our identity and our belonging."

5.2.2 Pacific Community Leaders in Aotearoa

Four themes became apparent from scrutiny of the transcripts of the 10 Pacific community leaders' Talanoa dialogue: tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), fa'asinomaga (identity), and alafua (vision).

5.2.2.1 Tautua (service)

This group saw tautua as the means by which to fulfil their leadership responsibilities. The following comment from Sieni was typical of how the community leaders defined their service-related role: "I define my role as a leader starting from my service to my family, church, community, and the educational context as well. So, I see leadership as giving service." Although some of the community leaders did not use the word tautua, it was clear from what they said that they viewed themselves as "servants", that is, in service to their community,

which is essential to the concept of tautua. Sione, Filipo and Sieni, respectively used the words "service" and "serve" when discussing tautua.

> In our church, I'm the leader for the men in our congregation. My role is not to lead, it is to serve. I am a humble servant. I assist the bishop wherever he may need assistance and to cater for our families and their needs, their struggles, whatever difficulties they may face, that's where I go in. I try to decipher any ways in which we can assist them, any activities that can be correlated by myself to try and assist these families.

> It was no big surprise that I moved into education regarding teachers because service and running for our kids, there's always a purpose for that, and then moving into our role as school support advisors at the Ministry [of Education].

> I strongly believe that my obligation as a leader is to serve and ensure that teachers who are working with our Pacific families and whānau and community demonstrate their understanding of cultural awareness and are interacting with families to truly understand their reality.

Most of the leaders used a range of other words associated with the concept of tautua when endeavouring to define their roles as leaders. These words included, among others, influencer, mentor, encourager, navigator, bridge, explorer and instrument. Mareko, for example, was the leader who introduced the notion of leaders as a bridge:

> I see a lot of the things I do in the community is to act as a bridge, a conduit to help our parents [and] our grandparents understand the New Zealand context but also to ensure that their stories aren't lost by our New Zealand generation…. I'm not strong in Samoan language capability and so when I say a bridge, or a bringer of perspective, it would be around being able to navigate where our matua [parents] come from regarding the islands, their culture and everything they bring that defines their identity, but then also bridging it with the context of growing up, living in, New Zealand.

Alofa saw her service-related leadership role as that of an influencer, especially in terms of educational policies and decisionmaking: "I think [my role is] firstly as an influencer, in terms of influencing decisions and influencing policies that contribute to the positive outcomes

for Pasifika learners and their communities. So that's [acting] strategically and then to equip and to empower."

Vili considered his role to be that of an "instrument", committed to ensuring the wellbeing of the community. "I see myself probably best described as an instrument. An instrument in use between the community, in all areas…. An instrument to guide and mentor. An instrument to be used to give advice, and to advocate the understanding of community relationship … being able to advocate and share information between the Cook Islands community and schools and organisations."

Tama used a variety of words when talking about his leadership role, among them encourager, motivator and navigator.

> I work as an advisor and encourager, to help encourage them [community, schools, organisations] and motivate them. Our ancestors never gave up easily; they fight and keep on fighting to reach their destiny…. In our community, I work as a navigator, influencer, mentor. I put myself as a navigator. You need to have big ears to listen and a big heart to forgive, and then sometimes you come across tough situations and [you need] to have a type of view [about these situations], whether it's a microscopic view, or a telescopic view, and then make your judgement.

Filipo and Sieni both used the concept of a builder when discussing their roles as leaders in their communities. They set the builder notion within the contexts of providing service to their respective aiga and community, and of building the leadership capacities of others. Filipo said: "I believe I'm a builder. Our job is to build our home here where we are so that our family can come here and be a part of the community and create a space where they feel comfortable and create new explorers who are going to go into new pathways, whether that's new careers or different places." Sieni followed on with: "[I see myself] as a builder, and I was just thinking about my role is to grow new leaders into leadership roles. That's important because what's happening now with our group is we're getting a wee bit old, so we need to bring others to be here."

The concepts of builder and explorer appeared to be important ones for Filipo because he again referred to both later in the dialogue, this time linking them to education: "So, that's been a big part of our focus in education, I suppose. Building new leadership and new explorers… I see our role here is to explore new pathways, new careers, new opportunities,

where people aren't, and to create a pathway there and then to build a new place for us. That's a key part."

Amosa embraced his Christian values when speaking of giving service to his community: "But I think the development of the ministerial role is my experience of what's happening with the work that I've been doing. A role that is very much guided by our Christian values, cultural values, family values, community values, and aligned with the will of God, which I will refer to as the Tofa Paia." He also emphasised the need to provide service through actions, not just words: "[A]ctions speak louder than words. You have to put those words into action during the work in relationships, in service to the people. It's an action work, not just a service."

Like Filipo and Sieni, Vili considered leaders' service role as being one that helps others to help themselves, or, more specifically, helping others achieve their goals: "But also a sense of appreciation at the end of the goal, that I've contributed a little bit to that individual, to that view of the community of 'being better' in what they do. Basically, where that phrase is a 'better life'. I think, coming back to that … [aspect of a] Cook Island proverb … 'To have a strong foundation' and 'rising to the occasion'."

Together, the service-related comments from the community leaders positioned tautua as a powerful space in the Soalaupulega discourse. For them, the essence of leadership is to serve the needs of others and is thus a key leadership quality that enriches the lives of those who receive this support.

5.2.2.2 Teu le va (nurturing relationships)

Teu le va (nurturing the space to develop good relationships) was another prominent theme for the community leaders. Sieni spoke for all of them when he discussed the importance of reciprocal relationships. "Again, relationships—respect, love, spirituality—are all embedded in that… [If] they [leaders] get that and lead from the heart, then I'm sure we will have lots of our Pacific families who will be successful in this world."

5.2.2.3 Fa'asinomaga (identity)

The importance of schools valuing Pacific students' identities was voiced by community leaders in a variety of ways. Mareko emphasised the need for schools to provide Pacific students with a safe cultural environment where they could see themselves and be confident in their cultural identities: "It's that whole mindset around how we value our kids and make them feel safe, culturally safe. That would be an environment that our kids would want to go to."

Alofa considered that a key to empowering Pacific students within schools was teachers and school leaders actively recognising the cultural backgrounds of these young people. "Teachers and principals recognise each Pasifika has his or her own cultural background. They need to try and recognise that." Tama expanded on Alofa's point when he said that empowerment comes from teachers' understanding of Pacific students' cultural identities:

> Because often our kids leave their culture at their gates, and they come in and put the uniform on and they're someone else, and the Palagi teachers ask, "How come they're naughty with us but they're always respectful and they always listen to what you say? Is it because you're a man?" No, the reason is because I understand them, and you don't, and that's not always evident in our non-Pacific teachers.

Mareko then added: "So, I see my role as being able to use that knowledge and understanding as well as my Samoan aganu'u [culture] to be able to unpack and explain concepts and ideas to our community so that they can better understand and be better empowered." Tama agreed, saying that once "teachers … understand the students and understand the reality of the students … then it's easy to nurture and teach them."

Alofa also alluded to the value of "knowing the learner" and the power that this knowledge brings to finding solutions for students' educational needs.

> It is important [for teachers] to know their learners. If they don't know their learners, they don't know their needs. So if they start from being culturally responsive, they'll know the needs and they'll know how to identify and provide solutions for those needs so that our Pasifika students can have a better start; the [solution] first starts with them [the teachers]. They [the teachers] can have the pedagogy to go with them, but it first starts with them [the students], with their dispositions.

Tama brought to the discussion the importance of Pacific people knowing and valuing their identity: "Every Pacific Island person should know where they come from, their village, their roots, their aiga, etcetera. They should be proud of who they are and carry their family name with pride and respect." He also referred to the need for others to understand the significance of spirituality in the identities of people from Pacific Island nations, and how this identity helps guide young people through life: "Spirituality—every child who was born and brought up in the Islands would have a spiritual relationship with God. They will come to know

and understand that God is the master of their ships and the knowledge that God is at the helm of our ships can give us assurance and good directions in life and during turbulent times.

5.2.2.4 Alafua (vision)

Several members of the community leaders' participant group spoke of the need for leaders to have a vision or goal and to be able to readily convey that vision to others. Vili expressed these ideas as follows: "For me, one thing of having effective leadership is vision. A vision of being able to see in front—where you want to go. The second thing is some leaders, they talk at this level, [but] the community is down here. Imagine that gap from this level to the community—they won't understand that [i.e., what the leader is saying]."

The community leaders also spoke of visionary leaders being people who, having determined how to realise that vision, can lead their communities towards it by example—by "setting the sail for navigation". Tama, for instance, said: "I think when I lead by example, they can see me, and the family sees, and then the community sees and starts to follow. That's why it's very important when you're trying to navigate and advocate in your community and influence your community because they've seen it in you." Filipo similarly characterised a visionary leader as someone with a clear understanding of where people in his or her community were heading or should be heading and where those courses might take them: "For effective leadership, our leaders have to know where we're going and what is the outcome of where we are going. It's important to make a difference in individuals' lives but when you're talking as a leader, you've got to have that vision of where you are going and of the impact you're going to make."

Picking up on "making a difference in individuals' lives", Alofa said visionary leaders are "enablers", that is, people who can guide their communities to achieve success in all they do: "I think first of all [this role is] to be an enabler to the communities … enabling them to reach whatever they desire, whatever they see as being successful."

On a practical note, Mareko pointed out that leaders within schools working to implement actions intended to achieve specified goals need to ensure a monetary budget is in place that supports realisation of the vision.

> We need leaders who have caught the vision … they know and understand.
> They don't need to be experts, but they just have to know and understand and
> then allow that support to happen within their school because it doesn't
> matter how much a teacher tries to push things, if you don't have a budget

and the principal doesn't sign their budget, then that work is not going to

happen.

5.2.3 School Principal Leaders

Of the eight themes, six emerged from analysis of the transcribed "voices" of the school principals during my one-on-one interviews with them. These themes, all of which related to school and other educational contexts, were tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), alafua (vision), auala a'oa'o (pedagogy), loto ma le agaga (emotional and spiritual connections) and fa'asinomaga (identity).

5.2.3.1 Tautua (service)

The principals discussed tautua in terms of "service" or "being a servant" in school communities. The leaders all felt that if they were knowingly making a positive difference to Pacific students' learning, health and wellbeing, then that provided them with the motivation to continue to serve. Comments from Mataio and Pola, respectively, provide examples of this take on principals' service-related roles:

So, my role really is to lead the community towards learning and being a servant of the community, so helping the community in any way I can.

My role is to serve others. That's servant leadership. To serve and to grow others, I think is the most important thing in my role. I'm there to serve our community and [to] try and ensure that those children learn, but [that they] also develop a real pride in their school and a real connection to their school, because that will enhance learning…. If they're wanting to come to school, they're going to want to. It's not just [about the] academic; we're not a university. There's got to be that connection to where that's [the learning] happening.

Iulia spoke enthusiastically of her role as a "servant leader", which for her involved providing pastoral care for children and families. "My style is that of a servant leader. I like to work with families. I support their pastoral needs, around making sure there's food and clothing, anything the family needs, really. Anything that is going to support their children."

Although the service and servant concepts loomed large in the scripts, the principals also saw their servant role as making connections and maintaining unity. Paulo, for example, said, "My primary role is creating those positive connections so that we can all support one

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another. We need to make everyone join in because if there are any little resistances or negativity, then those things only spread." Ropeti, reflecting on the service role, called himself a leader of learning: "I'm here as a leader of learning, too. So we've had a constant focus over the last five years on using student data and research to improve teaching learning practice to accelerate progress and achievement for our learners."

Several school leaders characterised their service roles in other terms, specifically motivators, listeners, energisers, cheerleaders and leaders able to unlock students' potential. Penina, for example, brought four of these roles into her description of her overarching service role: "I see my role as a school leader to kind of be the motivator and energiser to keep the team feeling like we're on the right track and guiding that position…. It's almost like I'm a bit of a cheerleader sometimes. You cheer at everything, celebrating it, and making sure that people feel like they're on the right track and confident."

Malo also brought in the "unlocking potential" analogy, but ended his comments related to it with questions:

> So, for me, one of the main things I would say that drives me, if I had to pick
>
> one, it would be unlocking potential in other people. So that would be trying
>
> to find things and ways to grow and help and support parents, children,
>
> teachers, the whole lot, not just focusing on one group particularly, but how
>
> do we do that? How do I unlock potential in other people?

Pola also considered helping children fulfil their potential as a vital and motivating part of his leadership role. "It motivates me, by wanting to see children fulfil their potential. They're not all going to be academics or whatever, but it's getting the most, you know, fulfilling their potential, what they have."

5.2.3.2 Teu le va (nurturing relationships)

The school leaders' ideas about principals' roles with respect to teu le va typically focused on the need for facilitating and maintaining trust between and among teachers, students, families and communities. Penina was just one of the principals who spoke of the need to build trusting relationships not only with students but also with their families and communities: "I mean that's essential in our school, not for the staff, but for our kids and our families to trust us to build those relationships. Yeah, that positivity, that presence, and developing those relationships where people trust you."

That trust, however, as Pola explained, relied on understanding the realities of life for Pacific families and offering them whatever support possible and whatever the families considered appropriate:

> … and then relationships, you know, that's, again, kind of the core. And it was kind of that relationship building before we can get into the nitty gritty and talk about, you know, how can I help you? How can I understand what's going on for you? You know that Mum's got two jobs and Dad's working night shift … so there's actually no one in the home until eight o'clock, or nine o'clock in the morning. It's understanding that, and so therefore how can I help that? I think for our Pasifika families, they trust me because I make sure their Pasifika group is happening. So, then they feel like, "Oh, the school's acknowledging our options."

At a later point during my interview with him, Pola returned to this theme: "I don't know if there's a simple, easy answer to that [advancing student success] but I think definitely trusting relationships makes a big difference for our families and feeling that they're valued in our school communities."

Penina spoke of the need to remember "the little things" that build positive relationships: "It's just that smile when they come to the gate. It could be just a nice thing you say. You never know what piece of the day is going to be something that kid will remember forever or make a difference to them forever."

5.2.3.3 Alafua (vision)

Like the members of the two other participant groups, the principals considered a clear vision a paramount aspect of strong leadership. However, the principals saw that version as one specifically related to guiding the direction of the school. That said, each of them generally talked about this type of vision in different ways.

For Melani, the school vision needed to be one set in collaboration with the community: "And so we came up with the vision of 'grow', which is our kids growing as healthy and happy learners. And then as the school opened, and we built our community around us, we've been constantly reviewing with the community whether this vision meets the needs of the community as well." She explained that while the vision needed to be "shaped collectively", she had, as part of her capacity as a leader, integrated her own values in its formulation. "[T]he vision is collective. As a leader, you bring to it your own values, your morals, and your ethics

and what you want to happen for all children and the opportunities you want to give them and the affordances and you know what you want them to then contribute back into the community, the wider community as well. So, it's a unique opportunity [for the leader]."

Penina spoke convincingly of the value that principals with a clear vision can bring to students' learning. "My vision will be that every kid wakes up in the morning and can't wait to get to school because we're offering something here that they want to be part of, and they feel they have some control and leadership and ownership of." Pola also embraced this type of vision and expressed it in terms of guiding students towards the future: "It's about trying to create as many 'green lights' down the track as possible. So that's about being able to see where you're heading and having that long-term vision of where you want to go."

Malo was firm in his conviction of the need for a relevant, accurate, realistic vision and of the need for school leaders to simultaneously oversee and protect that vision through to achievement of the goals "set down" in that vision.

> As a leader, you've got to have a vision, and it's got to be a relevant, accurate vision. So, if that's where you're headed, and [you have] your mission statement, because a vision is set out there … [then] your mission statement is what you are doing to achieve your vision. So, you've got to have a good vision to keep the ship basically headed toward achieving what that vision is…. So, we've got our vision, we've got our values, we've got our guiding principles, and we have our graduate profile, and we've got our strategic goals, all headed to where we're going. So, I say [it's all about] keeping the vision, protecting the school's culture, unlocking potential in other people. Measuring and celebrating success is a key thing that I think that leaders should be doing.

When discussing her thoughts on what leaders' visions should include, Melani said these should be about creating equal opportunities for students, with these opportunities taking the form of pathways: "So, irrespective of where they're born, colour of their skin, the family's values, that they all have opportunities, and can go on and be successful. And university might be a pathway, Ara [Institute of Canterbury] might be a pathway, working on a farm might be a pathway, but you're enabling those equal opportunities for everybody."

5.2.3.4 Auala a'oa'o (pedagogy)

The school leaders' pedagogy-related comments revolved around the pedagogical practices the leaders thought improved children's learning and their role, as leaders, in promoting and maintaining those practices within their schools. Paulo and Melani both said it was up to them to recruit and retain pedagogically proficient teachers in their schools. "My role," Paulo emphasised, "is to make sure the teachers are doing a good job, that they're using effective pedagogical practices, that they are culturally competent, that they care about children, that school is a fun place to be and that we're providing a lot of rich, deep learning."

Melani stated that her "responsibility … [was] to put the best teachers in front of the children, so [we have] teachers who really know their pedagogy and are effective practitioners, and they can build relationships. If they can't do that, then they're not going to be effective teachers." Melani went on to discuss the juncture between effective teaching in theory and in practice:

> What I've learned as a teacher is the theory behind effective teaching and learning. And, you know, what is going to make a difference for children. And then how you bring that theory into reality. If this is what we believe is good for kids, and if this is what we want them to achieve, what does that look like in the classroom? What will our teachers be teaching? How will our children be learning? So, it's all [about] perceived reality versus what actually happens in classrooms.

Pola introduced the notion of enthusiasm in relation to competent teaching: "[F]or me, the biggest thing that a teacher can bring to the classroom is enthusiasm and energy. If they're dragging themselves into there and don't really want to be there, they might as well not be there. It's acting; the classroom's your stage, so you've got to go [get into it]." As he continued talking about his ideas on enthusiasm, Pola said that principals need to know their teaching staff and their levels of enthusiasm for their teaching. If a teacher's enthusiasm was lagging or not as it should be, then the principal needed to advise and support: "It's more of a coaching conversation than a "get out" sort of thing. It's certainly not that. It's knowing those staff, knowing who you've got to put your arm around and walk alongside and those you've gotta wag your finger at. That's leadership, I guess."

Paulo talked at length about pedagogy for the "whole child". His strong sense of the knowledge and dispositions he wanted children to leave their school years with was readily apparent in what he said:

[Our job is to] lead curriculum and to educate the whole child, and at our school, we've sort of broken that down to strong language, identity and culture. And every child will be fit, healthy and have a strong sense of wellbeing. That they'll have high-quality academic and key competency skills. They'll have a good understanding of tikanga Māori and te reo, as [part of their] living in a bicultural country.

Paulo also considered reviewing students' progress and planning ahead to be essential features of effective pedagogy.

So, looking at what are the areas of need in the school and collecting a whole lot of data around that, both academically and socially. And then planning: "Well, how are we going to solve those issues? What are the solutions to those issues? What could we do better?" And then looking at them and reviewing those things. So, that's how I sort of see the cognitive—thinking— [side of pedagogy]. It's really around creating systems that allow you to constantly review….

I think just ensuring that Pasifika culture is reflected in our curriculum, and also in everything that we do. That our teachers gain a greater understanding of our Pasifika learners, because it's ever changing as well. The children that are coming through now are not like the Pasifika students of ten years ago. So, it's the type of thing … [where] you actually need to get to know your community. You can't read it in a book. You can understand some of the backgrounds, but you really need to know the backgrounds of those learners in front of you….

We look after our students and learners. Yeah, it's no one thing, it's multiple things, but just working together as a team and allowing our teachers to understand that they're [the children are] all of our children, and that we're all responsible for our children and we do our best every day to create opportunities for them to do well.

For Malo and Mataio, effective pedagogy called on school leaders and teachers to be culturally responsive to their students and to unlock their potential. Malo spoke enthusiastically about culturally responsive practices: "So, my leadership and my thinking has really been that

we need to develop, firstly, culturally responsive processes but then culturally sustainable [ones]. So, it must be genuine, and it has to be maintained. We need to make everyone join in." He said the need to unlock students' potential was constantly on his mind and part of his strategic thinking as a leader.

> Whereas … I think to myself, unlocking potential in other people is a critical thing that I do. Have I done that today? Have I done that this week? Who have I unlocked the potential of? Have I measured and celebrated success this week? Have I protected the culture? Have I talked about the vision? Have we moved toward it? So, it's kind of like being strategic.

Mataio considered pedagogy effective when it responded successfully to each learner's uniqueness: "It's really our philosophy for our learning, which is just valuing, seeing the image of a child as being incredible, innovative, creative, unique. And if you believe that children are like that, then that changes the role of the teacher." Mataio also expressed the need for teachers to treat each child as an individual and to tailor their teaching practice to meet the needs of each child as "knowing the learner" and having high expectations: "So that we're not treating everybody the same. We have high expectations for everybody, but actually [because] people are different, too, so it's knowing your learner."

Picking up again on the matter of students as individuals with diverse learning and other needs, Malo said that, as a leader in his school, he tried to relate to his staff the same way—to see them as unique individuals, and to treat them in the same supportive way that he wanted them to relate to their students. "So, to motivate staff, they need to feel valued, they need to feel trusted and respected, they need to be given strong professional development opportunities. They need to have modelled [for them], how to celebrate … I think I told you the other day, we have celebrations every Friday morning as part of our staff meeting and [during this time] the teachers are celebrating the children."

Penina valued the importance of celebrating little successes as a school, as part of ways to motivate learners: "Key for us as a school is celebrating the little successes because there's always things going wrong. Things are never perfect but celebrating what's going well and reminding teachers that they're actually influencing a kid's life [is important]." She continued by valuing the contribution teachers can make: "I think that's motivating for our teachers to know they're changing the directions of people's lives, what their future will look like, so I think that is motivating in itself."

Pola said he used an analogy when reminding teachers of the importance of how they taught: "Talk to the staff. It's about a wee tomato plant; we don't see the tomatoes, but we've got to create that strong wee stem and those first few leaves, so then when we pass that plant on [we know] that it's encouraged and nurtured and ready to flourish."

5.2.3.5 Fa'asinomaga (identity)

Like all the school principals, Mataio spoke with concern and conviction during discussion on valuing children's individual identities. What he said was typical of commentary from the other seven school leaders. Mataio used an analogy to emphasise the need to recognise and embrace a child's cultural identity, to see it as a taonga for them and a catalyst for facilitating their learning:

> I think we're missing the point as educators and school leaders if we show those cultures no value. We're damaging the children from those cultures, and we're damaging those cultures. And we're sort of blowing out other candles just to make ours look a bit brighter. But, in actual fact, what we should be doing is feeding all those other flames and making the whole place brighter. We actually bring the light level down by snuffing out all those other things that could be shining. So, I think, for me, we're missing the point; we don't value the wonderful things that are part of those Pasifika cultures.

Mataio also said that he considered culture to be children's strength: "I think it's really important to show value to cultures, Pasifika cultures, and look at the strengths that they have had over thousands of years and bring those into a modern context."

5.2.3.6 Loto ma le agaga (emotional and spiritual connections)

The school principals agreed that their leadership role meant showing genuine emotion in the form of caring about and understanding the situations experienced by Pacific students and their families. The principals consequently saw the value in learning about and appreciating the students' and their families' connection to emotional values. As Iulia said, showing your feelings as a leader is a positive thing to do because people know that you have empathy for them: "I think that comes down to just showing families and the kids that we care, and just have a smile out there, share a smile with them. And don't be afraid to show your feelings. I think that's all part of it. This life is part of having a family and that's important for them as well."

Iulia also said, however, that showing empathy for the students' families was not always easy: "I'm a good one for wearing my heart on my sleeve, anyways, so I have a great deal of empathy for our families. I'm able to relate to them and help support them in that way as well. It's one of my greatest assets, but it's also probably my biggest negative as well because I can feel deeply about the people and their situations."

Paulo agreed that empathy, especially for "at-risk children", can take an emotional toll on principals: "The emotional things in the job do take their toll as far as a principal goes, because you're constantly trying to weigh up the greater good of the whole staff versus the greater good of the one child. So we do have a lot of empathy for particularly at-risk children." Paulo thought one way that principals could cope with this emotional toll was to be honest about their feelings with themselves and with others: "[B]ut pretty much it's just do the best you can. And I think if people see you being vulnerable sometimes … [you can] say, 'Well, look, I'm tired at the moment. I can't deal with this right now.' It's just giving those examples."

Paulo also reminded me, when he used a well-known adage in education, of just how important it is for school leaders and teachers to consider the long-term effect they can have on children's emotional wellbeing: "Children won't always remember what you taught them,' Paulo said, "but they'll remember how you made them feel." In similar vein, Paulo said that principals need to understand teachers' emotional triggers and to support them when they experience difficulties, whether at school or at home: "Just connecting, I suppose, on an emotional level with staff as well and understanding the same thing, understanding about their family and their children and things that might be going on in their life. So, it's being a person first and then a principal second."

The principals also spoke of the value of spirituality and what it meant in the lives of their Pacific children and their families. Ropeti, for example, described how he learned about Pacific peoples' connection to spirituality:

> [Regarding] the importance of the church and service to others … it wasn't until we visited the Islands that I really, really connected, and this is a real thing. Just seeing all those churches everywhere was because it's such a big part of everyone's life. So, I think, I mean, I get that, and I think the older I get, possibly the more spiritual I am becoming, but you know, I'll continue on that myself personally.

Pola introduced the concept of love. Showing care for children, he said, made them feel comfortable in the classroom. This type of care, he went on, is part of spiritual value:

… but coming back to this spiritual value, I think we all require love, and it's providing an environment where that is embraced. Where the children feel comfortable in that. And whether that's children giving you a hug or whatever it happens to be, I think we get protective of that or push them at appeal. We've got to, especially as males, protect ourselves … but a child running up and giving an adult a hug is the most natural thing in the world.

Iulia considered Pacific children well connected to spiritual values. She saw her leadership role in relation to these values as that of leading by example: "Children can see that I live by what I believe. And I can lead by example. We're able to share prayer, faith-based opportunities together. And I know it's not necessarily spiritual in the religious sense, but the religion thing just all ties in for me as well. Which has a different dimension to our understanding and the connection with our people as well." Pola connected spiritual values with children's drive and motivation to do well. "It's that connection there. It's not always when there's bad news. It's when there's good news. We're just talking about your child and we both want the same thing. We want your child to do the very best that they can. So, I guess that can be wrapped up as the spiritual, you know, just looking out for them and wanting the best for people."

5.3 Chapter Summary

My analysis of the discussions with and between the members of my three groups of research participants—the Indigenous leaders, the Pacific community leaders and school principal leaders—provided an overview of their lived realities as leaders as well as a strong indication of what they saw as important leadership capacities in relation to the educational achievement and wellbeing of Pacific students.

All three groups had in common the leadership-related themes of tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), and fa'asinomaga (identity), but differed in the remaining five. The themes of ta'imua (leading from the front) and tausimea (keeper of family treasures) emerged only from analysis of the Indigenous Samoan leaders' transcripts; alafua (vision) only from the community leaders' and teachers' transcripts; and auala a'oa'o (pedagogy) and agaga ma le loto (emotional and spiritual connections) only from the school principals' transcripts.

Overall, the findings in Foafoa 5 revealed some convincing messages and themes of relevance to my two research questions. I discuss these messages and themes in relation to

those questions in Foafoa 6. This next Foafoa essentially serves as a weaving together of possible reasons for the three common themes and five different themes across all groups, and the implications of the findings for the type of leadership potentially valuable to enhancing learning and wellbeing outcomes for Pacific children in Aotearoa New Zealand schools.

The sound of the conch shell continues as we move into Foafoa 6, discussion of the findings.

Foafoa 6

Auili'ili'ina o Fa'aiuga

Discussion of Findings

Fofola le fala se'i ta talanoa (Samoan)
Fofola e fala kae talanoa e kāinga (Tongan)
Spread the mat and prepare to talk

6.1 Introduction

Ua ili le Foafoa—the conch shell has blown; ua tu'u i tai le va'a tele—the big canoe has launched and is ready to embark; ma ua fofola fo'i le fala ma tapena mo le Fa'atofalaiga—and the Mat of Soalaupulega, woven from the leadership themes introduced in Foafoa 5, is now rolled out ready for dialogue in this Foafoa of my doctoral thesis. I think of these themes as measina or taonga (treasures) because my intention is to see them used to help resolve the educational difficulties and challenges Pacific students continue to experience in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Such help is key to the 'talatalaina o le upega lavelave' untangling the tangled net of Pacific students' disengagement from schooling and associated educational underachievement. Once these important concerns are effectively addressed, I am confident Pacific students will be able to secure good employment, to fully engage in the economy and society, and to bring prosperity and wellbeing to themselves, their families and communities.

The voices of the three groups of leaders who participated in my doctoral research highlighted eight major themes or treasures (measina), namely ta'imua (lead from the front), tausimea (keeper of treasures), tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), fa'asinomaga (identity), ta'iala (vision), auala a'oa'o (pedagogy), and agaga ma le loto (emotional and spiritual connections). Their answers to my questions and their comments, all

derived from their moana loloto o mafaufauga (ocean of deep thinking), which yielded the penina o tomai ma agava'a loloto (pearls of knowledge and wisdom) so essential for this Soalaupulega. The Samoan saying, "O le tuamafa lava sa fili i malae" | "choose the best wood pigeon to feed the paramount chiefs," refers to well thought-through ideas and perspectives carefully voiced and presented for the weaving of solutions. This "voicing" is accomplished during the Soalaupulega and in readiness for the launch and embarkment of the va'a tele, the big canoe that metaphorically speaks of preparing families and the village to live in peace and harmony through trials and hardship.

My identification of and now, in this Foafoa, interpretation of the themes came from my reading and rereading of the participants' voices, which I conducted according to my Samoan culture-specific way of thinking and processing information. This thinking is particular to me as a traditional Samoan researcher who was born and grew up in Samoa, a place with hundreds of years of epistemology—of ways of thinking, talking, acting, behaving, interpreting information, and meaning-making in keeping with Fa'a-Samoa (the Samoan way). This epistemology is my way of being, and it differs from that of anyone born elsewhere. My interpretation of the participants' voices is therefore also distinctly my own.

Within Samoan culture, metaphorical thinking has a centrality in how information is processed. This type of thinking therefore comes to me naturally. Metaphorical understanding means that my interpretation of the participants' voices has varied layers of meaning within the contextualising and crystalising of their spoken "texts". My interpretation of the themes is completely different to how someone not connected to metaphorical thinking would interpret those text. Metaphor not only gave me a tool with which to dig deeper and wider but also a way for me to show my full respect towards my research participants' contributions.

6.2 Interpretation of Themes Against Research Questions

The following discussion focuses on my research aims, which were to identify the key educational leadership qualities needed for improving the educational outcomes, health and wellbeing of Pacific learners in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. As mentioned in Foafoa 5, three of the eight themes emerged from the data for all three groups of participants, while the remaining five differed across the groups, as evident in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Key themes of the Fala of Soalaupulega by participant group

Themes	Participant group
1. Ta'imua (lead from the front)	Indigenous leaders
2. Tausimea (keeper of measina, treasures)	Indigenous leaders
3. Tautua (service)	Indigenous leaders Community leaders School principal leader
4. Teu le va (nurturing relationships)	Indigenous leaders Community leaders School principal leaders
5. Fa'asinomaga (identity)	Community leaders School principal leaders
6. Ta'iala (vision)	Indigenous leaders Community leaders School principal leaders
7. Auala a'oa'o (pedagogy)	School principal leaders
8. Agaga ma le loto (emotional and spiritual connections)	School principal leaders

6.2.1 Themes 1 and 2

Only the Indigenous Samoan leaders identified and discussed Themes 1 ta'imua (lead from the front) and 2 tausimea (keeper of treasures). This finding did not surprise me because, as Indigenous Matai from Samoa, they had culture-specific location experience and Fa'a-Samoa knowledge about these concepts. These Matai model the concepts and roles of ta'imua and tausimea on a daily basis and use them as part of their mana-enhanced leadership within their cultural contexts. The traditions and expectations associated with these two leadership capacities are ones passed down from generation to generation.

As I premised in Foafoa 1 of this thesis, if educational leaders, including school and initial teacher education leaders, are to improve Pacific students' learning outcomes, they must be strong advocates of culturally responsive practices. By motivating and inspiring teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand schools, where Pacific students are often a minority as well as a marginalised group, leaders enable the teachers to explicitly demonstrate that they value and understand the cultural values and principles of these young people. As a consequence, the

students and their families and communities are more likely to feel at ease and to know that they and their culture are an important and valued part of the school. Embracing Pacific cultures, languages, and styles of leadership thus becomes a vital means of improving not only Pacific students' learning outcomes but also their health and wellbeing indices. Integral to Pacific students' motivation is the knowledge that they are in a safe and welcoming place of learning because that place is one where school leaders, teachers and the wider school culture value and respect the students' cultures and knowledge.

I now explore and discuss, in turn, Themes 1 and 2 within the context of the Indigenous Samoan leaders' thoughts and dialogue about them. The leaders referred to in these sections are all members of that participant group (for details about them, see Table 4.1 in Foafoa 4).

6.2.1.1 Theme 1: Ta'imua (lead from the front)

The Indigenous Samoan leaders discussed the concept of ta'imua in these terms: to lead, to take the lead, to be at the front of or, in a more cohesive way, to lead from the front by "walking the talk", setting an example, and being a role model. As Malotau said: "When I go to my family discussion, I go with the knowledge that I will play a leading role. As a Matai, you set a good example—by walking the talk with actions not just words. [You] must demonstrate your words through actions." In my earlier research on effective school leaders in New Zealand schools (Taleni, 2017), I identified a "true leader" in education as an *effective* leader, that is, a leader with high integrity (aloaia, mana) and standing, who is driven by culturally responsive principles, values, and aspirations and appreciation and understanding of students' worldviews.

Lalovi spoke about what leading his village and family meant in practice: "My key role as a Matai in my village includes a responsibility for leading a village malaga [a cultural visit] to another village. That means I am taking a lead role in the malaga and that includes a speaking role on the behalf of our village. My Matai title is known in the village and the district as a Ta'imua—a leading chief." The hierarchical nature of the role of a Matai in each village means that certain Matai are given the specific and key responsibility of leading the village malaga to another village. This leadership role is important because it demonstrates the true essence and value of a Ta'imua leader who leads from the front. The malaga gives the village the opportunity to showcase their own status and strengths in terms of exchanging and orchestrating cultural knowledge and practices and drawing connections through gafa (cultural links and genealogy). Malaga also provide opportunity to maintain good relationships with neighbouring villages.

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By working collaboratively, leaders across villages weave together important aspects of strong collegial relationships, share resources and maintain enduring partnerships that continue to promote and strengthen the culture for upcoming generations. In the same way, leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand schools can connect with leaders in neighbouring schools and facilitate elements of healthy competitiveness (such as in sporting events) across the communities from which they draw their students. The underlying principle is very much one of sharing expertise and resources to foster a sense of community. Building such relationships helps strengthen and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole and is consequently, according to all members of the Indigenous Samoan leaders group, an imperative role of the Ta'imua leader.

A Ta'imua is primarily a leader who values the importance of Samoan cultural knowledge, who cares about learning and reserving knowledge to share with others. A common saying in Samoa related to the art of tattooing is "Ta muamua lou gutu, ona ta ai lea o lau tatau," which means, tattoo your mouth first (ta lou gutu) before you get your full tattoo; in other words, first learn the language and gain the cultural knowledge. Thus, when leading the village, a Ta'imua must lead with dignity and with the mana (integrity) that comes from knowledge of the culture. Those who participate in these cultural exchanges can hear the mana of the Ta'imua coming through strongly. Seeing the role of a Ta'imua being orchestrated through all the values of Fa'a-Samoa is empowering, inspiring and motivating for young emerging Samoan leaders.

During discussion on this matter, Indigenous Samoan leader Poututoa added her conviction that a good Ta'imua is someone who "sets good examples for new generations coming through—scaffolding them for the future." Her voice speaks to the importance of maintaining the vitality of the culture to ensure that leaders constantly keep their eye on future generations; such leaders are always thoughtful in their thinking and vision for these generations and always focused on the long-term.

The wider literature provides theories about and discussion of many different styles of educational leadership, particularly those evident in schools. The research shows that democratic leadership, which enables teachers to experience greater self-efficacy by empowering them to make decisions, is effective leadership in terms of pedagogical practice and student learning outcomes (see, for example, Fullan, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2007). Although the wisdom of the Participant Group 1 Pacific elders regarding leadership and some of the examples they provided of leadership were contextualised within their own village or wider fono settings, that wisdom and those examples add to the sum of knowledge about school-

based leadership, especially in relation to providing school leaders with insight into how leadership functions from a Pacific perspective.

Leading a school in Aotearoa New Zealand involves working alongside the community outside the school and may also involve working alongside Pacific teaching and school administration colleagues. Not having the tools and cultural knowledge of how leadership occurs and is respected within a Pacific culture can provide stumbling blocks and barriers for non-Pacific school leaders. Even though these leaders may do things (act) with the best of intentions, they may inadvertently be offensive or misunderstood from Pacific cultural perspectives. Empowering non-Pacific school leaders to be culturally responsive is therefore essential because it focuses school leaders not only on *what* to do to motivate and inspire teachers within their schools but also on *how* to do this.

One important aspect of the Indigenous leaders' reflections on the role of a Matai in leading and guiding the family was captured by Va'asilitele. "Good leadership," he said, "contributes to the way families live in peace and harmony; [it] also contributes to the wellbeing and prosperity of the family and children. A good leader takes care of his or her family." Va'asilitele's comments reference the key kaupapa of my research, which is the link between effective leadership and better learning, health and wellbeing outcomes for Pacific children. That link ties in directly with the "leading from the front" concept of ta'imua. This type of leading, which has a deep cultural meaning in Samoa, has resonance for the role and capacity of school principals in Aotearoa New Zealand because it is they who must lead from the front with respect to all school programmes, initiatives, activities, curricula and strategies. The ta'imua concept also reminds school leaders that they are employed by their school Board of Trustees to lead the school in ways that advance educational success for all children.

Leading from the front is typically evident when there is change within an organisation. However, in these instances, ta'imua requires leading from the front to be acts of care and commitment and an embracing of the change for others to follow. Similarly, leading from the front in difficult situations requires setting a good example by going in and doing what has to be done to show everyone else how to do it. These instances reveal the adage that showing or modelling is sometimes easier and better than telling. School leaders who practise ta'imua actively lead the change they are seeking to make by being the first to immerse themselves in the new ways of working. Such leaders often involve themselves in or take note of staff initiatives to show that they value the work of their teachers and administrators, understand their contributions and appreciate their time. Many effective leaders also do not believe in

asking their teams to do anything they would not do themselves. These approaches can go a long way with team members because they build respect, relationships and trust.

As the Indigenous leaders emphasised, school leadership must always be from the front; it must never be from the back or from the side. In making this point, the Indigenous leaders presented a challenge to all school principals by reminding them that their leadership is held to account by everyone in and associated with the school. As the Indigenous leaders said, if a school is not performing well, this situation is attributable to the school principal's poor operational and managerial leadership. However, if the school is performing well, then that is due to the principal's sound leadership. The following quotation, voiced by both Salemuliaga and Va'asilitele, two of the prominent Indigenous leaders in the Samoan Indigenous leadership group, contains the essence of this thinking: "E mafua ona manuia le nu'u ma le aiga ona o ta'ita'iga ale ta'imua, a le manuia foi le ta'ita'iga ale ta'imua e le manuia fo'i se aiga mase nu'u" | "When the ta'imua leadership is effective, the aiga and nu'u are successful, and if the ta'imua leadership is ineffective, the aiga (family) and village have failed to function." This particular challenge from the Indigenous leaders points not only to the important value of the school principal's leadership role but also to the vitality and integrity of it.

Between them, the Indigenous leaders identified or alluded to the following qualities as integral to ta'imua. A leader who leads effectively from the front demonstrates, through word and deed, *how* to lead from the front; in other words, they model this type of leadership. In word and deed, they fulfil all that is required of them to the best of their ability. They lead by doing, through action. They give of their best in all they do. They have great courage. They work hard, persevere and are resilient. They advocate for peace and harmony and work to advance the wellbeing and prosperity of others. They exhibit fa'apalepale—patience and compassion—as well as ola magafagafa, which means they never stop thinking about the future of their families and communities. All of these qualities connect to the four key pillars of Soalaupulega described in Foafoa 3 and depicted in Figure 3.1 of that chapter. These four key qualities—Tofa Loloto (deep thinking), Tofa Mamao (broad thinking), Tofa Manino (clear vision), and Tofa Mau, which together call on leaders to "stick with" the decision and its conclusion in action—demonstrate the capability of a leader who is an effective Ta'imua.

When I was growing up in my village, I saw ta'imua leadership in action thanks to my father and the many other Matai in the village, as they exercised their responsibilities to their aiga (family), nu'u (village), ekalesia (church), aoga (school), komiuniti (community), and malo (nation). Knowing that they were leading from the front and that they held in their hands

the success of everyone and everything for which they held responsibility, these Matai gave their full commitment to their leadership. From the Indigenous leaders' perspective in particular and the Pacific peoples' perspective in general, I know that school principals who lead from the front are, to put it simply, excellent leaders. They are well-rounded people and therefore good all-round leaders, able to lead their schools with a strong vision that includes dedicated aspiration for Pacific students to reach their full potential and be successful, happy learners. These leaders genuinely understand that such learners will go on to make good choices for their future and will themselves become good Ta'imua in years to come. Finally, and importantly, Ta'imua leaders always take responsibility for their actions.

Figure 6.1 sets out the eight key qualities of an effective Ta'imua according to the Indigenous Samoan leaders. Alofa (love), agamalu (humility), ola magafagafa (being considerate), toa (courage), fa'amaoni (honesty), fa'aalo'alo (respect), fa'apalepale (tolerance), and onosa'i (patience) are all valued leadership qualities from the Samoan Indigenous perspective, and leaders who demonstrate them do so in authentic Samoan ways highly. Ola magafagafa (being considerate), for example, connects not only to alofa, one of the eight key qualities, but also to the values of motivation, determination, perseverance and enthusiasm for supporting other people. Consideration for others is therefore a vital component of how an effective leader leads an organisation, a school, a village or a community.

> *I saw my mother time and again exhibiting the value of ola magafagafa when I was growing up. For her, this value meant never stop considering—never stop thinking about—the future of the children. She also demonstrated the associated values of love, hard work, perseverance and humility in how she nurtured and cared for her children.*

To give another example from the values that the Indigenous leaders identified, fa'apalepale (tolerance) has strong connections to the qualities of agalelei (compassion), agamalu (humility), and finau (perseverance). Together, the eight qualities present a unique description of what a Ta'imua looks like and feels like when engaged in real leadership practice.

6.2.1.2 Theme 2: Tausimea (keeper of treasures)

This leadership position is particular to the responsibility that Indigenous Samoan leaders have for looking after their family's and community's measina (treasures). These measina encompass fanua (lands), suafa Matai (family titles), gafa (genealogy), and family tala'aga (stories and history). Of the 10 Indigenous Samoan leaders who participated in my study, Poututoa, Amoatu, Lualua, and Malotau all emphasised that Matai responsibilities included

taking care of family belongings. Malotau, for example, said: "The roles and responsibilities pertaining to a tausimea include looking after their family titles, family lands, family genealogy, playing a role as a family spokesperson at the nu'u [village] meeting and the church. Such a tausimea role is critical for the Matai to ensure the family is functioning successfully."

From a school leadership perspective, the value of a tausimea requires school principals to be the keepers not only of school resources but also of measina specific to the wider school and its community. These measina include students' academic development, health and wellbeing, which link into the health and wellbeing of their families and communities. This tausimea responsibility strongly aligns with one of my main aims in conducting my doctoral research, that of making a positive contribution to the education, health and wellbeing of Pacific students, families and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 6.1: Indigenous Samoan leaders' identification of key qualities of a Ta'imua leader.

The Indigenous Samoan participants also associated tausimea with the qualities of honesty, reliability, trustworthiness, resourcefulness, capability, loyalty, and caring, and an appreciation of the principle of fairness. School leaders can exhibit all these tausimea-related qualities, each of which is characteristic of Samoa's Fa'a-Matai (chiefly) system of caring governance. By carefully overseeing students' safety, health and wellbeing and ensuring that teachers do likewise, principals strengthen the school's bonds with both the children and their families. Taking care (pastoral oversight) of teachers maintains strong collegial relationships

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with them, again for the collective wellbeing of the students, which ultimately contributes to students achieving in their education.

Va'asilitele explained the meaning of fairness relative to the concept of tausimea when he said, "A tausimea is a leader that oversees everything for the protection of his family, a keeper of his family measina. He distributes things equally among his family members." Va'asilitele saw a strong connection between tausimea and the role that school principals have for taking care of teachers for students' benefit.

Va'asilitele and the other members of the Indigenous leaders group also said the tausimea role requires principals to exercise, enact, or oversee the following: careful management of school funding; upkeep and maintenance of school buildings and grounds; framing and implementation of clear school policies; ensuring the ethos of the school is culturally inclusive; ongoing improvement of quality teaching and learning; provision of appropriate teaching resources; implementation of a range of programmes to support all learners across arts, sports, and cultural opportunities; provision of effective, supportive administrative personnel; and provision of adequate food for marginalised students while they are at school.

I agree with these leaders that an effective school tausimea is a principal who can put in place strategies, policies, programmes, and practices intentionally directed towards making sure Pacific students' educational needs and aspirations are fulfilled and their potential unlocked. With respect to these students, a large part of the role of tausimea in the school is a commitment to allocate funding resources to measures that support the achievement of these young people. Among these measures is the important one of providing teachers with professional learning and development opportunities focused on culturally responsive and inclusive practices for the Pacific learners in their classrooms.

The combined qualities of tausimea leaders depicted in Figure 6.2 connect to two of the pillars of the Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Research Framework (SSTRF)—Tofa Loloto (deep thinking) and Tofa Mamao (broad thinking); see Figure 3.1 in Foafoa 3. Leaders who exhibit Tofa Loloto and Tofa Mamao proficiencies think deeply and broadly about all that is important for the future wellbeing of children, families and communities. Tausimea school principals therefore also think deeply and broadly about this matter, especially in terms of how best to allocate resources so that Pacific students have ready access to educational programmes effective in helping them meet their educational outcomes in all areas of learning, health and wellbeing. According to the Indigenous leaders, educational leaders, including school principals, who are effective tausimea with respect to Pacific young people, are always seeking

out opportunities to create and sufficiently fund and resource new programmes that benefit these students.

6.2.2 Themes 3 to 8

Themes 3 tautua (service), 4 teu le va (nurturing relationships), and 6 fa'asinomaga (identity) were common to all three participant groups. Of the remaining three, Theme 6 ta'iala (vision) was common to the community leaders and the school principals. Themes 7 and 8—auala a'oa'o (pedagogy) and agaga me le loto (emotional and spiritual connections)—were specific to the school principals. Even with the themes held in common, the groups tended to vary in the words they used when talking about them. This difference was especially noticeable with respect to tautua.
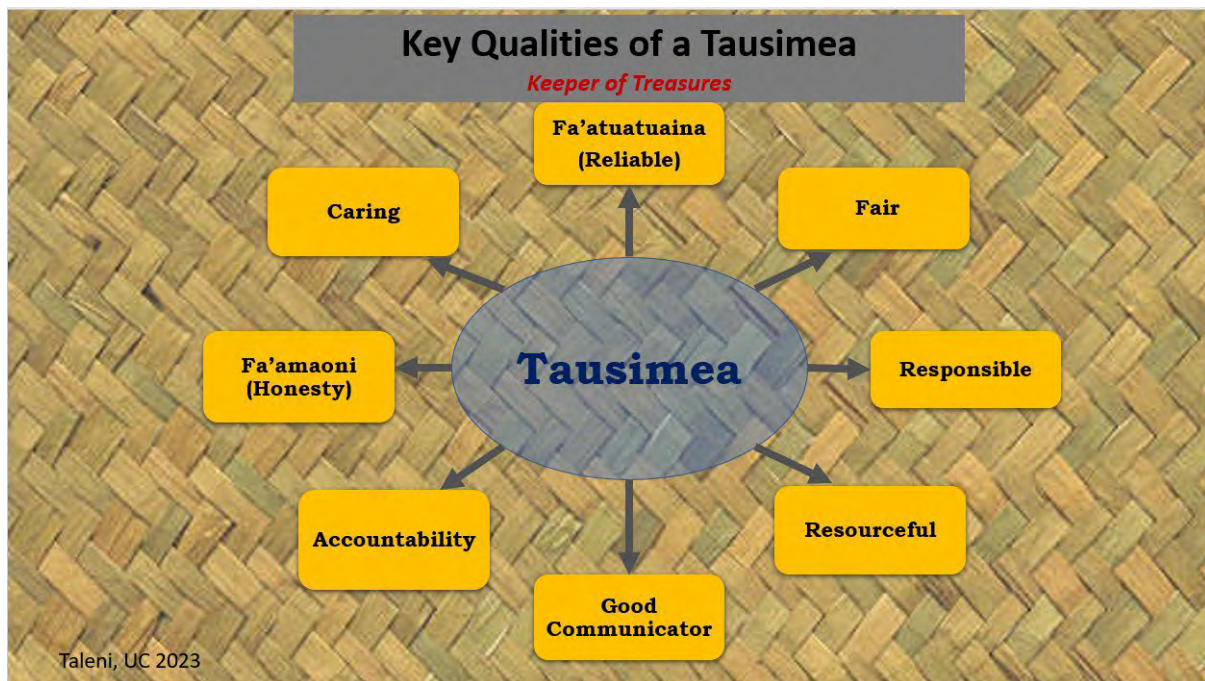
Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 6.2: Indigenous Samoan leaders' identification of the key qualities of tausimea leadership.

6.2.2.1 Theme 3: Tautua (service)

Tautua is a particularly important feature of cultural life not just in Samoa but other Pacific nations (Anae, 2013; Averill et al., 2020; Fa'aea & Enari, 2020; Rimoni et al., 2022; Surtees et al., 2017). I was therefore not surprised that tautua emerged during my study as one of the key themes of an effective education leader, with the study participants frequently using the word

"serve" and emphasising it as an essential feature of effective leadership. Tautua, they said, presents a way to contribute to the lives of others. It is a means of giving something back to the community and the nation to which they belong. As Fititoa (Participant Group 1) simply said: "I grew up learning to serve."

Pacific community leaders (Participant Group 2) Sione, Filipo, and Sieni all used both "serve" and "service". Sieni spoke for all of the community leaders when he said: "I strongly believe that my obligation as a leader is to serve." Among other words the leaders in this participant group used to describe their service role were bridge, influencer and instrument. Tama described his service role in the following terms, each of which indicated service in action: "In our community, I work as a navigator, influencer, mentor. I put myself as a navigator; you need to have big ears to listen and a big heart to forgive."

Like the Indigenous Samoan leaders, the school leaders (principals) described tautua as service. However, they also saw their service role as that of "a servant" within their school communities. Pola emphasised that "My role is to serve others. That's servant leadership. To serve and to grow others, I think, is the most important thing in my role. I'm there to serve our community…" Some of the school leaders combined the idea of to serve with the notion of giving something back to Pacific families by educating Pacific students to be successful learners. Mataio, for example, said: "So, my role really is to lead the community towards learning and being a servant of the community." These leaders also considered leading learning for students a satisfying form of service because it contributed to a prosperous future for young people, and therefore at the same time gave back to Aotearoa New Zealand's economy.

From a cultural perspective, the Indigenous Samoan leaders saw tautua as a prerequisite for becoming an effective future leader. Tufuga and Fititoa, two of the Indigenous Samoan leaders, said they had to learn to serve first before becoming Matai and that the process took time. As Fititoa explained: "I became a Matai when I was a lot older. I did a lot of service when I was growing up—served my family, my village, my church and the community. To become a Matai, you must serve first." As the participants emphasised and is also stressed in relevant literature, a person cannot become a Matai without first rendering service to one's aiga and to other Matai (Apulu, 2017; Taleni, 2017; Va'a, 2009).

The idea of learning about and practising service before becoming a Matai is captured in the Samoan saying, "O le ala i le pule ole tautua" | "A pathway to leadership is through service." This saying is explicitly referenced in work by Aiono and Enari (2021) and Fa'aea and Enari (2021), to the extent that its words form the title of both articles. In acknowledging the pathway

to leadership is through tautua, the alagaupu (proverb) "O le ala i le pule, o le tautua" succinctly captures this point.

The pathway to becoming a leader in the Samoan cultural context starts at a young age. Children and young people are expected to serve in their own aiga, village and church. Service across these pivotal institutions of Samoan life provides young people with sound knowledge about what service is and how it is done. As Malotau, one of the Indigenous leaders clarified: "Home was where I learned to sit down and listen. This was where I built my confidence to move into doing other roles such as serving Matai in the village. It started from serving my own parents and family Matai." These types of service also help to create a strong desire in youngsters to contribute to the lives of others in the community. Schools can do the same by advocating the true value of service. Providing opportunities for all students to serve is an important step along this pathway. Teachers and leaders should lead by example, however, thus showcasing service as an important part of the culture of the school community.

Tautua also relates to the spiritual and emotional aspects of life, actioned through a person's cultural soul, which carries the values of alofa (love), agalelei (compassion), fetausia'i (reciprocity), fa'aaloalo (respect), and teu le va (nurturing relationships). Participants across all three groups singled out alofa as intrinsic to being a Matai. Fititoa, from Participant Group 1, had this to say: "I also learned that a Matai must serve and fulfil his or her duties with love. A Matai that demonstrates love is not selfish—[he or she] treats everyone the same."

Giving tautua therefore means putting others before oneself, and it means doing this without seeking personal gain or payment (Fairburn-Dunlop, 2010; Va'a, 2009). Although tautua is implemented and accomplished through alofa (love), it is also a *product* of alofa. Samoans give tautua because of their love for and their commitment to people. According to Va'a (2009, p. 244), alofa "springs from the heart of a Samoan, from love for other humans". Similarly, tautua is implemented through and is a product of osiosiga (reciprocity).

Closely tied to fa'aaloalo (respect), agalelei (compassion), and loto fesoasoani (generosity), osiosiga motivates the giving of tautua with alofa, dignity, and humility in the knowledge that everyone belongs to the community and that, one day, others in the community will reciprocate this service in different ways. As the Samoan alagaupu (proverb) so aptly says, "Alofa atu nei, alofa mai taeao" | "Give love now, receive love tomorrow." Another alagaupu "O alofa na, o alofa nei" | "Your love is with you and my love is with me," also draws attention to the idea that every time a person serves others with their love, those others will reciprocate

that love. These simple alagaupu demonstrate the ecological role that love plays in the process and acts of osiosiga.

Any consideration of tautua needs to keep in mind the ethical matter of caring for the va—the sacred relational space. The concept of teu le va can be understood as an entreaty to attend to this space (Finau et al., 2022). More specifically, relationships, as the foundation of Pacific ways of being, must be protected. Because tautua is a strong component of the emotional and spiritual aspects of life in general and relationships in particular, tautua must be authentic and meaningful.

From a Fa'a-Samoa perspective, tautua is exemplified by different forms and acts of service. These include tautua matavela (giving service with full commitment, perseverance, and honesty); tautua matalilo (service done behind the scenes); tautua toto (a deep form of tautua that refers to service involving true sacrifice, such as giving one's life to save others); tautua aitaumalele (service from a distance, for example, family members who live abroad supporting their families back home); and tautua nofotuavae (referring to a servant who sits behind people but is always ready to serve them). Indigenous Samoan leader Malotau highlighted tautua matavela, tautua toto and tautua aitaumalele when he spoke of his commitment to his family back in Samoa.

> I have Matai duties pertaining to my family. I go to Samoa a lot because I have a lot of Matai duties pertaining to my aiga. I go to Samoa six or seven times a year to fulfil my Matai responsibilities. My family relies on me for advice and for putting into practice the things that need to be done—e.g., family weddings, family funerals, bestowal of new Matai titles, etcetera.

Together, the five forms of service provide a model of tautua (service) in Samoan culture (see Figure 6.3). Each form has its own interpretation and meaning that differentiates it from another. While Figure 6.3 presents a Samoan Indigenous model of service, it also provides school leaders with a vantage point from which to see the nature and extent of the tautua they offer and give to their students and schools.
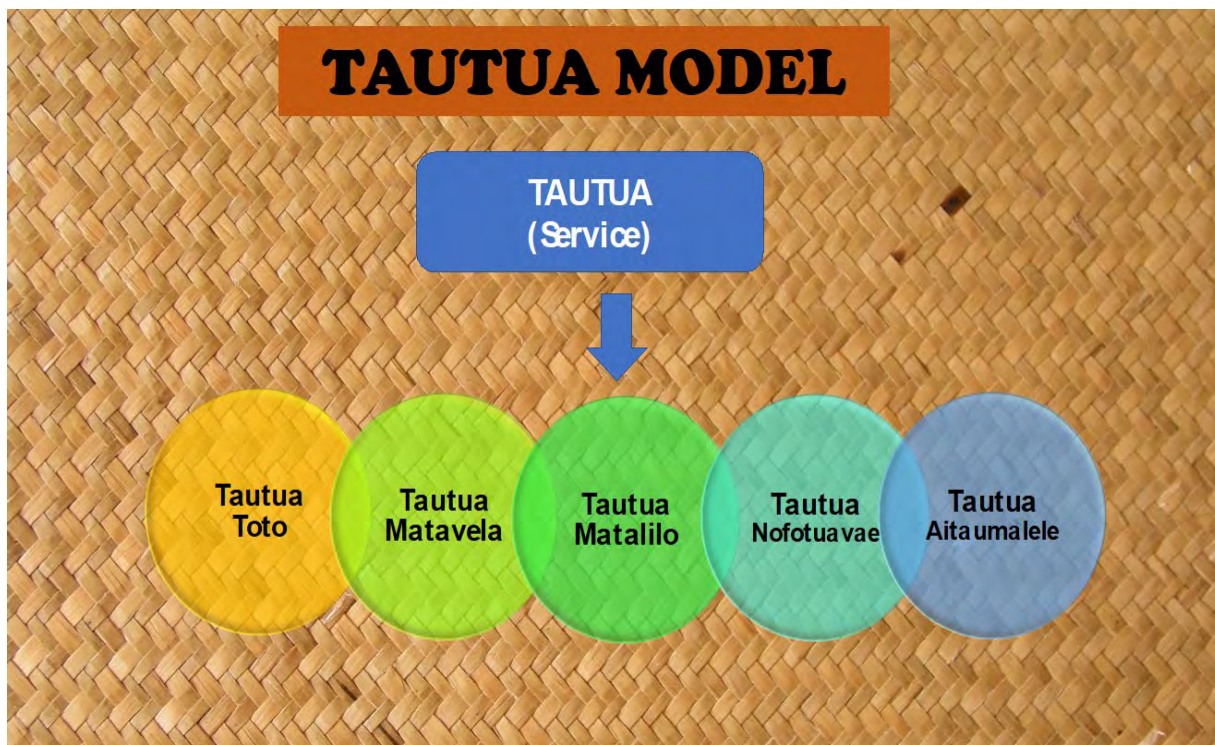
Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 6.3: The five primary forms of tautua (service) in Samoa.

Of the five forms of service, tautua matavela, giving service with full commitment, perseverance and honesty, particularly resonates with me.

> *Tautua matavela was a strong influence on me when I was growing up in the village. I often heard my mother say, "Ia fa'atino mea uma i le fatu, a leai, tu'u aua le faia" "Everything must be done and fulfilled from the heart. If not, don't do it." This saying expresses the true act of giving service in genuine, meaningful ways. It truly demonstrates the real intent of giving complete tautua.*

As noted above, tautua aitaumalele refers to people who serve their families from afar, such as those who live overseas but continue to serve their families back in Samoa. This service is typically one of providing financial support for families in the islands. Malotau (Participant Group 1) referred to this support when he said, "We all experience poverty in Samoa. We are all poor. We grow up with very limited resources (money) to do things and fulfil our Matai duties. We are grateful that we come to New Zealand and work here and help our family back home; help put into practice our Matai duties."

The term fa'alavelave (family commitments) is often seen in terms of obligations in the form of resources and time that family members are expected to extend to one another. These fa'alavelave are most evident during important events in the lives of families, such as birthdays,

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weddings, funerals, dedication of a new house, bestowal of a Matai title, and many more. When these fa'alavelave occur in their island homes, Samoan families who live in New Zealand continue to carry out their tautua aitaumalele for their family members back home.

> *Throughout my years of living in New Zealand, my siblings and I have continued to serve our family in Samoa. We send money, food and clothes to support the family with their everyday needs. We also contribute strongly to the maintenance of their houses, the provision of transport, and the many important family events, such as weddings, bestowal of a new Matai title, birthdays, funerals, and the like. By doing this, we fulfil our responsibilities as contributors to our family. This is how we carry out our tautua from afar. It is part of who we are; it is part of our identities.*

Tautua toto (serving with sacrifice) is a deep form of service. It refers to those who serve with dignity and mana, to those who serve wholeheartedly, perhaps even putting their life at risk so as to protect and keep others safe. Servicemen and women, such as soldiers and others who serve during times of war, are the ultimate example of those who carry out tautua toto. However, tautua toto can encompass anyone in families, workplaces or communities who give their full commitment to serving others, even if doing so means to the detriment of their own wellbeing.

The school leaders (Participant Group 3) all spoke of the importance of service but in fairly generic terms. It may therefore be valuable for them to consider the forms of tautua depicted in Figure 6.3 and to ask themselves how they could deploy these forms to heighten effective education leadership practice for their Pacific students, families and communities. They could ask themselves the following questions: How deeply am I giving and performing tautua to my Pacific children and their families? Which form of tautua best describes me and the way I implement my service to my Pacific students? How can I take my tautua performance to the next level? Self-reflective questions such as these can help principals refocus on their ways of giving tautua to the students and their aiga (families). These questions also provide principals with a challenge to revisit their own performance as leaders and to determine the form or forms of tautua that best describe them in terms of giving service to their students.

As a Pacific educator, I see the theme of tautua as an important strand in weaving the Mat of Soalaupulega. This value can motivate and inspire school principals to give something unique back to the community and families through education. Principals must remember that what they do in their role as school leader is a form of tautua (service) from the Pacific perspective. As Aiono and Enari (2021, p. 94) state:

Enacting tautua (service) is one of the key fundamental tenets of being Samoan, both in traditional village contexts of the (mother) land and diaspora communities in transnational societies. Acts of service in a traditional village context centre on tasks and ways of being that show respect, obedience and diligence in honouring elders and families… The extent to which tautua is conducted outside Samoa is dependent on the strength of aiga (family) to honour it in their interactions of fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way).

Pacific communities always appreciate the service school leaders give through their role. These leaders' contributions to the advancement of Pacific education in Aotearoa is also valued by the key government agencies that are closely connected to Pacific families and communities, such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Health. Tautua therefore implicitly connects to another of the eight main leadership themes evident in my study data because service to others helps create and strengthen good relationships. That theme is teu le va—nurturing relationships.

6.2.2.2 Theme 4: Teu le va (nurturing relationships)

"Leadership is the creation of an environment in which others are able to self-actualise in the process of completing the job."

— *John Mellecker*

Teu le va is about bringing people together, to collaborate, share ideas, find solutions and forge relationships. An effective leader can build relationships with people by recognising their potential and strength. From the cultural perspective, the Indigenous Samoan leaders in my study spoke of teu le va in relation to va fealoa'i, that is, nurturing the space in which mutually beneficial relationships are built. The leaders referred to this type of relationship as dignified, harmonious, and respectful during face-to-face interactions between tagata (people), aiga (families), and nu'u (villages). The idea of va fealoa'i—nurturing the space for nurturing good relationships—underpinned the following comments from Fitiao, one of the Samoan Indigenous leaders. "I am a Matai. That means I need to remember and value the importance of nurturing relationships. If I am a young chief, I must know where I sit when the meeting is held and also my time to speak. Same goes if I am a high-ranking chief. I must also know where to sit in the meetinghouse. I must know my position in the community."

As previously mentioned, Samoan people learn from a young age at home and in the village what the role of a Matai involves. They learn this through observation. The Samoan

saying "E iloa gofie le tama po'o le teine Samoa i lana savali, tautala, nofo, ai ma lana tu" | "A Samoan boy or girl can be easily recognised by the way he or she walks, talks, sits, eats and stands" expresses the way Samoan youngsters are brought up at home to embrace the strong value of fa'aaloalo (respect), which orchestrates teu le va (nurturing relationships and the spaces between people). When someone becomes a Matai later on in life, their transition to the role of a Matai is fluent and well-articulated because of this prior learning. From there, a Matai always plays his or her role with dignity and honour.

The word "va" refers to the open space between people. Although no one owns this space, it is a natural space that belongs to one or more tagata (people) just for the time of the interaction, engagement or negotiation. It is also a relational space or site of action in which social interactions are productive for those connected to the place. The va therefore connects people and is the place where mutual harmonious relationships are formed. Teu le va fealoa'i highlights the importance of looking after the va (space) and relationships within the va, and of treating reciprocal relationships as sacred so that they are valued and nurtured. This concept incorporates a number of values in addition to fa'aaloalo. They include whakaapa'apa (another term for respect), tautua (service), feosiosia'i (reciprocity), agalelei (generosity, caring), ola magafagafa (thoughtfulness), and aofia fa'atasi (inclusivity), all integrated into the value of alofa (love).

Pacific people grow up in communal settings and environments, where the building and nurturing of relationships is an important part of life. When Pacific children go to school, they look for signs of their cultural values within their school environment that make them feel connected to that environment. They look for the values of respect, love, service, caring, humility and reciprocity. These values help build the trusting relationships between teachers and students so integral to learning.

The notion of nurturing or looking after relationships was a common thread of discussion among the members of all three participant groups. The principal leadership group spoke often of the need to nurture relationships of trust in the school context. The relationships they referred to were typically those with and between teachers, students, families and communities. Pola, one of the principals in this group, commented: "I think, for our Pasifika families, they trust me because I make sure their Pasifika group is happening. So, then, they feel like, 'Oh, the school's acknowledging our options.' I don't know if there's a simple, easy answer to that, but I think trusting relationships makes a big difference for our families and the feeling that they're valued in our school communities."

Mataio, another of the principals in the school leadership group, supported Pola's thinking when he acknowledged the need to value students' culture as an important part of nurturing relationships. I included his analogy of the candle flame in Foafoa 5, but its aptness makes it worth repeating here.

> If we show those cultures no value, we're damaging the children from those cultures, and we're damaging those cultures. And we're sort of blowing out other candles, just to make ours look a bit brighter. But, in fact, what we should be doing is feeding all those other flames and making the whole place brighter. We bring the light level down by snuffing out all those other things that could be shining. So, I think, for me, we're missing the point. We don't value the wonderful things that are part of those Pasifika cultures.

Mataio's words stress the importance of school leaders and teachers valuing Pacific cultures by promoting and incorporating them into school and classroom programmes. This approach can include Pacific languages, myths and legends, songs, cultural metaphors, celebrations, histories, narratives, and so on. It allows Pacific families and communities to see how schools can feed the flames of Pacific candles to make them shine brightly rather than die out. Families and communities will always acknowledge and respect schools for supporting their cultures. They see this support as evidence of schools demonstrating the interlinked values of tautua (service) and teu le va (nurturing relationships). When schools do not include Pacific cultures, families see this lack as their ways of life being ignored and neglected.

Sieni, one of the Pacific community leaders (Participant Group 2) referred to the important cultural need of nurturing relationships within the va (the space): "Again, relationships—respect, love, spirituality—are all embedded in that [the space]. If they [school leaders] get that and lead from the heart, then I'm sure we will have lots of our Pacific families who will be successful in this world." Nurturing the va is a way of life in Samoa. Because people live closely together in the village and family, respecting and nurturing the va is vital for maintaining healthy relationships with one another. Sharing of food and resources is one important way of building and maintaining good relationships among families in the village; sharing is their way of being. It denotes who they are as Samoan people.

The vitality inherent in building effective relationships, a fundamental aspect of Matai leadership practice, is evident in the Soalaupulega Samoan Theoretical Research Framework (Figure 3.1 in Foafoa 3). Va'asilitele, one of the Indigenous leaders, discussed the need to nurture relationships within a family and between individual families and the village as an

imperative for effective leadership. Alofa, he said, is an essential value in this process. "It means that Matai leadership maintains and nurtures relationship within the family. Nurturing the space within the family … there is a role to play by the Matai, [that is] to be a mediator between the family and the village."

The relationship-building role of a Matai in the family and between the family and the village or community involves several key responsibilities additional to that of mediator: taking care of family measina (property and other belongings); caring for the safety, health and wellbeing of the family; being a strong advocate of Samoan values and qualities, such as respect, service, humility, spirituality and reciprocity; nurturing relationships and love; being a main provider of food for the family; and sharing wisdom and cultural knowledge with children as part of mentoring. The Matai guides families to live in peace and harmony, in line with nurturing relationships among family members, and especially so during curfew.

> *I reflect on the village curfew. The conch shell is blowing to let everyone have time and space to break from daily duties, and for families to come together for evening devotional. I can see that this time gave us spiritual nourishment through a sense of belonging and cohesiveness within the family. I can also see the evening curfew practice as an intrinsic part of Samoan village life. It signalled the important role of Matai leadership in the village.*

The relationship-building role of the Matai in the family and community is no different to the role of a school principal. This person must be an advocate for and a nurturer of Pacific children's cultural values. These values are the bridge between the school and the children's families and communities and thus a crucial learning resource. "A bridge between school and community" was just one of the phrases my research participants used when talking about relationships between school and home. They also used words such as guide, gatekeeper, mediator, mentor, influencer and encourager to describe how effective leaders mediate relationships between various parties. According to Fullan (2008), effective leadership contributes to the success of families, communities, schools and organisations. When leadership is ineffectual, families, schools and communities cannot function in ways beneficial to all their members.

The Samoan culture also incorporates a deeper relationship known as va tapuia (Anae, 2013). Va is, of course, a space. Tapuia comes from the word tapu, meaning sacred and taboo. The va between people is sacred according to Samoan culture, its epistemology and beliefs and is therefore mutually respectful. This sacred space also refers to the sacred interrelationships

between people, lands and environment. Violation of va tapuia, according to Samoan epistemology, is believed to result in dire spiritual and physical consequences. A very important example of va tapuia is the feagaiga, a covenant between brother and sister that, prior to the influence of Western missionaries, gave women in traditional Samoan culture sacred power (Amituana'i-Toloa, 2007; Airini et al., 2010; Fepulea'i, 2016). This feagaiga captures the true essence of the sacredness of the va between people.

School leaders need to take into the core of their leadership the understanding that Pacific children come to school with va fealoaloa'i and va tapuia every day. This understanding sets a high expectation for all leaders in schools with Pacific children, which is to fully and genuinely respect this va as part of lifting these students' educational outcomes. This understanding, moreover, can lift leaders' and teachers' leadership and pedagogical practices in ways that strengthen effective engagement with students and, in turn, successful learning outcomes for these young people. Thus, within the school context, good leaders recognise that building effective relationships can bring positive consequences for learners. School principal Pola showed his understanding of this need when he said:

> … and then relationships, you know, that's, again, kind of the core. And it was kind of that relationship building before we can get into the nitty gritty and talk about, you know, how can I help you? How can I understand what's going on for you? You know that Mum's got two jobs and Dad's working night shift … so there's actually no one in the home until eight o'clock, or nine o'clock in the morning. It's understanding that, and so therefore how can I help that?

Pola's comments provide a more nuanced indication of the type of understanding school leaders and teachers need. This understanding is one that comes from awareness of the home environments, family routines and living situations of their Pacific students. Many of these children's parents left their Pacific homelands to come to Aotearoa New Zealand in search of a better future for their children. They work hard to earn an income to survive, at times with one or both parents working two jobs to pay the bills, meet everyday living costs and support their children's education. The financial pressures can be overwhelming for many Pacific families (see, for example, Taleni et al., 2018), a situation that can have adverse impacts on their children's education. When both parents are in employment, "parenting" can fall on the older siblings, who therefore do not have time to do homework let alone go to school.

School leaders' and teachers' emotional, spiritual, physical, and psychological awareness and understanding can help to support Pacific students through these situations, break down home–school barriers and build bridges, all of which can advantage the children's learning. Important questions that school leaders can ask themselves in relation to all aspects of teu le va include these ones: How do the concepts of teu le va fealoaloa'i and teu le va tapuia impact on effective leadership? How do they influence students' learning and engagement in the classroom?

Teu le va, nurturing relationships, is so critical to Pacific culture that I consider all staff within a school must be committed to it before implementing actions directed towards better educational outcomes for Pacific students. Further, as the Pacific community leaders pointed out, building relationships with key government agencies is also vital because what these agencies do affects schools' efforts to raise student achievement. From my perspective as a Pacific community leader, I consider teu le va a leadership a value that fosters better engagement with and by staff, which then contributes to raising educational outcomes for students.

The effective engagement of Pacific parents and communities in their children's education and the schools they attend also relies on strong relationships fostered by and among all partners (Gorinski & Fraser, cited in Ferguson et al., 2008). When family and school form positive relationships with each other, outcomes for students quickly improve (Berryman, cited in Bottrell & Goodwin, 2011). To build relationships of trust with parents, families and communities, schools need to actively construct knowledge with these parties and be willing to listen and learn. Schools must also allow families to be self-determining—to let them decide how they will be involved in schools (Berryman & Bishop, 2011). As the Children's Commissioner (2013) advised, situations where all parties construct and share common visions and goals are those most effective for collaborative, trusting partnerships advantageous to children's learning and wellbeing.

Teu le va as voiced by the leaders who participated in my study relates to one of the four foundational aspects of the Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Framework—the Tafesilafa'i (Figure 3.1 in Foafoa 3). That value is nurturing mutual relationships with people. Figure 6.4 presents the key leadership qualities related to teu le va for better student engagement and achievement in learning.

Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 6.4: Key qualities of teu le va leadership.

6.2.2.3 Theme 5: Fa'asinomaga (identity)

The Samoan word fa'asinomaga means identity, and it derives from the word fa'asino, which means to show, to model, to demonstrate where you belong. When people know where they belong and that they belong, they feel good about themselves. When children feel secure about their fa'asinomaga (identity), they are motivated and enthused to engage in learning and conversation. The three groups of research participants recognised the considerable value that fa'asinomaga holds for Pacific students and their learning as well as its strong influence on effective leadership.

The participants viewed culture and language as key components of identity. Fititoa, one of the Indigenous Samoan leaders, spoke of the influences on his identity: "I grew up in the culture. This makes me happy to continue to embrace the culture and language. As a Matai, I am keen to promote the culture and language to children in schools and the Samoan community." Some of the leaders pointed to the loss of identity among the generation of young Pacific children in Aotearoa New Zealand. Tufuga (Participant Group 1), for example, described the difficulty of trying to bring up children in traditional Samoan ways. The sense of struggle and loss in his comment, which I also included in Foafoa 5, is obvious:

We are the leaders in our family. We need to work within our families. We now leave our families behind, and we are here in New Zealand. We always remember what our parents taught and did for us. We taught our children with what our parents taught us. The issue is that the children who are brought up here are not interested in the things we taught them with—the traditional ways.

Tufuga made the same point later in the discussion among the Indigenous Samoan leaders: "There are many changes we see here in New Zealand with our children growing up here. It is not easy." The issues he and other participants identified were evident in research colleagues and I conducted some 14 years ago. The study sought the views of Pacific students and teachers on the supports and barriers that Pacific children experience when learning in New Zealand schools (Fletcher et al., 2009).

Although the children of migrant Pacific parents may not always appreciate their parents' messages, it is important to know that parents continue to do their best to expose their children to the cultural experiences of their heritage. They do so by teaching the children their native language, sharing stories, telling of their experiences of growing up in the Pacific, and talking with them about cultural values. The children will grow up and remember these stories as part of their own kete (basket) of knowledge.

I am reminded, in this regard, of the saying, "E aofia uma tagata ole nu'u ile fa'afaileleina ma le tapu'eina ole olaga ole tamaiti'iti" | "It takes a whole village to bring up and nurture a child." Translated to the school context, this saying can be interpreted as the whole school community needs to support Pacific parents to maintain their cultures. In short, school leaders and teachers have a part to play in valuing and acknowledging Pacific cultures at school because these practices are vitally important to families and communities. The school principals (Participant Group 3) certainly recognised this. They agreed that Pacific children need to be able to value their identities through their languages and cultures, thus reinforcing the comments on this matter by the Indigenous and Pacific community leaders. The school leaders also emphasised that it is crucial for school principals to lead by example so as to inspire and motivate staff to recognise and acknowledge their Pacific students' cultural identities.

One of many strengths of Pacific families is their ability to come together to talk and discuss matters that are affecting the wellbeing of the family. They show care and concern for one another, and they seek solutions together (Ferguson et al., 2008). As Tufuga said, "We

bring our family members together and talk. We model this to our children; in the future they will do the same."

Several of the Indigenous and Pacific community leaders (Participant Groups 1 and 2) spoke of the importance of drawing on their cultural values to guide their fa'asinomaga (identities). Indigenous Samoan leader Poututoa commented on the importance of cultural values alongside Christian values.

> We must be guided by our cultural values. These cultural values guide us and help us to be honest and do the right thing; at the same time perform cultural practice in the right way—act with humility, not rely on your own knowledge, but consider knowledge from others…. Continue to connect with your family effectively…. Culture is a gift that comes from God; it is part of our identity, our belonging.

From the Indigenous perspective, fa'asinomaga also relates to the value of spirituality in the sense that the fanua (land) is the home and central point of a person's fa'asinomaga. This knowledge is important for educators and school leaders so they can truly value the power of learning that comes from valuing students' cultural identities—their fa'asinomaga. Tufuga Lagatule, a prominent Pacific leader in Aotearoa New Zealand, had this to say on this matter:

> As a teacher, we must ask, "Who are you? Where are you from?" This breaks down the barrier; we then know who this child is, where he belongs and can call out his name. The village is where I belong, where I come from, where I live with my family, where I slept beside my family and talked to God and [can] identify all the little things that make this child special—every child is special. If we ask this of a child in our New Zealand village, this then allows the child to realize they belong and in return that he or she needs to ask the teachers who they are, where they are from and who are their parents? It breaks down the barrier between the two. It establishes common ground. (Tufuga Lagatule, Pasifika Education Advisory Group 2012, quoted in Taleni, 2017, p. 79)

Even though some migrant Pacific parents express concern that their children are not interested in what they (the parents) experienced in their island homes and brought with them to Aotearoa, the feeling that they belong is still important to Pacific children. This feeling provides them with a sense of security that opens up every opportunity for them to grow and thrive, evident in this Samoan saying: "E felelei manu i nofoaga ma si'osi'omaga e tafafao

fiafia ma ola ai" | "Birds fly to environments where they can survive and thrive." Some of the Pacific community leaders agreed that Pacific children gain empowerment when their teachers provide this security through knowledge and understanding of the students' identities. Another comment quoted in Foafoa 5 worth repeating in this chapter is this one from Pacific community leader Tama:

> Because often our kids leave their culture at their gates, and they come in and put the uniform on and they're someone else, and the Palagi teachers ask, "How come they're naughty with us but they're always respectful and they always listen to what you say? Is it because you're a man?" No, the reason is because I understand them, and you don't, and that's not always evident in our non-Pacific teachers.

When Pacific students know that their cultural identities are valued and utilised in the classroom and schoolwide, they will no longer leave their cultures at the gate but will bring them into the school and its classrooms. Schools and teachers who value these students' cultural identities engage in culturally and inclusively responsive practices that reinforce for students the richness of their cultural environments and the backgrounds they come from. Pacific students' cultural identities are connected to and embedded in their families, cultures, languages, ancestors, churches, fanua (lands), stories, and gafa (genealogy). Teachers and teacher educators need to see the value of these important connections; they need to see the strength and motivation to learn that comes from students confident in their cultural identities. There is so much that teachers can do within the space that is teaching and learning to support students to recognise and value their identities, languages and cultures. Implementing familiar cultural contexts and using cultural stories and narratives are but two ways teachers can do this. However, ongoing, long-term implementation of such approaches relies on principals always leading from the front by advocating for and demonstrating why valuing the cultures and languages that inform Pacific students' identities helps these young people achieve educationally.

Because culture is a huge part of a person's identity, including students' respective cultures in daily instruction means we teach the whole child. We empower the child to capitalise on their uniqueness and individualism. And we foster a love of diversity. For community leader Alofa, teaching always has to start from school leaders' and teachers' knowledge of their students' individuality:

It's important [for them] to know their learners. If they don't know their learners, they don't know their needs, so if they start from being culturally responsive, they'll know the needs and they'll know how to identify and provide solutions for those needs so that our Pasifika students can have a better start … [From] the first, [responsiveness] starts with them [the students]. They [teachers] can have the pedagogy to go with them, but it first starts with them [the students], with their dispositions.

In stressing the need for "teachers who understand the students and understand the reality of the students", Tama agreed with Alofa: "Once you understand that," Tama continued, "then it's easy to nurture and teach them."

All three leaders' groups spoke at length about the place of Pacific languages in Pacific children's identities. They considered that the role school leaders and teachers play in supporting Pacific learners must be one of ensuring the survival and maintenance of the children's languages in schools. The following poignant and desperate plea from the Minister for Pacific Peoples in 2018 for cultural and language survival is one all of my study participants would have validated: "When the language dies, a culture dies, when culture dies, our stories die, when our stories die, our connections die, when our connections die, our identities die, when our identities die, we will truly be lost people" (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2018b, p. 17). Two decades earlier, prominent Samoan scholar Fana'afi Le Tagaloa Aiono (1996) expressed the same sentiment: if you lose your language, you lose your culture. If there is no living culture, "darkness" falls over the village and community.

The three participant groups endorsed maintenance of language and culture as a key laufala (strand) of the Mat of Soalaupulega and saw valuing and acknowledging the fa'asinomaga of Pacific children as a way to engage and empower them in their learning. Figure 6.5 provides a summary of the words the participants used when discussing how educational leaders can inspire teachers across the education system to help maintain Pacific children's identities.

Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 6.5: How leaders can motivate teachers to support Pacific students' identities.

This valuing of students' identities offers Pacific students a catalyst by which to "cast their nets deeper" into their learning. The importance that the participants placed on valuing Pacific students' identities is captured in this statement from a study by Taleni et al. (2023, p. 6) on Pacific children's effective transition to schools: "We want our children to know who they are, where they belong. We aspire for our children to thrive as citizens who actively contribute to our increasingly diverse society. If we can strengthen children's identity, languages and cultures in early learning services and schools, our hopes and dreams will have a chance of succeeding."

6.2.2.4 Theme 6: Alafua (vision)

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are

a leader."

— *John Quincy Adams*

The theme of alafua (vision) was particularly evident in the Pacific community leaders' discussions on effective leadership. Vili, for example, described leadership-related vision as follows: "For me, one thing of having effective leadership is vision. A vision of being able to see in front—where you want to go." The community leaders positioned vision as an essential component of the school leadership role because they considered it to be one of the key

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determinants of students achieving success at school. However, they cautioned that although leaders with a strong vision is all very well, leaders also need to effectively define and convey that vision to everyone associated with the school.

One way of doing this, according to community leader Tama, is to lead by example. "I think when I lead by example, they can see me, and the family sees, and then the community sees and starts to follow. That's why it's very important when you're trying to navigate and advocate in your community and influence your community because they've seen it in you." Alofa, another community leader, saw a leader as an enabler whose vision for people to reach their full potential and achieve success means tapping into the vision that families and communities have for their children's achievement at school and beyond: "I think first to be an enabler to the communities and enabling them to reach whatever desire, whatever they see as being successful."

Melani, one of the school principals from Participant Group 3, observed that whatever vision a leader had with respect to guiding school students to educational achievement, the vision had to be built from and accord with the voices of school staff and the school's families and communities: "And so, we came up with the vision of 'grow', which is our kids growing as healthy and happy learners. And then, as the school opened, and we built our community around us, we've been constantly reviewing with the community whether this vision meets the needs of the community as well.… the vision is definitely collective."

The members of the two leaders' groups strongly agreed that the vision had to be developed not only collectively but also with cultural perspectives in mind. Consideration of cultural dynamics provides the means by which to connect the development of a collective vision to the key pillars of the Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Framework (SSTRF; Figure 3.1 in Foafoa 3), that is, Tofa Loloto (deep thinking and reflection), Tofa Mamao (broad vision), Tofa Manino (clear vision), and Tofa Saili (seeking deep knowledge). The relevance to the current discussion of one of the framework's foundations, Fa'auliulito, representing a visionary leader, needs no added explanation.

Ancestry has a centrality in Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST) because our ancestors had the vast repositories of knowledge gained from experience across the many different learning contexts they needed for survival. Seeing those attributes of our ancestors in Pacific students is a cultural imperative because it allows us to visualise these young people as learners with huge potential to shine in the world. This same vision is strongly stated in the New Zealand

Qualification's Authority's recently published action plan for Pacific learner success *Takiala Pasifika* (NZQA, 2020, p. 2):

> Pacific learners are descendants of skilled Polynesian navigators, experienced astronomers, explorers, discoverers and innovators who traversed distant horizons across the vast Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa to fulfil their dreams and aspirations. This same dream continues to guide Pacific people and it is upon this foundation that we navigate, to ensure that the New Zealand education system can fully realise the potential of all Pacific learners in Aotearoa.

6.2.2.5 Theme 7: Auala a'oa'o (pedagogy)

As might be expected, this theme was most evident in the school principals' interview data. All of these Group 3 participants referred to pedagogy in terms of providing *quality* teaching and learning and the need to prepare teachers, both preservice and inservice, to be competent, confident classroom practitioners fully able to support Pacific students' school success. Paulo and Melani, respectively, when speaking of the need for pedagogically competent teachers, said that it was their responsibility as school leaders to ensure they had these teachers in their school classrooms.

> My role is to make sure the teachers are doing a good job, that they're using effective pedagogical practices, that they are culturally competent, that they care about children, that school is a fun place to be and that we're providing a lot of rich, deep learning.

> Pasifika parents value having competent, effective teachers in front of their children—teachers that have strong pedagogical practices founded on culturally responsive ways of teaching. Teachers that understand Pasifika cultural values, and they use these values to guide their practice.

Paulo later added: "I think my responsibility is to put the best teachers in front of the children, so teachers who really know their pedagogy and are effective practitioners, and they can build relationships. If they can't do that, then they're not going to be effective teachers."

Figure 6.6, which presents a model setting out the components of culturally based pedagogy, serves to encourage teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their Pacific students' cultural values. These values, depicted in the figure, include alofa (love), service (tautua), respect (fa'aaloalo), spirituality (fa'aleagaga), reciprocity (fetausia'i), belonging

(fa'asinomaga), and humility (agamalu). The model reminds teachers that cultural values are foundational to Pacific students' learning. Because cultural values are what these children connect to and make meaning from, they provide the catalyst for their learning. To use another analogy, cultural values "anchor" the children's capacity and capability to explore and make sense of new learning while simultaneously strengthening and restoring their existing knowledge through ongoing activation of prior knowledge and experiences.
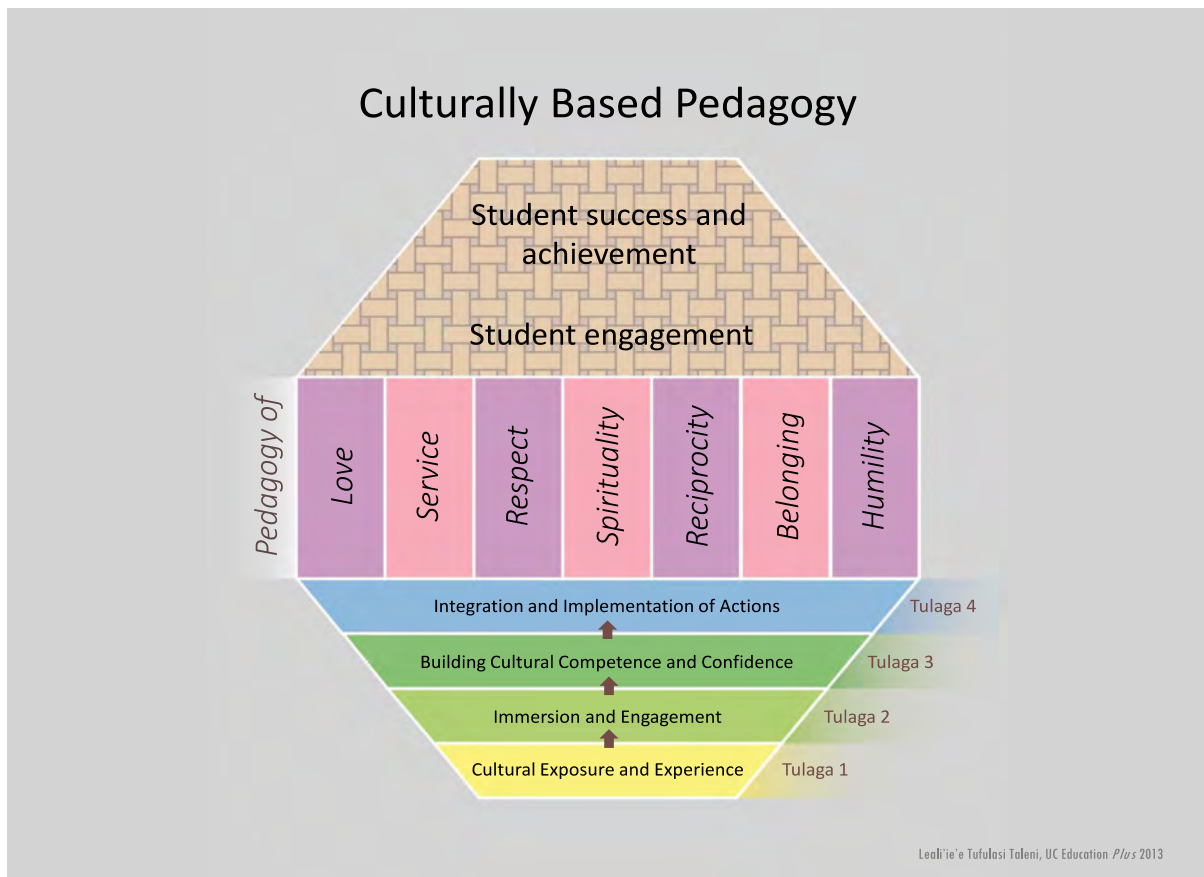
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Figure 6.6: A culturally based model of pedagogy for students' educational engagement and success.

When leaders' leadership and teachers' teaching embrace a pedagogy imbued with the values included in the Figure 6.6 model, they provide a strong basis from which to *engage* Pacific students in their learning and from which to *achieve* in their learning. As Surtees et al. (2021, p. 269) maintain, "… understanding Pasifika cultural values and integrating these into pedagogy is a critical first step for educators." The authors convey several "messages" concerning teaching practices relevant to this pedagogy and claim that "while these messages focus on Pasifika communities, students and children, they can be adapted for other ethnic groups."

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Among the messages are ones stating that students need to feel assured that their school's principal and teachers love them, respect them and therefore want to help and support them to achieve their educational goals. The children see the reflection of their "learning anchor" (their cultural values) in the learning content their teachers deliver. They feel recognised and important because they know, through the way their teachers teach them, that their teachers know something about them, that they value their identities, languages and cultures. The students take into their hearts the value of respect for their teachers and the value of reciprocity, realised when their success in education results in a giving back to their own families and communities.

According to the principals' voices, in order to deliver curriculum content in responsive and inclusive ways, teachers require a good understanding of not only their Pacific children's cultural contexts but also their learning styles. When speaking of these matters, school principal Melani asked what that understanding looks like when translated into effective teaching practice (a question at the heart of this thesis):

> What I've learned as a teacher is the theory behind effective teaching and learning. And, you know, what is going to make a difference for children. And then how you bring that theory into reality. If this is what we believe is good for kids, and if this is what we want them to achieve, what does that look like in the classroom? What will our teachers be teaching? How will our children be learning? So it's all perceived reality versus what happens in classrooms.

Once again, school leaders need to lead by example by advocating for pedagogical practices culturally responsive to Pacific students' learning needs. Even though this matter has been mentioned throughout this thesis, the point that *culturally responsive teaching is about making school learning relevant and effective for each and every Pacific learner* warrants repetition. Such teaching draws on students' cultural knowledge, languages, life experiences, frames of reference and learning and communication styles. It means encouraging students to use their first language in real learning situations, experiences, and tasks and to draw on knowledge of Pacific cultures to better understand and appreciate Pacific students' cultural identities. Culturally responsive teaching furthermore draws on students' cultural experiences in daily instruction, embraces students' native languages and their families as assets, creates a classroom environment that represents and respects all students, and communicates clearly expressed high educational expectations for everyone. As was evident in comments from some

of the study participants, Pacific parents do not see culturally responsive teaching as one day of celebrating a certain culture. Rather, this type of teaching involves daily practices that not only bring students' cultures into the instruction but also value each student and what he or she brings to their learning.

According to the research participants, by tapping into a student's culture, teachers get to know that student well. "Tapping in" includes talking with students, asking them questions and learning about their family life, history and experiences. The school leaders especially emphasised that students need to feel they have a valued voice in the classroom. Having a voice in the classroom, they said, helps students take ownership of their learning and gain success in it. Actively engaging students, moreover, requires lessons that are relevant and compelling and provide numerous opportunities for students to engage and collaborate in discussion. These opportunities reinforce the message to students that their voices are valued.

Alton-Lee's (2003) synthesis of research on best pedagogical practice for diverse students concurs with the leaders' point that "knowing" the learner is a critical part of effective pedagogical practice. When, as Alton-Lee's work confirms, teachers know and value their learners, they build good relationships with them, which leads to effective engagement in the classroom. According to school principal Paulo, knowing students well means knowing the "whole child" and then tailoring teaching accordingly: "To lead curriculum and to educate the whole child … at our school, we've sort of broken that down to strong language, identity and culture. And every child will be fit, healthy and have a strong sense of wellbeing. That they'll have high-quality academic and key competency skills."

Educating the whole child from the cultural (including identity and language) perspective is about acknowledging and valuing the child's ability to reach his or her full potential. The whole child's potential encompasses their cultural, spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual, physical and psychological make-up. When teachers and school leaders lead learning for Pacific children, it is essential they understand what educating the whole child means in practice. In pedagogical terms, Malo saw pedagogy responsive to the whole child as pedagogy focused in on each learner's uniqueness: "It's really our philosophy for our learning, which is just valuing, seeing the image of a child as being incredible, innovative, creative, unique. And if you believe that children are like that, then that changes the role of the teacher."

The school principal leaders also saw their Pacific students' prior knowledge and experiences as a way to build a bridge between what the students already knew and what they needed to know. This is where the provision of culturally relevant texts, topics, contexts and

perspectives contribute to effective pedagogical practices. Paulo was especially enthusiastic about bringing Pacific cultures into effective teaching practices:

> I think just ensuring that Pasifika culture is reflected in our curriculum, and also in everything that we do. That our teachers gain a greater understanding of our Pasifika learners, because it's ever changing as well. The children that are coming through now are not like the Pasifika students of ten years ago. So, it's the type of thing that you actually need to get to know your community. You can't read it in a book. You can understand some of the backgrounds, but you really need to know the backgrounds of those learners in front of you.

Overall, the participants' comments conveyed the notion that culturally responsive pedagogical practices derive from a mindset that embraces and values diversity and brings that mindset into daily instruction which resonates with students. That mindset may, however, need guidance and nurturing by way of professional learning and development (PLD). All of the research participants signalled in various ways their desire and commitment for all teaching staff to gain the benefit of PLD of this kind. As Malo said: "So, to motivate staff, they need to feel valued, they need to feel trusted and respected, they need to be given strong professional development opportunities. They need to be modelled, how to celebrate, how to, I think I told you the other day, we have celebrations every Friday morning as part of our staff meeting and the teachers are celebrating the children."

The eight members of the school principal leadership group were also conscious of the need for clear communication with students and their families regarding learning. For them, building effective relationships, setting high expectations for students, and designing a culturally responsive curriculum that acknowledges students' prior knowledge all connect to effective pedagogical practices. In essence, what the participants' comments made clear is that effective teaching practices for Pacific learners must be developed from a belief in each student's uniqueness and competency as a learner. Learning content must therefore achieve the following: pose engaging challenges for the learner but always with appropriate levels of support; provide multiple learning opportunities, with a focus on improving academic language; ensure deliberate and explicit instruction about language as well as learning content; and make productive links with families and communities.

These and the other qualities of effective pedagogical practices that my participants identified and discussed feature in Figure 6.7. Together, these qualities present pedagogically

knowledgeable and competent leaders and teachers as people who know and respect learners, have a vision for and high expectations of them, are culturally inclusive, can recognise potential, and are able to connect with students as individuals and thereby form relationships with them that expedite learning. As McLaughlin et al. (2015) remind us, building strong relationships is part of school leaders' and teachers' effective implementation of principles, curricula and pedagogy directed towards realising sound learning outcomes for their students.

Note: Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 6.7: Study participants' identification of effective pedagogical practices for Pacific learners.

It is convincing for me to know that the pedagogical practices my research participants identified are ones I have often thought about and have experienced during my role as an educational adviser in schools. As a Pacific researcher and educator, I know these pedagogical practices are commensurate with the needs and aspirations of Pacific students in regard to what they want to learn and achieve.

6.2.2.6 Theme 8: Agaga me le loto (spiritual and emotional connections)

In Fa'a-Samoa (Samoan ways), emotional and spiritual values are connected and intertwined. Samoan children, like many other Pacific children, are brought up in an emotional and spiritual environment deeply rooted in their aiga (home), fanua (lands), nu'u (village), and tapuaiga (church) settings. When children leave home to go to school every day, they take these values with them, as they are a very strong component of their cultural capital and funds of knowledge

(Breinholt & Jaeger, 2020). These values are therefore hugely important for their learning. The school principals' voices (Participant Group 3) in particular relayed this perspective. The principals were well aware that their leadership practice needed to incorporate deep understanding of Pacific children's connection to emotional and spiritual values.

Emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) has a strong association with motivation. All children need motivation to drive their learning. Motivation is what pushes them to achieve their goals, to feel more fulfilled and in a position to improve the overall quality of their lives. School leaders and teachers therefore need to be aware of and understand emotional intelligence and what it means for Pacific students' learning, health and wellbeing. Goleman (2006) defined emotional intelligence (EQ) as the ability to identify, use, understand and manage emotions in an effective and positive way. A high EQ helps individuals communicate better, reduce their anxiety and stress, defuse conflicts, improve relationships, empathise with others and effectively overcome life's challenges. Emotional intelligence from the Pacific perspective is infused with the cultural values of alofa (love), fa'aaloalo (respect), agamalu (humility), agalelei (compassion), fetausia'i (reciprocity), and teu le va (nurturing relationships).

I am reminded at this point of Tili, whom we met in Foafoa 1, and his story. As a reminder, seven-year-old Tili, struggling with English, was sent by his teacher to the school principal's office where he met a less than helpful reception and the directive to write a letter of apology to his teacher. Instead, confused and angry, Tili headed outside and took off. The principal glanced out the window, saw Tili, head down, walking through the school gate. After that glance, the principal returned to his work.

Tili's story demonstrates the principal's lack of understanding and sensitivity about the impact that emotional and spiritual values was having for Tili that morning. Tili's language difficulties had made it difficult for him to engage in the writing lesson. Frustrated and confused, he disengaged from the task. By the time the principal saw Tili, the little boy was emotionally overwhelmed. Another principal with deep cultural knowledge and understanding of spiritual and emotional experiences would have sat down with Tili and talked through what was happening for him. One of the common issues identified in the literature about Pacific students' disengagement from learning at school is their principals' and teachers' lack of understanding of why and how Pacific students learning can be affected by deep emotional and spiritual causes (see, for example, Ferguson et al., 2008; Spiller, 2012, 2013).

It was therefore exciting for me to find the principals who participated in my research clearly acknowledging the need for school leaders and teachers to understand the emotional and spiritual dimensions in Pacific students' lives and how these contribute to these students' educational outcomes. Ropati, one of the principals, made clear that in order to fully appreciate the emotional and spiritual aspects of Pacific students' lives, the principals themselves have to have a strong connection to those students and their families: "I feel emotionally connected. I have a soft spot for many of our Pasifika families. They are trying really hard to take care of their families and support their children through school. I have an emotional connection to our Pasifika children and families."

Leaders who are emotionally and spiritually connected to Pacific students readily show empathy and respect for them while at the same time building relationships with them, typically through conversations, all of which advantage learning. Paulo's comment quoted in Foafao 5 that "children won't always remember what you taught them, but they'll remember how you made them feel" sums up what that empathy and respect can mean for students' long-term wellbeing.

Some of the participating principals advised school leaders to show their feelings and not be afraid to do so. Iulia, for example, said: "I think that comes down to just showing families and the kids that we care, and just have a smile out there, share a smile with them. And don't be afraid to show your feelings. I think that's all part of it, that this life is part of having a family and that's important for them as well." Iulia also added comments (also quoted in Foafao 5) about the positive consequences of empathetic interactions with students and their families: "I'm a good one for wearing my heart on my sleeve anyways, so I have a great deal of empathy for our families. I'm able to relate to them and help support them in that way as well. It's one of my greatest assets." However, and again as quoted in Foafao 5, Iulia said her ability to empathise had the potential to take an emotional toll on her. "But it's also probably my biggest negative as well, because I could feel deeply about the people and their situations."

Three of the participating principals were involved in the "Samoa Malaga" experience offered under the auspices of the Pasifika Education Initiative from 2003 to 2019. This initiative was one I developed for principals, teachers, and initial teacher education students, and it involved bringing these people to Samoa and inviting them to live in Samoan villages. The cultural experiences that these people had at this time gave them the confidence and competence to plan and implement culturally responsive practices for their Pacific students (Allen et al., 2009; Taleni, 2017).

The above-mentioned three principals spoke highly of their experiences in Samoa. They especially mentioned the understanding they gained, in authentic village contexts, of the emotional and spiritual elements of life for Samoan people. They experienced the emotional element through engagement in deep cultural events and activities, where they saw acts of generosity, hospitality, reciprocity, respect and service. Their understanding of the value of spirituality came from participation in family prayers, Sunday worship, close connection to the fanua (family lands), and exposure to family stories and cultural narratives, including myths and legends. They felt grateful for and emotional about the service and love they received from the people of the village.

The spiritual element for Pacific people is intrinsic to our being at one with our faith and fanau. For school leaders, understanding the ways of Pacific peoples means knowing and acknowledging how central spirituality and faith is for Pacific children and how these dimensions influence and intersect with their learning and wellbeing. This consideration has links to research conducted by Karaka-Clarke (2020), which shows that, in today's world, individual Māori may encompass traditional Māori culture to different extents. In his article, Karaka-Clarke outlines how te ao Māori (the collective Māori worldview) can form a unique common milieu for Māori that is guided by wairua (spirituality). Similarly, the apposition of Pacific and Western cultures offers opportunity to understand and be aware of the faith-based nature of many Pacific peoples. This faith-based aspect ties into the different dimensions of life and wellbeing that include spiritual wellbeing. Without doubt, knowing this aids understanding of and connection with Pacific people.

As a Pacific researcher and an educator, I see school leaders' understanding of these key values as integral to helping them navigate their leadership in their schools. Consequently, should a situation like that featuring Tili eventuate, leaders would know how to deal with it in the most culturally appropriate responsive manner, and they would ensure their teachers could do likewise. Essentially, increasing our cultural capacity as educational leaders means being fully engaged in learning about the culture of our students (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), understanding them, and changing the ways we "look" at different worldviews (Allen et al., 2009; Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2016).

6.3 The Fala of Soalaupulega

The fala (mat), now known as the Fala of Soalaupulega, is complete. It has been woven from the laufala (strands) of ta'imua (lead from the front), tausimea (gatekeeper), tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing the space); fa'asinomaga (identity), alafua (vision for learning), auala a'oa'o (pedagogy), and o le agaga ma le loto (emotional and spiritual connections). All eight of these strands are the eight identified themes that emerged from my analysis of the study participants' transcribed discussions and interviews. All have contributed critically and effectively to making my Fala of Soalaupulega. I now roll out and lay down this completely woven fala as the means of presenting answers to my two research questions concerning educational leadership qualities and strategies effective in improving Pacific learners' educational achievement, health, and wellbeing.

To expedite the link between the mat's eight woven strands (themes) and answers to my research questions, I bring in 10 cultural metaphors that allow me to unpack the meanings presented in these themes. My aim in doing this is to take advantage of the opportunity to utilise cultural knowledge to interpret the themes. These metaphors are integral to the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my thesis and my way of interpreting its findings. That work has required me to plunge into the moana loloto o mafaufauga (ocean of deep thinking). Metaphors have a Fa'a-Samoa depth of meaning for me that aligns with my way of thinking and meaning-making. It makes authentic sense for me to complete this Foafoa in this way. As pointed out in the early childhood education curriculum *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017, p, 62), "Pacific approaches typically use and value metaphors and models, which provide an authentic means of connecting the familiar with the unfamiliar."

6.3.1 The Metaphors

Table 6.1 presents the analysed themes highlighted by each of the three participant groups, as well as the connections between each theme and one or more of the 10 metaphors. The richness of meaning taken from these connections is woven throughout the remainder of this Foafoa.

Table 6.1: Key themes of the Fala of Soalaupulega and their corresponding metaphors

Themes	Highlighted by these leaders	Connection between themes and metaphors
Ta'imua (lead from the front)	Indigenous	Ula (lei) Upega (fishing net) Fala (mat) Fau (fibre) Taula (anchor) Manu (bird) Aoa tree
Tausimea (keeper of family measina/treasures)	Indigenous	Taula (anchor) Manu (bird) Aoa tree Fau (fibre)
Tautua (service)	Indigenous Community School	The bird of Utufiu Foafoa (conch shell) Upega (fishing net) Fau (fibre) Taula (anchor) Popo (coconut) Manu (bird)
Teu le va (nurturing relationships)	Indigenous Community School	Foafoa (conch shell) Ula (lei) Fala (mat) Fau (fibre) Taula (anchor) Popo (coconut) Manu (bird)
Fa'asinomaga (identity)	Indigenous Community School	The bird of Utufiu Ula (lei) Fau (fibre) Popo (coconut) Manu (bird) Taula (anchor)
Alafua (vision)	Community School	The bird of Utufiu Foafoa (conch shell) Aoa tree Fala (mat) Fau (fibre) Popo (coconut) Manu (bird)

Themes	Highlighted by these leaders	Connection between themes and metaphors
Auala a'oa'o (pedagogy)	School	The bird of Utufiu Upega (fishing net) Manu (bird)
O le agaga ma le loto (emotional and spiritual connections)	School	Aoa tree The bird of Utufiu Foafoa (conch shell)

6.3.3.1 Metaphor 1: Manu nai Utufiu (the bird of Utufiu)

Ua sausau fia lele le manu nai Utufiu | The bird of Utufiu flaps its wings ready to fly

This metaphor belongs to and originates from my fanua (birthplace) of Utufiu. The bird is one that belongs to Utufiu. The bird flapping its wings, ready to fly, conveys excitement and a determination to go and conquer the challenges out there, to achieve success. The metaphor reminds me of my longing aspiration and motivation to make a difference for Pacific learners' education. These learners include my own children, the children who belong to my extended family, and the children of my village.

The themes of ta'iala (vision), tautua (service), auala o'oa'o (pedagogy), and fa'asinomaga (identity) form strong connections with this metaphor. The flapping of the bird's wings at dawn heralds preparation for a new day of exploration and navigation. The metaphor hints, educationally, at the value of having a ta'iala (a vision) with associated high expectations for success and preparing to make a real difference for learners' education. My own vision for my people motivated and guided my preparation to leave my birthplace of Utufiu to come to Aotearoa New Zealand. This vision came to me as a result of my experiences of growing up in a poor home and village environment, and it motivated me to make a difference for our Samoan children's learning in Aotearoa.

The 'ua sausau fia lele le manu nai Utufiu' metaphor challenges learners to set high expectations for their own success, to reach their full potential through perseverance and hard work. While the metaphor is primarily about students recognising their skills and unlocking their potential, it also indicates to students that life is a journey they can plan out and feel excited about. The metaphor's connection to the value of service centres on the service that leaders and teachers give to their students through education, while its connection with the theme of pedagogy concerns leaders' and teachers' implementation of pedagogical practices effective in improving learning for students. The flapping of the bird's wings in the morning

that indicates its excitement as it prepares to fly away to explore a new environment is indicative of the excitement leaders and teachers experience when they see students making progress in their learning.

The fourth connection is that of identity (fa'asinomaga). The bird of Utufiu belongs to my fanua (birthplace) of Utufiu. Although the nature of this bird is to fly away to explore other environments, it always returns to its habitat of Utufiu. The bird's nature presents a constant reminder about our cultural identity, which is that wherever we go, we have a place to return to at the end of the day. Leaders in schools can be strong reinforcers of identity, by contributing to each student's uniqueness in meaningful ways. These ways must be ones that value and recognise the importance of maintaining students' identities, cultures and languages because doing so can contribute to students' engagement, learning and achievement. This process is all about identifying what engages each student and providing that for them. When school leaders lead by example in this important area, teachers can follow. Ua sausau fia lele le manu nai Utufiu; the bird of Utufiu flapping its wings ready to fly signals this whole notion of leaders preparing students for the future—a future that gives them security, happiness and prosperity.

6.3.3.2 Metaphor 2: Foafoa (the conch shell)

When the sound of the Foafoa is heard in the village, everyone comes together to the fale fono (meetinghouse) to prepare for a dialogue. This metaphor signals the importance of bringing people together to collaborate in seeking solutions for matters that affect the lives of people in the community. It symbolises unity, collaboration and inclusivity, all for the purpose of achieving something together. Four themes connect to this metaphor—tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), o le agaga ma le loto (emotional and spiritual connections), and ta'iala (vision).

Tautua (service) is demonstrated through the conch shell's role as a means of communication. The sound of the shell brings people together to collaboratively discuss matters that affect the lives of the community and to resolve any issues. The sound of the shell also signifies the importance of having a voice or speaking up about matters that are important to the community. In educational terms, the conch shell echoes the need to create opportunity for Pacific students to navigate learning in the best possible environment, that is, an environment which is culturally inclusive and sufficiently responsive to meet the students' educational aspirations. When people come together to dialogue, they teu le va (build and nurture relationships) with one another so that they can continue to work together to achieve

their vision for the future. They also utilise the opportunity to fofolla le fala—spread the mat and dialogue in genuine, meaningful ways.

The echoing sound of the Foafoa furthermore reminds the people of the village of their spiritual connection to their fanua (land), talatu'u a aiga ma nu'u (family and village narratives), gafa (genealogy), and ancestors. The other three themes intertwine with this spiritual connection in the sense that leaders must show respect for those who have passed on by deeply recognising the vision that these individuals had for their people. Leaders must also continue to nurture the space for better communication and continue to serve families and communities through their role in education. The Foafoa metaphor connects these four essential themes to Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (Section 3.2.2 in Foafoa 3).

6.3.3.3 Metaphor 3: Ula (the lei)

The metaphor of the ula (lei) symbolises the value of connectedness and unity in building relationships and partnerships with people. The ula metaphor therefore embraces the themes of teu le va (nurturing relationships), ta'imua (lead from the front), and fa'asinomaga (identity). These themes are about empowering teaching and learning so that children achieve. The flowers that beautify the ula are bound together by a string or fibre. This string signifies leaders' responsibility (ta'imua) for bringing the people in the village or the community together (teu le va) and for nurturing them to grow and become good leaders in the future. The role of the string that ties the flowers together is also similar to the role of good leaders in families, schools, organisations, churches and communities.

Effective leaders influence people to be united rather than divided. This aspect of leadership is captured in the Samoan saying, "O le ta'ape a nu'u potopoto" | "In a united village, even when there is time to go separate ways, the spirit of togetherness and cohesiveness remains." As the leaders of their schools, principals are the Ta'imua, the people who lead from the front. They facilitate bringing the teaching staff and the wider school community together to build relationships and to develop effective policy and curriculum implementation plans for the school.

The spirit of working together to achieve a common vision for Pacific learners is also captured in the ula metaphor. Teu le va—nurturing the sacred space and building effective relationships—means fostering effective engagement between and among school leaders, teachers, students, families and the wider community. Ongoing engagement and dialogue in education relies on teu le va. Effective building and nurturing of relationships, in turn, requires

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respect and reciprocity. These behaviours open many doors, making it possible to embed more productive ways, all with the aim of bringing greater prosperity to the community.

The ula metaphor also reminds schools about the importance of engaging with families, but with the care and pleasure associated with gathering flowers. When families are authentically engaged, they contribute their voices to the fabric of the school; power comes from the voices of families and community. When community people are united, everyone has the desire and motivation to make a worthwhile contribution to the cause. The ula metaphor primarily speaks to unity, collaboration and a desire to make a difference, values at the heart of Soalaupulega Samoa Theory.

6.3.3.4 Metaphor 4: The aoa tree

This metaphor presents the notion of protection and security for a better future. It aligns with the themes of 'o le loto ma le agaga' (emotional and spiritual connections) and alafua (vision). As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the aoa is a tree native to Samoa. Large in size and shape, it gives shelter to smaller trees and plants in the forest, guarding them from natural disasters. Like the nurturing, protective role of the aoa tree, good education protects and secures children's future wellbeing. The aoa metaphor therefore stresses the importance of caring for and providing an educational environment that is culturally responsive to and inclusive of Pacific learners, thus enabling them to flourish in their learning and wellbeing. Education of this kind brings stability and a solid foundation for Pacific peoples' young generations. It opens doors to educational success and career opportunities and pathways.

The gigantic aoa tree also generates a spiritual environment in the forest. This environment is peaceful and well cared for. Effective leaders are caring leaders. They value the sense of security that comes from valuing students' identities, languages and cultures. The physical presence of the aoa tree signals protection as does the physical, spiritual and emotional ethos of leaders able to effectively lead learning for Pacific students.

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The alafua (vision) theme connects to the aoa metaphor in the sense of young people feeling sufficiently secure and confident enough to develop a clear sense of the educational direction they want to follow. That foresight motivates them to work hard at school and to persevere through challenging situations and experiences. They bring to their learning their understanding of the importance of their cultural values, evident in the way they work hard to follow and achieve their vision and aspirations for the future. For these young people, having a clear vision about the future is like the stance of the large aoa tree—steady, immovable, firm and secure. The message here for educational leaders is that Pacific children's learning needs to be guided from the outset by a clear vision for their future achievement and wellbeing.

6.3.3.5 Metaphor 5: The upega (net)

Tu'utu'u le upega i le loloto | Cast the net into deeper waters

The upega (net) metaphor presents the notion of sustainability, responsibility and community engagement. The role of the upega in the village context is to provide villagers with fish for daily sustenance. Villagers take the net out to sea to catch fish and share the catch among all villagers. The art of fishing requires good fishing experience, knowledge of the sea, and the effort of putting this knowledge into action. "Tu'utu'u le upega i le loloto" | "Cast the net deeper" is a motivational saying that comes from the art of fishing. This art includes knowledge that fishing in shallow waters tends to be less successful than fishing in deep waters. The upega metaphor presents the notions of perseverance, hard work and having high expectation for success. The three themes best suited to it are tautua (service), ta'imua (lead from the start), and auala a'oa'a (pedagogy).

The upega metaphor captures the notion of giving tautua (service) to the community. It calls for extending meaningful service to people and contributing to someone's life. The Pacific community leaders who participated in my research used a variety of words to express how they were giving service as leaders. These words included bridge, navigator, motivator, encourager, influencer, explorer, instrument and builder. The leaders were carrying out these roles to the best of their ability, but always ready to cast the net deeper and wider as required.

Casting the net deeper also resonates with the theme of ta'imua because leaders have a responsibility to guide people in the right direction, to take them safely into "deeper waters" to achieve goals. As leaders, they lead by example, demonstrating perseverance, showing courage, having high expectations for performance, and exhibiting a "never give up" attitude. The art of fishing includes knowledge of the ocean and the skills to catch fish. This art is similar

to the art of teaching in that teachers must know how to implement curricular content effectively and to use pedagogical practices well suited to helping students learn and succeed in their learning. The upega metaphor reminds me of what I wrote in my Master's thesis (Taleni, 2017, p. 62):

> When teachers and principals accomplish the pearl harvest, they demonstrate obligation and commitment to Pasifika education. Their desire to cast their nets deeper is a stepping up with a genuine willingness to explore and learn about Pasifika students' cultural worldviews as a support to implement effective strategies and approaches to raise Pasifika student engagement and achievement.

6.3.3.6 Metaphor 6: The fala (mat)

Fofola le fala se'i ta talanoa | Spread the mat and prepare to dialogue

The fala (mat) metaphor brings in Talanoa, that is, dialogue and conversation, which may be directed towards helping to resolve a challenge or difficulty. Similarly, the saying "Fofola le fala se'i ta talanoa" | "Spread the mat and talk" encapsulates the notion of contributing to the fabric of the community through actions and sharing words of wisdom that guide decision making and the formulation of solutions. The mat metaphor also presents the values of hospitality and generosity in the true sense of welcoming and inviting people to come into the fale, to sit down on the mat, and to participate in face-to-face Talanoa.

The themes best connected to the fala metaphor are alafua (vision), teu le va (nurturing relationships), and ta'imua (lead from the front). These themes speak succinctly to the importance of leaders and teachers engendering Talanoa (open dialogue) with families, parents, and community so that the latter grouping can contribute their ideas and perspectives to the planning and development of school programmes and curricula. Fofola le fala sei ta talanoa signals the importance of the matters that people come together to discuss. As village leaders sit on the mat for Talanoa, they nurture relationships that are integral to ensuring deep conversation about the visions the village and community have for their children. This process equates with the school context of principal and staff sitting together to talk about important matters that can contribute to realising the vision for the school and its students.

Ta'imua (lead from the front) is the premier theme here, and it is the one the Indigenous Samoan leaders (Participant Group 1) identified and strongly related to the mat metaphor. During a Talanoa, the leader who is the Ta'imua must lead the Talanoa from the

front. He or she must speak up, set the tone of the dialogue and lay out for everyone present the clear purpose of the Talanoa. The people gathered together on the mat must at all times value the sacredness of the mat space on which the dialogue is held, for it is here that they nurture the relationships with one another that enable them to successfully collaborate on how best to meet the vision they have for the future of their children and young people.

6.3.3.7 Metaphor 7 Fau (wood, fibre)

Soso'o le fau male fau | Connect another piece of wood or fibre with another piece of wood or fibre

This metaphor originates from the building of a Samoan house, where one piece of fau (wood) is bound to another piece of fau to make the resultant beam or plank of wood stronger. However, with respect to the educational context, I prefer the alternative translation of fibre; thus, the joining of one fibre with another to produce a longer, stronger fibre. The concept of binding together captured in this metaphor encapsulates the important role of leadership in bringing people together. The themes best suited to this metaphor are fa'asinomaga (identity), alafua (vision), taimua (lead from the front), teu le va (nurturing relationships), and tautua (service).

The strength that comes from joining one fibre with another is the same as the strength that comes from the unity that prompts people to build relationships and work together to achieve a common goal. This joining also has relevance to the context of children transitioning from early childhood education to schools and the obligation that everyone associated with schooling has to support those children throughout their years in the education system.

Pacific children's confidence in their identities, languages and cultures can be understood as a metaphorical fau (mat), and the transition from early childhood education settings to school as the process of connecting the fibres from one environment to another—physically, culturally, linguistically, and spiritually (Taleni et al., 2023). Strengthening identity (fa'asinomaga), language and culture is an ongoing desire and aspiration of Pacific parents and communities. It is also their expectation that their children will perform well academically and maintain their identities, languages and cultures throughout the process of achieving and succeeding. This expectation is captured in the vision (alafua) set down in the Pasifika education plan for 2013 to 2017: "Five out of five Pasifika learners participating, engaging and achieving in education, secure in their identities, languages and cultures and contributing fully

to Aotearoa New Zealand's social, cultural, and economic wellbeing" (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 3).

People in the village use fau (fibre) to make strings and ropes that they use for the everyday activities and tasks of life. One piece of fau is not strong or long enough to make a strong, long rope. Many fau must therefore be bound together to produce such a rope. Similarly, the collective voices of parents, community, leaders, and teachers need to "bind" together to set a good clear vision for Pacific children's success in schools. Soso'o le fau ma le fau also, of course, signals the importance of effective leadership to lead (ta'imua) and guide the school and its broader community in devising and realising that vision. The fau metaphor values the contribution that every individual makes to the fabric of a community, including the community made up of the school and the children's families and their communities. Thus, it is not just the school leader but the whole school community in its broadest sense that must find ways to achieve the school vision.

The fau metaphor also points to the importance of leaders nurturing positive ongoing relationships (teu le va) with teachers, students, families and the wider community throughout this process. In guiding the setting of a vision for the school, valuing and acknowledging the children's identities, languages and cultures, continuing to lead from the front and maintain productive collegial relationships, leaders demonstrate the true meaning of tautua (service).

6.3.3.8 Metaphor 8 Taula (anchor)

This metaphor presents the notions of security, safeguard and protection. All of the research participants spoke intently about the impact that effective leadership had for leading positive changes in their respective areas of responsibility. For them, this aspect of the leadership role was like the anchor (taula) of va'a (a canoe). As the Indigenous Samoan leaders' group unanimously agreed, "Good leaders lead by example. They lead with actions not just words."

Like the taula, which holds and stops the canoe from drifting off its base, leaders do the same for the people they lead. A great leader directs the people, community, village, school and organisation in the right direction and makes sure they keep heading that way. Leaders give people a strong sense of security and protection. Leaders are the anchor, the base point, of any school, community and educational organisation.

The taula metaphor relates to five themes of effective leadership. Leaders who exhibit this form of leadership provide service (tautua) to the community, lead from the front (ta'imua), continue to build and nurture relationships (teu le va), are responsible gatekeepers

(tausimea) who allocate resources appropriately, and are people who always advocate for the maintenance of children's identities, languages and cultures (fa'asinomaga). Of the people who participated in my study, the Indigenous Samoan leaders and the community leaders in particular spoke of the importance of safeguarding Pacific peoples' knowledge, especially Indigenous epistemologies and native languages. They saw culture, language and identity as the children's anchor in life. These, according to the participants, are the greatest resources for Pacific children and the catalyst for their learning. These "safeguarding" leaders are the anchor of Pacific children's future and the future of their families and communities.

> *When I was young, one of my responsibilities in the village was to take care of the canoe. The tasks included cleaning the canoe and putting the anchor down. One night, I forgot to put it down. The canoe drifted off during the night and got lost in the ocean. My father was not happy. As a result of this experience, he gave me a lesson that I will never forget. He spoke about the importance of the canoe in the village for fishing. Fishing, he reminded me, provides daily sustenance for the elderly in the village as well as our family. He then spoke of the importance of the anchor in our lives in terms of our always holding onto and valuing our identities. When we lose our identity, language and culture, he said, we are like a drifting canoe, lost to the ocean, without hope. The simple mistake I made in not putting down the anchor adversely affected the village, and I well remember the elderly not having fish for dinner.*

6.3.3.9 Metaphor 9: Popo (coconut)

E le sua se lolo ise popo e tasi | One coconut is not enough to make coconut oil

This metaphor symbolises the importance of collectivism, collaboration, inclusivity and sharing. The four themes that best connect to it are tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), identity (fa'asinomaga), and vision (alafua). Any community faced with difficult situations and experiences requires the efforts and strength of everyone in it to work together to find and implement solutions. An apt Samoan saying in this context is "O lau ato mea'ai, ma la'u ato mea'ai ua lava ma totoe mea'ai mo le fono" | "With your basket of food and my basket of food, we have enough to feed everyone." School leadership requires support from everyone associated with the school to achieve the vision set for its students.

Collectivism and inclusivity are the strengths of any village, for these are the ways of being and surviving in this challenging world. Collaboration built of strengths and experiences can overcome challenging situations. When the whole village comes together as one to provide

support for any village project, they give and implement tautua (service) to the village. They continue to nurture relationships with one another (teu le va) in a harmonious environment. And they maintain children's identities, languages and cultures (fa'asinomaga) in accordance with achieving their ongoing vision (alafua) for the village's wellbeing. The manner in which the village models the spirit of togetherness and cohesiveness contributes something special to school leadership, namely ways of guiding and directing the school and community in the right direction for the betterment of students' learning.

6.3.3.10 Metaphor 10: Manu (bird)

E tu manu, ae le tu logologo | Birds fly and stop to rest but parents never stop giving words to their children.

This metaphor refers to leaders who constantly give good counsel and words of advice to their respective communities, villages or schools. "E tu manu, ae le tu logologo" expresses the fact that while birds do fly around, they stop and stand on tree branches to rest. Likewise, good leaders and parents never stop giving words of encouragement and advice to their communities and families, as evident in these two significant Samoan sayings: "O le matua alofa e le mapu le fa'atonu o lana fanau" | "Loving and caring parents never stop talking to their children about their future" and "O tama a tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala, a'o tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o la'au | "The offspring of humans are fed with words but the offspring of birds are fed with seeds and flowers." In short, effective leaders always keep the communication channels open and ongoing. Effective school leaders also lead with the sense and spirit of "ola magafagafa" (thoughtfulness), which means they never stop thinking about the future of their students, families and communities.

The themes that best suit this metaphor include tautua (service), teu le va (nurturing relationships), vision (alafua), ta'imua (lead from the front), tausimea (gatekeeper), fa'asinomaga (identity), and auala a'oa'o (pedagogy). Good educational leaders always give thoughtful, reasoned advice and encouragement to everyone associated with their sphere of influence, whether it is the school, its community or an educational organisation. Within schools, these leaders lead from the front, setting the direction for the school and giving advice on how to maintain that direction. Facilitating advice and encouragement from others, especially teachers, for the betterment of the school, is a form of pedagogy (auala a'oa'o), conveyed with all the manners of respect and emanating from the heart. The manu metaphor also brings in the notion of leaders as tausimea (gatekeepers), who always respond to the needs

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of people through fair allocation of the resources available. These leaders furthermore continue to foster relationships with people (teu le va), and they always value the importance of identity (fa'asinomaga). All these attributes and actions are part of the tautua (service) that never ends, just as the expression "E179aini179au ae le tu logologo" says.

6.4. Summative Comments and Limitations

6.4.1 Fa'amategataua

As Foafoa 6 draws to a close, Nafanua's precious weapon of war the Fa'amategataua (see Section 3.2.2 in Foafoa 3) comes to mind. The Fa'amategataua was legendary Samoan leader Nafanua's fourth and last weapon of war. Her other three weapons were Tafesilafa'i, Ulimasao and Fa'auliulito. Of the four weapons, Fa'amategataua was the ultimate weapon. It was made especially for Nafanua to help her win the war she fought—to fa'amate le taua (end the war). This notion of decisively achieving a goal contextualises the meaning of Fa'amategataua in the context of effective educational leadership as "perfection and high expectations".

Fa'amategataua also encapsulates the essence and value of my research participants' voices and perspectives, for these are the keys that will help unlock the "doors of high-quality leadership" in schools for the betterment of Pacific children's education, health and wellbeing. I think of the depth of leadership knowledge of pedagogical theory and practice that the school principals shared when talking of their leadership experiences and perspectives. I also think of the leadership expertise and wisdom shared by the Pacific community leaders and the Indigenous Samoan leaders' epistemological perspectives and wisdom. All of these contributions are the genuine measina (treasures) that my participants so kindly and generously gifted me.

6.4.2. Limitations of this Research

All research studies need to be evaluated within the context of elements (e.g, methods) that might potentially compromise the validity, reliability and generalisability of those findings. A brief account of the elements relevant to my doctoral study follows.

6.4.2.1 Time

While qualitative research examines social processes in depth, the large amount of fieldwork data and its analysis and interpretation can be time consuming and therefore impact on the time

available to carefully scrutinise and cross-check the data. For example, reading and rereading participants' voices to fully analyse and interpret the meanings in their scripts took many hours of work. However, I persevered with this task, bringing to it all the time I considered necessary. The richness and depth of information obtained from those voices made this lengthy process worthwhile and culturally invaluable.

6.4.2.2 Covid-19

The arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic and consequent lockdown coincided with the time I intended to gather my research data. My intention was to include leaders residing in Samoa, which meant I needed to travel there (as mentioned in Foafoa 3). Lockdown meant I could not do this. I believe that this inability impacted on the breadth of information I obtained for this thesis.

6.4.2.3 Participant numbers

Qualitative studies tend to have small numbers of participants, which can result in the research not being taken seriously or recognised by other academic researchers and policymakers (Griffin, 2004). These professionals tend to be committed to quantitative research methodologies and outcomes because they perceive them as "scientific". Although my research involved only 28 individuals across the three participant groups, I consider that the large quantity and quality of information gained from these participants was sufficiently robust to provide valid answers to my research questions. I offer the same rejoinder to any claim that the inclusion of just eight school leaders from Christchurch schools might not have been sufficiently representative of the views about leadership relative to Pacific student educational achievement held by principals across all primary and secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

6.4.2.4 Researcher bias

Opponents of qualitative methodology tend to say that qualitative researchers are biased because of their embeddedness in the research. This critique comes from the assumption that researchers can and should be objective and apolitical in their research activities (Griffin, 2004). I acknowledge that bias was possible in my research, especially my interpretation of the data. However, I was rigorous with respect to cross-checking my coding and analyses of the transcribed interviews and discussions against my findings (the themes) and interpretations of them. In addition, the objective and apolitical assumption can be challenged as a myth. No

researcher, whether qualitative or quantitative in orientation, can be absolutely objective, apolitical and value free. Regardless of endeavour to be objective and without political thinking, the act of being human means the act of research can never be value free.

Further, from my position as a Pacific researcher, I know that qualitative research is more appropriate for engagement in an Indigenous cultural research framework. It is more respectful of the people and their cultures (Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2018). I was certainly aware of my need to be transparent about who I am and to recognise the cultural learnings, bilingual knowledges and lived experiences that have shaped me and brought me to this doctoral research. As Willig (2001, p. 10) emphasises, those of us who are researchers always need to recognise the importance of "reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life, and social identities have shaped the research … [and] how the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers."

6.5 The Fala (Mat) of Soalaupulega

And now, at last, I present the Fala (Mat) of Soalaupulega, a fala carefully woven from its beginning to its completion. Many people have contributed to its creation. It represents the fabric and masterpiece of the village, the aiga, the church, the community, and especially all the schools around Aotearoa New Zealand that Pacific students attend. My own ancestors, my family, my village and community members both past and present all contributed to the weaving of this fala. My research participants are among its strongest woven strands. The many educators (past and present) that I have worked with over many years in education are contributors, too, as are so many Pacific families and communities in Aotearoa. All put their hearts and souls into the weaving of this special fala.

Now the Foafoa—the conch shell—is blowing once again, a signal for all contributors to and weavers of the fala to come together to celebrate the eight major themes of effective educational leadership identified from my doctoral research and woven into the mat. These eight themes also serve as placemats on the fala. Each represents values and qualities that educational leaders need to embrace and to facilitate in others so as to help advance Pacific young people's education, health and wellbeing. I am confident that these findings are the key educational leadership qualities that can help unlock the doors that have held Pacific students

back and thus free them to realise their full potential as learners, as people, as future leaders and as contributors to their families, communities, society and the economy,

Figure 6.8 depicts these eight educational leadership qualities. As both the vital strands of the Fala of Soalaupulega and the placemats put on it, they are the key leadership qualities that will help untangle the complex issues in schools that seem to continually slow improvement in Pacific students' educational achievement. However, as a saying in Samoa puts it, "Ole upega e fili i le po ae talatala i le ao" | "The net that tangled in the night became untangled in the morning,". This untangling for the betterment of Pacific students' education, health and wellbeing requires all educational leaders to enact and to model for others, especially teachers, these eight themes of effective leadership in a deep and deliberate act of implementation. The messages within these themes are so deep and rich that they need to be fully incorporated and embedded into leadership and pedagogical practice.
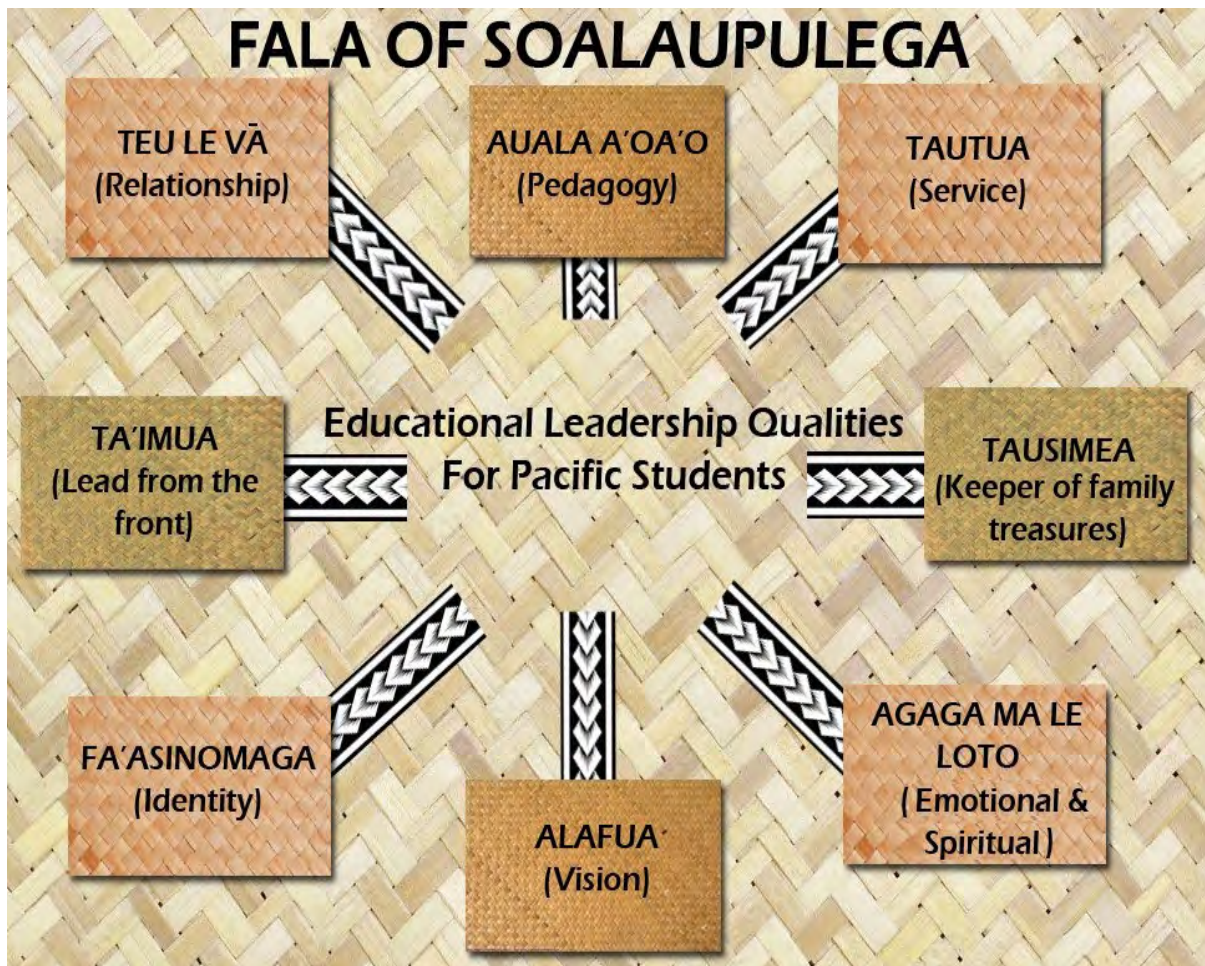
**Note:** Figure developed by Taleni for the purposes of this thesis. © Tufulasi Taleni.

Figure 6.8: The Fala of Soalaupulega.

The eight quintessential themes (placemats) emerging from my thesis also illuminate and provide guidance on ways to develop more robust policies within ministries of education, not only in Aotearoa New Zealand, but perhaps also in countries such as Australia and Canada that are also seeking ways to improve the education, health and wellbeing of their Indigenous populations. Culturally inclusive policies that sit alongside school leaders' and teachers' professional development are likewise critical if true change is to occur for marginalised people. School leadership needs vision, where understanding of the culture that surrounds the emotional and spiritual wellbeing for learners is clear and transparent. In exemplifying "Fofola le fala se'i ta talanoa" | "Spread the mat so we can talk," the Fala of Soalaupulega offers a fala fofola (open mat) upon which students' families and communities can challenge educational policies and practices, always talking and suggesting from their places of respect, humility, commitment, teu le va (nurtured relationships), and alofa (love) for their children.

In order for an effective Soalaupulega (a discussion that leads to positive change) to occur, the weaving of the eight key placemats needs to be instigated and directed by ta'imua— leading from the front. Each placemat serves as a critical part of the approach needed to help untangle and remedy the complexities facing our marginalised and underserved Pacific people within the Aotearoa New Zealand education system.

As my research draws to its end, I keep reminding myself not to lose track of that other metaphor important to my research topic: O le Fa'atamasoali'iga a tautai matapalapala—the soul-searching, far-reaching voyage of a Tautai, a Master Navigator. The voyaging and navigation implications of this metaphor encompass not only the challenges I experienced during my thesis journey, but also, and most importantly, the challenges laid out in front of school principals to be more effective in leading and implementing the changes required to ensure better educational, health, and wellbeing outcomes for Pacific students. In the va'a (canoe) a true Tautai, as leader and Master Navigator during a far-reaching voyage, continues to persevere, to engage in the soul-searching and conquering of the confronting encounters and challenges that will bring all who voyage with him or her safely to their destination. So, too, will true effective leaders in school environments steer the way for their school to reach the destination of student success.

I now move to Foafoa 7, the final Foafoa and the conclusion of this Soalaupulega. The sound of the Foafoa is about to sound one more time.
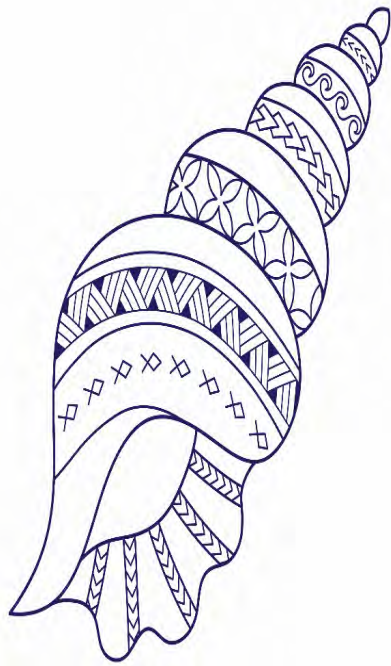
Foafoa 7

Taualuga

Conclusion

O le upega o Pili e tautau, 'ae fagota

The net is now hanging up (to dry), but it will soon be used for fishing again. This work has come to an end, but it will continue.

My aim in conducting the doctoral research documented in this thesis was to determine educational leadership qualities likely to be effective in improving the educational outcomes, health and wellbeing of Pacific learners in Aotearoa New Zealand schools. Eight such qualities emerged from my analysis of the discussion group and interview data obtained from my three groups of study participants: Indigenous Samoan leaders (Matai), Pacific community leaders, and school leaders (principals).

The eight qualities were tautua (service); teu le va (nurturing relationships); ta'iala (vision); fa'asinomaga (identity); ta'imua (lead from the front); tausimea (keeper of family treasures); loto ma le agaga (emotional and spiritual connections); and auala a'oa'o (pedagogy). All eight contribute to the leadership capacity and capability needed for the lalagaina (weaving) of solutions to advance Pacific children's learning in education and their consequent health and wellbeing. Identification of these qualities is also invaluable for guiding school leaders' professional learning and development and the anticipated flow-on effect on pedagogical practices effective in improving students' learning.

In alliance with these leadership qualities, my study provided me with opportunity to shape a Soalaupulega Samoa Theoretical Research Framework (SSTRF) derived from Soalaupulega Samoa Theory (SST) and described in Foafoa 3. The four foundations—

Tafesilafa'i (relationship), Ulimasao (optimism), Fa'auliulito (visionary), and Fa'amategataua (high expectations)—are all associated with the leadership narrative of esteemed Samoan leader Nafanua, while the nine pillars of leadership arise from the Samoan Indigenous Fa'a-Matai (chiefly) system and are captured in the Taleni Soalaupulega Leadership Framework (TSLF; see Figure 3.4 in Foafoa 3).

The SSTRF guided my doctoral research. I hope that it will also guide future research relating to Pacific peoples. I additionally envisage the model arising out of incorporation of the eight educational qualities into the Fala (Mat) of Soalaupulega (see Section 6.5 of this thesis) as a systematic means of facilitating deep conversations among school leaders and teachers about successful curriculum programme planning and implementation. I recommend that all school leaders and teachers gain a thorough understanding of the SSTRF so they can engage in effective practices designed to address the issues influencing the long-term pattern of educational disengagement and underachievement by Pacific learners in Aotearoa New Zealand. I furthermore consider that schools, if not our education system as a whole, can use the framework to help tackle barriers preventing *any* learners from achieving their potential.

The sound of the Foafoa (conch shell) that has echoed throughout my thesis from its beginning to its end calls out to the importance of my research journey—a journey that has required me to navigate the choppy sea for Pacific students, their families and their communities. At the opening of my study, I started with the Samoan metaphorical expression, "Ua sau fia lele le185aini185a185i Utufiu" | "The bird of Utufiu flaps its wings ready to fly." This saying from my birthplace of Utufiu captures my endeavour in migrating to Aotearoa New Zealand in search of a better future, and to find opportunities to make a difference for Pacific students' education. Here I am now, with these new findings from the moana loloto o mafaufauga (ocean of deep thinking and exploration), gifted to me by the Indigenous, community, and school leaders who shared their wisdom and perspectives on leadership advantageous to Pacific students' learning and wellbeing.

Having come this far, I look back and realise that my whole journey has indeed been about the process of talatalaina ole upega lavelave, that is, untangling the tangled net of adversity so detrimental to the education, health and wellbeing of Pacific children, their families and communities. Deep down, I know my whole education, which started in Samoa when I was very young, then continued in Aotearoa New Zealand, has been about preparing me to address the complexity of this untangling task. Fortunately, I consider that my research has found a way of aiding that untangling, namely the SSTRF. This framework offers a tool

for motivating and inspiring educational leaders to support teachers as well as teacher educators as they plan, develop and implement effective programmes, systems and strategies designed to overcome Pacific students' educational underachievement.

The validity of my research and its outcomes have been driven by my own epistemological and philosophical views, all of which stem from the heart and soul of my cultural upbringing and learning. Such kaupapa is close to my heart. Nafanua's Indigenous narrative guided my research not only in terms of the development of the SSTRF but also through utilisation of her mana (integrity), evident in her leadership qualities and wisdom. The birth of this new Pacific research methodology enables me to offer something back to the educational and research communities, nationally, regionally and globally.

The SSTRF furthermore provides new knowledge for leaders, teacher educators, academics, and policymakers as they come together to engage in Fa'atofalaiga (deep collaborative dialogue) focused on ideas and perspectives relating to improving the situation for Pacific learners. In this way, the framework also provides a new perspective on the effectiveness of decisionmaking processes involving effective leadership that stem from the concept of lalagaga (the art of weaving). In the context of this thesis, lalagaga refers to ideas. I trust that in providing a space for collaboration to untangle the complex matters affecting the lives of Pacific communities, especially those related to education and health, the framework will continue to serve this purpose, including in future research conducted by myself and others.

I consider that my research findings and resultant SSTRF immediately open up three pathways to improvement: sustained professional development for school leaders and teachers about the SSTRF, its eight embedded key educational leadership qualities and their implementation; provision of an auditing model for leadership performance in schools; and workshops focused on using the SSTRF as a model for research methodology and methods from Pacific perspectives. At the national level, I see the framework and its leadership qualities informing policy directed towards lifting the leadership performance of government-sector leaders with respect to the Pacific people of Aotearoa. This development, I believe, would have an advantageous flow-on effect on people working in government departments and associated areas.

An important ongoing research initiative would be to investigate the extent to which Pacific students' achievement is affected (and in what way) by leaders who have received professional development centred on the framework's leadership qualities. This research could be guided by several simple questions: Do these leadership qualities make a real difference for

Pacific students' learning? How do we know? What do these qualities look like in leadership and pedagogical practice? Interviewing students about their schooling experiences under such leadership could also provide powerful research data, while the development of a leadership audit utilising the SST framework and other key findings from my research would be a very useful resource for educational leaders and teachers.

Finally, my research has provided me with new understandings from the heart of Indigenous epistemology, a metaphorical way of thinking that is Fa'a-Samoa yet strengthens alignment with Western leadership qualities. It is exciting for me to capture the dawning of a "new horizon" of thinking, doing, and implementation via my development of the SSTRF. I am happy to now find myself in a space of optimism lit with the vision of all Pacific children, their families and communities living happy and prosperous lives.

The Foafoa continues to blow for all Pacific children to achieve their learning goals, to be healthy and to live lives of wellbeing.
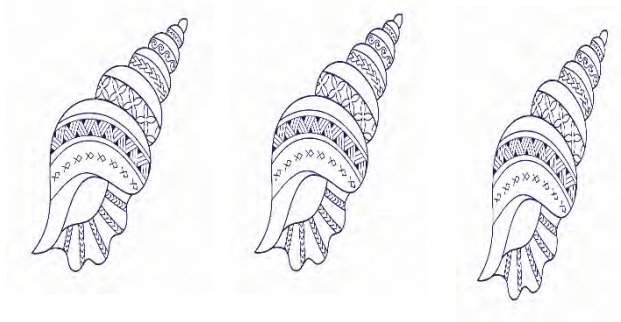
Appendices

Appendix 1. **Upu i le Gagana Samoa: Glossary of Samoan Words**

Agaga ma le loto	spiritual and emotional
Agalelei	compassion
Agamalu	humility
Agava'a fa'apitoa	special qualities
Aiga	family, refers to both forms of family —— immediate and
Aloaia	integrity
Alofa	love
Aoa tree	large Samoan native tree
Aofia fa'atasi	inclusion
Aoga	school
Ato	basket
Auala a'oa'o	pedagogy
Aulotu	congregation
Ekalesia	religion, church
	extended family
Fa'aalo'alo	respect
Fa'afaletui	chiefly collaboration in Samoa
Fa'ale-agaga	spirituality
Fa'ale-aganu'u	cultural ways
Fa'alelegapepe	displaying and presentation of completed mats
Fa'amanuiaga	blessings
Fa'amaoni	honest, sincere, loyal
Fa'a-matai	chiefly ways
Fa'apalepale	caring, patience
Fa'a-Samoa	Samoan way of doing things
Fa'asino	to show how to do something
Fa'asinomaga	belonging
Fa'atalanoaga	interviewing
Fa'atalanoaga	interview
Fa'atamasoali'iga	a journey, a voyage,
Fa'atofalaiga	collaborative process
Fafaga	to feed
Fala	mat
Fale fono	meetinghouse

Fanua	land
Fau	a fibre, name of a tree, to make
Feosiosia'i	to reciprocate
Fetausia'i	reciprocity
Foafoa	conch shell
Fofola	to spread
Fono	meeting, a collaboration
Ietoga	fine mat
Ili le pu	blowing the conch shell
Itulau	chapter
Lalaga	weaving
Lalagaga	art of weaving
Logologo atu	to let them know
Loloto	deep
Mafaufauga	thinking
Magafagafa	thoughtfulness
Malaga	journey
Malamalama'aga	understanding
Manu	bird
Matai	chief, a family title holder
Matua	parents
Measina	treasures / taonga
Nafanua	Goddess, Queen warrior of Samoa
Nu'u	village
Onosa'i	patience
Popo	coconut
Pulenu'u	village mayor
Soalaupulega	deep collaboration
Suafa Matai	Matai title
Ta'iala	handbook, curriculum
Ta'ita'i	a leader
Ta'ita'i alofa	a loving leader
Ta'ita'i toa	a courageous leader
Talanoa	a conversation, dialogue, to talk
Talatalaina	untangling
Taonga	treasure
Tapasa	compass
Tapena	prepare, get ready
Tapu'eina	nurturing
Tatalo	prayer, karakia
Taualoa	respectful, integrity
Taula	anchor
Tausimea	gate keeper, keeper of family treasures

Tautai	Master Navigator
Tautua	service
Teu le va	nurture the space—relationship
Teuina	tidy up
Toa	courage
Toa tamaita'i	Queen warrior
Tolotolo	a cape
Tomai	skills
Totoina	to plant
Ula	a lei
Upega	fishing net
Va	space between
Va fealoa'i	nurturing relationship
Va tapuia	respectful relationship
Va'a	canoe
Va'a tele	big canoe
Vaifofo	solutions

Appendix 2. Research Information Letter in Samoan

Fa'amatalaga (information) mo Matai Samoa ua filifilia e auai ile Saili'iliga fa'ale A'oa'oga

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

Fa'amatalaga (information) mo Matai Samoa ua filifilia e auai ile Saili'iliga fa'ale A'oa'oga.
Autu ole Saili'iliga:

'Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai': 'Fa'atauaina o a'afiaga lelei o suiga taua e tu'uina mai e Ta'ita'i mo le fa'aleleia o aoga ma le ola soifua maloloina o fanau ale Pasefika'.

O a'afiaga o Ta'ita'iga maoa'e mo le faia oni amataga lelei a fanau i a latou a'oa'oga ma le tausia ole soifua maloloina lelei.

Soifua manuia,

Ua ou fa'aleoina ma191aini191a i upu e fai i le faiva o le gataifale, o le a ou le toe ta i Utum'au, pe falo le afa loloa i o outou paia sausaugatā. E manatu ole a ou le o'o iai aua o paia e mai lava ile vavau e o'o ile fa'avavau. O paia o Samoa o paia sausau tetele, ole i'a e ivi'ivia, ole vao filifili, ole fue ma le upega e lavelave e faigata ona autalatalaina. Ae taoto la fa'amaene i le tai loloto i mamalu ma paia ia, ae logo le nai a tea logo fo'i le nai ama ma ou si'i mea i Matautu Sa, i lo tatou Matai sili i le lagi, o ia ole Mata'isau Foafoa. E fa'afetaia lona agalelei matalasi ua fa'aauau ai pea lona alofa mo i tatou uma, ua malutia ai i tatou mai le pepesi ole faama'i faigata e pei ona a'afia ai le lalolagi ma o tatou tagata nu'u.

Fa'amalo la le soifua manuia.

Ae manatu le taofi ole a vili tonu ia le ifi a Maina ma faga tonu le malama e uiga ile a'ano ma le fa'amoemoe ole nei tusi.

O a'u o Leali'ie'e Tufulasifa'atafatafa Ova Taleni, mai le nu'u o Iva i le Fa'asaleleaga, i le motu tele i Salafai. Sa ou ola ane isi o'u aiga ile pitonuu o Vaiafai i Iva ma a'otauina i Samoa, ma galue ai fa'a faiaoga mo tausaga e fa, ae le'i tu'ua Samoa mo Niu Sila ile tausaga e 1985.

O lo'o ou galue nei ile Iunivesite o Kenetaperi, i Mataupu tau Pasefika ile Kolisi Fa'a-faiaoga male Soifua Maloloina ile Iunivesite.

Ole a'ano moni ole nei tusi ole fia fa'ailoa atu ose taumafaiga o lo'o ou fa'ataunu'uina ile taimi nei ile Iunivesite o Kenetaperi ile saili'ina lea o lo'u fa'ailoga Fa'afomai (Doctorate degree) i mataupu tau tomai fa'afilosofia i tulaga lava i poto salalau. E fa tausaga e sailia ai lenei fa'ailoga, ua maea nei le tausaga muamua ae toe tolu tausaga olo'o totoe ona fa'amaeaina lea.

Ose tasi o vaega taua ole sailiga ole nei fa'ailoga, ole aoina mai lea o fa'amatalaga taua mai ia i latou ua valaaulia e auai ile nei Saili'iliga. Ole mafua'aga tonu la lenei ole nei tusi ole fia fa'ailoa atu ma le agaga fiafia ua ou manatu e valaauina lau Susuga ete auai ile nei saili'iliga. Ua ou iloa le tele o tomai ma agava'a fa'ata'ita'i o lo'o i lau Susuga, ole mafua'aga lea ua192aini192aa'aulia ai lau Susuga e auai i le nei fa'amoemoe.

Autu ole Saili'iliga

'A'afiaga taua o tulaga tau Ta'ita'i ile una'i'ina ma le fa'aleleia o tulaga tau Aoga ma le ola soifua maloloina o fanau aoga Pasefika'.

O le fa'anaunautaiga ole Saili'iliga lenei ina ia tatala mai le ato vaili'ili, le tofa fetala'i, le tofa tatala, le Tofa Saili, le tofa loloto, le tofa mamao, tofa liuliu ma le Tofa Manino a Ta'ita'i fa'ale nu'u, ta'ita'i o aoga ma ta'ita'i o fa'alapotopotoga i so outou sao e soalaupule ai le mataupu i le u'unaiga o le192ainia ose amataga lelei i le fa'aleleia o a'oa'oga ma le ola soifua maloloina o fanau ale Pasefika. Ole mau a isi saili'iliga a lelei ma mata'alia le fa'agasologa o a'oa'oga a fanau mai le amataga, ole a avea lea ma auala e faaauau atu ai ini tapula'a lelei ile lumana'i ile sailia o galuega aemaise ole tausia lelei ole soifua maloloina. O le manulauti lea o le Saili'iliga ole a saili ai ni finagalo o i latou ua vala'aulia e auai ile nei Fa'afaletui.

Ole agaga la lea o le fa'atalau'ula atu i lau Susuga e ala ile nei vala'aulia mo lou auai ile nei saili'iliga. O lou sao taua fa'a-ta'ita'i ole a ou fa'atauaina lea ile nei saili'iliga taua fa'ale aoaoga.

O le nei saili'iliga ole a ta'ita'i'ina lea i auala fa'a-Soalaupulega ua fai ma auala su'esu'e mo la'u Sailiiliga.

O nisi nei o Vaega e fa (4) ole a auai i la'u sailiiliga:

1. O ta'ita'i Fa'ale-aganu'u – Matai Samoa.
2. Ta'ita'i o faiganu'u fa'a-Pasefika e aumau i Niu Sila
3. O Ta'ita'i Pule Aoga i Aoga ma Aoga Amata i Niu Sila
4. Tamaiti aoga olo'o a'otauina ile Kolisi Fa'afaiaoga i le Iunivesite o Kenetaperi

Fuafuaga ole Fa'afaletui

E lua feilaoiga ole a fuafuaina mo le nei fa'amoemoe

1. **Feiloaiga muamua** – ole a tatou feiloa'I ai ise Fa'afaletui I totonu lava ole tatou nuu nei e aoina mai ai o outou finagalo e uiga ile saili'iliga.

2. **Feiloaiga lua** – ole a tatou feiloai ai ile fa'aiuga ole saili'iliga, ole a ou tu'uina atu ai fa'aiuga o la'u saili'iliga ma tali ni a outou fesili e fia fesiligia ai a'u e uiga lava ile saili'iliga.

O nei Fa'afaletui e lua ole a fa'ataunu'uina i le tatou nuu nei, ma e tusa ma le lua ile tolu itula le umi ole Fa'afaletui e tasi.

Fa'afoeina ole Sailiiliga

I le taimi ole a aoina mai ai o outou finagalo fa'aalia, ole ou fa'aaogaina le la'au pu'e leo e pu'eina ai o outou siufofoga ina ia maua lelei a outou tali ma finagalo mole fa'amaumauina i lalo.

Ole a malutia ma puipuia malu o outou suafa mai le fa'ailoaina i tusitusiga.

O le a malu puipuia fo'i fa'amatalaga uma ole a outou tu'uina mai e fa'aaoga i le nei saili'iliga ma ole a lokaina uma lea ise pusa e malupuipuia ai ile Iunivesite o Kenetaperi.

So'o se taimi lava ete finagalo ai e te le fia auai ile nei Sailiiliga, ole a mafai lava ona e tu'ua e aunoa ma sou solia oni aiaiga e tu'ua ai.

O le fa'amaoniga o lou auai i le nei Saili'iliga ole a fa'ailoa i feso'otaiga fa'a talanoa e aunoa ma le193ainii'ina ose pepa fa'amaonia.

Afai ae iai ni fa'afesili i so'o se itu e uiga i le nei Saili'iliga fa'amolemole e fa'afeso'otai mai a'u – Leali'ie'e Tufulasi Taleni, po'o la'u supevaisa o Polofesa Jo Fletcher.

Jo Fletcher
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Ia manu teleina lau Susuga ma le aiga aemaise tiute o feagai ai i le aiga, galuega ma le ekalesia. Tatou talo soifua ia mo le nei fa'amoemoe, ta'ita'i atu iai lou soifua ma lo'u ola ile manuia.

Fa'asoifuaina

Leali'ie'e Tufulasifa'atafatafa Ova Taleni

[Your name]

Appendix 3. Research Information for Samoan Indigenous leaders (Matai) (English copy)

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

Talofa lava

It is with love and a lot of pleasure that I present my research information about helping Pasifika students' educational achievement in Aotearoa New Zealand.

You know my roots and with respect I appreciate being able to present this to you for your consideration. My hope is that you will agree to be a participant in a Samoan Matai group, which will give me guidance on my work. I would like your advice on keeping my intended directions true to my Samoan cultural soul.

We know effective educational leadership should support Pasifika students to achieve at school. However, for approximately the last five decades Pasifika students have not achieved in the education system. Ineffective school leadership has not helped students to learn.

My research aims to use Soalaupulega as a model of effective leadership to explore the qualities of educational leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand. I hope this research will help schools to support Pasifika students' learning achievements.

I aim to have three four groups of participants:

1. Samoan Leaders living in Samoa,
2. Pasifika Leaders living in Aotearoa New Zealand,
3. Primary schools principals

I will meet with each group in different ways. With the Samoan Matai I will have a Fa'afaletui on two occasions:

1. before my work with the other groups, and
2. at the end of the research.

Both Fa'afaletui will be in Samoa and will be about a day for each one. Our first one will be about your guidance in my work, Soalaupulega and effective leadership qualities. Our final one will be about the research results and I hope your guidance will lead me onwards.

I will audio-record the Fa'afaletui so that I can write notes about our decisions.

I will protect your identity and confidentiality by using false names.

I will store all information in a locked cabinet in my locked office at the College of Education, University of Canterbury.

You can withdraw from the research at any time, and with no consequences to yourself.

Approval to be a participant in this work is by verbal agreement.

If you ever have any concerns or queries about the research you can contact Tufulasi Taleni or Associate Professor Jo Fletcher.

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Associate-Professor
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[Your name]

Appendix 4. Approval Sheet for the Samoan Matai Participating in the Research

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

□   Tufulasi has clearly explained his research to me.

□   I understand my role as a participant.

□   I know I can withdraw from the research at any time.

□   I know the Fa'afaletui will be audio-recorded, and I agree to this.

□   I understand that my identity will be protected and remain confidential.

□   I understand that Tufulasi will keep all research notes in a secure locked place.

□   If I have concerns or questions, I know that I can contact Tufulasi Taleni or Associate-Professor Jo Fletcher at any time.

Approval/Non-approval given_____

Date _____

[Your name]

Appendix 5. Information Sheet for Pasifika Leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muama"': "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing

Talofa lava

With respect, I appreciate being able to present my research information about helping Pasifika students' educational achievement in Aotearoa New Zealand. My hope is that you will agree to be a participant in the Pasifika Leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand group.

We know effective educational leadership should support Pasifika students to achieve at school. However, for approximately the last five decades ineffective school leadership has not helped students to learn. Pasifika students have not achieved in the education system.

My research aims to use Soalaupulega as a model of effective leadership, to explore the qualities of educational leadership in Aotearoa New Zealand. I hope this research will help schools to support Pasifika students' learning achievements.

I aim to have four groups of participants:

1. Samoan Leaders living in Samoa,
2. Pasifika Leaders living in Aotearoa New Zealand,
3. Principals of Primary schools and Head Teachers of Early Childhood Education Centres, and
4. University of Canterbury, College of Education ITE students—leaders in the making

I will meet with each group in different ways. With the Pasifika Leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand, I will organise two Talanoa, the first one at the beginning of the research—after my Fa'afaletui with the Samoan Matai—and a second one at the end of the research.

At our first Talanoa I will describe the research more fully and then lead the talk about the group's thinking on what effective leadership is and what it means to each leader. Our second Talanoa will be about the research results and planning for future work.

I will audio-record both Talanoa so that I can write notes later.

I will protect your identity and confidentiality by using false names.

I will store all information in a locked cabinet in my locked office at the College of Education, University of Canterbury.

You can withdraw from the research at any time, and with no consequences to yourself.

Approval to be a participant in this work is by verbal agreement.

If you ever have any concerns or queries about the research, you can contact Tufulasi Taleni or Associate-Professor Jo Fletcher.

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[Your name]

Appendix 6. Approval Sheet for Pasifika Leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

☐   Tufulasi has clearly explained his research to me.

☐   I understand my role as a participant.

☐   I know I can withdraw from the research at any time.

☐   I know the Talanoa will be audio-recorded, and I agree to this.

☐   I understand that my identity will be protected and remain confidential.

☐   I understand that Tufulasi will keep all research notes in a secure locked place.

☐   If I have concerns or questions, I know that I can contact Tufulasi Taleni or Associate-Professor Jo Fletcher at any time.

Approval/Non-approval given_____

Date _____

[Your name]

Appendix 7. Information Sheet for Primary School Principals

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

Talofa lava

I present my research information to you as part of my invitation to you to be a participant.

I was born in Samoa, moved to New Zealand in 1985 and have worked in the New Zealand education system for the past 30 years as a classroom teacher, Pasifika Education Advisor, and presently, Kaiarahi. I am married to Jane and have 4 children—3 sons and 1 daughter. My two oldest sons have left school now and are on their life's journey.

Pasifika students have underachieved in Aotearoa New Zealand's education system for approximately the last five decades. Although the Government put into place different programmes to help the situation, research shows that the situation hasn't changed, that School Leaders haven't been given the support they need, to change the situation for Pasifika students. My research is about ensuring School Leaders have the knowledge and ability to facilitate changes in their schools, to improve the learning situation.

I would like to have a 1–1 semi-structured conversation with you, for approximately 2 hours of your time. I will ask you questions about how you see your school leadership in relation to Pasifika students.

I would need to audio-record our conversation for verbatim transcription and later analysis. I will be finding themes related to School Leadership and Pasifika students' learning. Your help will be invaluable in helping me to support School Leaders in the future.

I will protect your identity. I will use false Principal and Head Teacher names. Likewise, I will use false school and early childhood centre names.

I will keep all information safe, locked in a cabinet at the University of Canterbury.

You will be able to withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences to you.

If you ever have any concerns or queries about the research, you can contact Tufulasi Taleni or Associate-Professor Jo Fletcher.

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[Your name]

Appendix 8. Approval Sheet for School Principals

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muama": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

☐ Tufulasi has clearly explained his research to me.

☐ I understand my role as a participant.

☐ I know I can withdraw from the research at any time.

☐ I know my conversation with Tufulasi will be audio-recorded, and I agree to this.

☐ I understand that my identity will be protected and remain confidential.

☐ I understand that Tufulasi will keep all research notes in a secure locked place.

☐ If I have concerns or queries, I know that I can contact Tufulasi Taleni or Associate-Professor Jo Fletcher at any time.

Approval/Non-approval given_____

Date _____

Researcher Tufulasi Teleni _____

[Your name]

Appendix 9. Sheet to Gather Information from Participating Principals

College of Education Health and Human Development
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PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective

leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health

and wellbeing.

Please complete the two tables below for some information I need for my research.
Please return through email.
I appreciate your time.

Principal (Name) *(A different name will be used in the research)*	Male/ Female	Age range 30–40 40–50 50–60 60–70	Ethnicity	School sector (primary/ ECE/ secondary)	No of years as a principal	Languages spoken

Name of school (School name will not be used in the research–an unknown name will be used)	State or religious school	No of staff, including support staff	School roll	Decile	Percentage of Pacific students

[Your name]

Appendix 10. Questions for Conversations with Samoan Indigenous Leaders

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

1. How would you describe and explain your role as a leader in your family and village?

2. What **obligations and responsibilities** do you believe that you have to your people in that role?

3. Why are these things important to you?

4. How do they motivate you, specifically in terms of what you do and say?

5. As a leader, what **dreams and aspirations** do you have for your people?

6. Why are these things so important to you?

7. How do they shape what you do and say to your people?

8. What **aspects of the Samoan culture** do you think provide strength and support to our young people – the leaders of the future?

9. In what ways do you think that these cultural aspects have a **positive influence** on our young learners —their thinking and their behaviour?

10. In what ways do you think that these cultural aspects specifically support the educational success, good health and wellbeing of our young learners—the leaders of the future?

[Your name]

Appendix 11. Questions for Fa'afaletui (Dialogue) with Samoan Matai (Chiefs)

1. Se'i saunoa ia e fa'amatala mai oe, lou alalafaga aemaise ai o ou tiute fa'ata'ita'i/fa'amatai i lou aiga ma lou afioaga?

2. a ni tomai fa'apitoa, mani agava'a fa'ale-aganu'u ua fesoasoani malosi ia te oe mo le fa'ataunu'uina o ou tiute fa'amatai i le ta'itaiga o lou aiga ma le nu'u?

3. a nisi o uiga tausili (*fa'ataitaiga - alofa, fa'aalo'alo, tautua, feosiosia'i,* ava fatafata, fa'asinomaga) ole aganu'u ua e silafia o lo'o ia te oe?

4. E fa'apefea e nei uiga tausili ole aganu'u ona fa'amalosiauina oe i au ta'ita'iga?

5. I le avea ai o oe ma ta'ita'i/matai mo ou tagata Samoa i lou aiga/ o lou nu'u ma lau ekalesia, o a ni au mitimitiga ma ni fa'amoemoega lelei mo ou tagata?

6. Ole a le taua o nei mitimitiga mo oe lava ia ma le avea ai o oe ma ta'ita'i fa'ale aganu'u?

7. E fa'apefea e nei mitimitiga ona fesoasoani e fausia ma fa'aosofia se lumana'i lelei mo ou tagata, aemaise ai lava tupulaga faia'e?

8. a ni auala lelei ua e manatu e mafai ele aganu'u ona fesoasoani e fa'aleleia le ola a'oa'oina o fanau i aoga, fesoasoani i o latou mafaufau fa'atasi ai ma le fa'aleleia o a latou amioga?

9. a ni auala ua e manatu e mafai ona faia ele tatou aganu'u e lagolago ai le fa'aleleia o taumafaiga ma tulaga fa'alea'oa'oga, aemaise le soifua maloloina lelei o fanau aoga a Samoa, aemaise fo'i i latou ole a avea ma ta'ita'i mo le lumana'i?

10. a ni auala ma ni tomai loloto fa'amatai e mafai ona lu'itauina ai ta'ita'i fa'aleaoga (Puleaoga) mo le fa'aleleia o tulaga tau aoga ma le tausia o le ola soifua maloloina o fanau aoga i totonu o aoga?

O Tofa Fa'amatai

O Tofa nei ua masani ai i tatou o Matai Samoa–

Tofa Manino, Tofa Mamao, Tofa Loloto, Tofa Fetala'i, Tofa Mau, Tofa Saili, Tofa Liuliu, Tofa Paia

Ole a le uiga ole upu 'TOFA' ile gagana Fa'a-Matai?

E fia maua sou finagalo e uiga i nei TOFA–

- *Ole a le taua o nei Tofa i le fa'amatai?*
- *Ole a le taua o nei Tofa i le fa'ataunu'uina ma le fa'atinoina o tiute o ta'ita'i o aoga (puleaoga) aua le fa'aleleia o taumafaiga fa'ale-a'oaoga a tamaiti Samoa / Pasefika?*

Tupu tama'ita'i o Nafanua–

La'au a Nafanua

Tafesilafa'i
Ulimasao
Fa'auliulito
Fa'amategataua

E fia maua sou finagalo–
O a fa'auigaga o la'au nei a Nafanua e atagia ai tulaga taitai Fa'a-Matai?

E fa'apefea ona fa'aaoga uiga o nei la'au a Nafanua e lu'itauina pe fa'aoloaina ai ta'ita'iga a Puleaoga o aoga aua le fa'aleleia o taumafaiga fa'ale-aoaoga a tamaiti Samoa/Pasefika?

[Your name]

Appendix 12. Questions for the Talanoa with Pacific Leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

1. How would you describe and explain your role as leader in your community?

2. What **obligations and responsibilities** do you believe that you have to your Pasifika people in that role?

3. Why are these things important to you?

4. How do they motivate you, specifically in terms of what you do and say?

5. As a community leader, what **dreams and aspirations** do you have for your people?

6. Why are these things so important to you?

7. How do they shape what you do and say to your people?

8. What **aspects of the Samoan culture** do you think provide strength and support to our young people—the leaders of the future?

9. In what ways do you think that these cultural aspects have a **positive influence** on our young learners —their thinking and their behaviour?

10. In what ways do you think that these cultural aspects specifically support the educational success, good health and wellbeing of our young learners - the leaders of the future?

[Your name]

Appendix 13. Questions to Frame Conversations with School Principals

PHD Study

"Ia fesili Mulimai ia Muamai": "Empowering learning and influencing changes through effective leadership"

The impact of effective leadership in making a better start for Pasifika learners' learning, health and wellbeing.

1. How would you describe and explain your role as a school leader?

2. If we think about ourselves as someone with four selves - thinking/cognitive, physical, emotion and spiritual selves. Spiritual does not need to be religious.

    a. How does your thinking or cognitive self-influence your role as Principal or Head Teacher?
    b. How does your physical self-influence your role as Principal or Head Teacher?
    c. What about your emotional self? Can you tell me about that? How does that influence your role?
    d. And your spiritual self? How does that influence how you are as a Principal/Head Teacher?

3. In your role, what **commitments**, **obligations and responsibilities** do you believe you have for your Pasifika children, their families and community?

4. Why are these things important to you?

5. How do they motivate you, specifically in terms of what you do and say?

6. As a school leader, what **dreams and aspirations** do you have for your Pasifika learners?

7. Why are these things so important to you?

8. As a school leader, how do you inspire and motivate your teachers to help your Pasifika learners make a better start in their learning, health and wellbeing?

9. As a leader, what motivates you to raise the level of achievement and success of Pasifika children in your school?

10. What **aspects of the Samoan culture** do you think provide motivation for your Pasifika students to perform well in their learning?

11. In what ways do you think your school and teachers can do to lift the educational success, good health and wellbeing of your Pasifika learners?

[Your name]

Appendix 14: Example of Coding Transcribed Data

Talanoa with Pasifika Leaders

Sieni

I define my role as a leader starting from the family, church, community, and the educational context as well. And I see leadership as service, *tautua*. My role in the educational sector is lead facilitator, mainly in the early childhood sector. And I provide and facilitate professional learning in early childhood services to support pasifika ECE services and mainstream services as well; all have pasifika children and families attending mainstream ECE services. I also provide professional development support for government and management as well as mentoring programmes. I believe that my role as a leader reflects four important leadership values. And this is based on *tofa* and also respect for leva, respect for relationships, *tautua* as service, and also *le puli* to ensure that we have got effective systems and structures in place so that ECE services will focus mainly on positive outcomes. To ensure that positive outcomes will be in place for all our children. That's my particular role in the ECE.

[handwritten margin note: Main Theme — Tautua (service?)]

Alofa

I think firstly as an influencer, in terms of influencing decisions and influencing policies that contribute to the positive outcomes for pasifika learners and their communities. So that's strategically, and then to equip and to empower. Trying to influence things that happen especially at the national level and empowering more operationally and within the community. For example, NCEA Malua Pasifika, through EERs that are non-tertiary, non-university. You can define it in different ways, but the outcome still remains, and that is to create positive and empowering outcomes for pasifika learners.

[handwritten margin note: Influencer, influencing decisions/policies]

Vili

Coming back to the question, what is our role, me, myself, in the Cook Island community, I see myself probably best described as an instrument. An instrument in use between the community, in all areas, but right now particularly sports. An instrument to guide and mentor. An instrument to be used to give advice, and to advocate the understanding of community relationship between Auckland and Christchurch. Being able to advocate and share information between the Cook Islands community and Christchurch.

[handwritten margin note: An instrument bet community & my people]

Mareko

Ministry of Education. I see my role as a leader in the community as being New Zealand Law and Samoan. Growing up in the South Island, here in Christchurch, I have a unique perspective with regards to being a bridge. I was raised in a Samoan E fa kasa background so I'm not strong in Samoan language capability and so when I say a bridge, or a bringer of perspective, it would be around being able to navigate where our Matua come from in regards to the islands, their culture, and everything they bring that defines their identity, but then also bridging it with the context of growing up living in New Zealand. I see a lot of the things I do in the community to act as a bridge, a conduit to help our parents, our grandparents understand the NZ context but also to ensure that their stories aren't lost by our NZ generation. Back to that Samoan space thinking of education, we also have a vision, or a view, in line with our other pasifika ethnicities so the other part of my role is making sure those voices are heard, in the journeyings that the parents and the grandparents have brought, but also the voice of our pasifika youth. So, I see my role in the bridging. In regard to education and changes in our community

[handwritten margin note: A bridge. A bringer of perspective]

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in your classroom, to be able to tell me about the home background of child, who do they live with mum or dad, what language do they speak at home? You know, if they're Samoan or Tongan, if they go to church on Saturday, they go to church on Sunday. I mean, I used the old one of, you know, the Toupoali's where I know that Ritchie, he's in year five, he plays rugby for Hornby on a Saturday, Lakisha's in room two, Mum's called Ula, Dad's called Tui, he plays presidents for suburbs, you know they go to church on a Sunday they go to the same church as you, they speak Samoan at home, AJ is three. So, it's about knowing the learner. So, I demonstrate that. I expect staff to pronounce names correctly. That doesn't mean that they never make a mistake, but they have done some homework and they try to pronounce it correctly. So, what happens when I go? It's not effective if everything falls over. So, what I'm thrilled about is that what's happening and you've seen it with our Pasifika cultural group, so we're growing the capability and the capacity of Georgia and Jane. And so, resourcing is important, from a leadership point of view, they are actually getting half a management unit each to do the piece of work they're doing because I value it, the school values it. They get time during school time to do their things with those group of children. And I suppose then we encourage you know, another saying I have is that when you walk through the gate at Hornby Primary School, so Sonny Boy shouldn't have to drop off his Māori backpack at Hei Hei Road gate to walk in here and be successful. So, we encourage children to bring their culture into school. So, I gave the example last Friday at assembly, four girls did a Cook Island dance. Beautiful, dressed up, did their dance, we want you to come in and be successful with your language or culture, your identity.

Tauinei Resourcing is imp

Tufulasi Taleni

Beautiful. Yeah, definitely. I think they're really, really important things you just mentioned there. I think this last question this one here is as a leader, what motivates you to raise the level of achievement and success observing the children in your school? I think we already mentioned importance of academic, we move to the next one it's what aspects of the Pasifika culture do you think provide motivation for your Pasifika students to perform well in their learning? I think you mentioned those things as well. Is there anything you want to add to that?

Gary Roberts *Kopeti*

being Values Security Foundation Caring

It's interesting, I could share some of this with you if you like. We do the NZCER wellbeing at school survey. So, the children tell us that they feel safe at Hornby Primary School, their teachers care about them, their culture is valued. And if they have a problem, they can ask somebody, so I suppose you know. So, they're feeling safe, they're feeling secure, that their culture is valued. So, I think that's a pretty good foundation to enable a better start.

being Successful

Tufulasi Taleni

Absolutely. So, the next question really is that 'In your role, what commitments obligations and responsibilities do you believe you have for your Pasifika children, their families and their community?

Jo Barlow

with that, I see my role as an influencer around policy, around strategy, so providing advice, but then also giving input into implementation; how do these ideas become actions that then happen at grass roots. I also have another hat in the community in our church community, I'm one of the younger elders. I'm a Deacon, I'm one of only four or five that are under 50 years old, we have around 100 elders. Again, being that bridge with what our traditions are religiously and what our young people are looking in regard to faith. I hold several roles, one as church treasurer and convener for our property and finance. Trying to utilise the skills that our parents sent us to school for to help improve our opportunities for our families.

Influencer

Bridge

Reverend Amosa

It's interesting to talk about my role, because if I look at the past, the Ministers role was more or less based in the church. And how it was perceived in those years, it was between the village and the ministers who built the faia aiga, and from there work was made from the two parties. But I think the development of the ministerial role is my experience of what's happening with the work that I've been doing. A role that is very much guided by our Christian values, cultural values, family values, community values, and aligned with the will of god, which I will refer to as the *tofa paia*. Which is quite interesting when I see the list at the back, I was just wondering if that is explained in here, or the tofa potu, because you haven't got that here as well, which I think that would be another dimension of spiritual leadership qualities which I'm thinking if the tofa paia is the expansion of that, that you have outlined.

Tofa Paia
*(Spirituality/
proficiency)*

The role frames myself for whatever I do, it directs me to what I wear and how I present myself in the communities. It's interesting because one of the PIC man, who is still living, I think it was a couple of years ago every time he come in the community, he always saw me wearing a collar. I said I always wear a collar that signifies our role, and it identifies you as a minister. It provides a guideline of how we present ourselves publicly, what we say, how we behave, and what we do and how we provide the services. That's the framework we live in.

Matu Makerita

My role in the primary health services is as a navigator. It's a word that has been used by our ancestors to guide us. The leadership skills and all that we got now. I look at that and hold it really close to my heart because they didn't use anything, they just used all the skills that they had so the skills that they had to use when the sea is rough, when the mountain is hard to climb. Whenever I think about my role I always go back to our ancestors. It was really weird because I wrote down the *tofa paia* because I wanted to put something there with the ??loku??, it's really important to our culture. So, my role is health education, health promotion to reach our pasifika communities and educate them, because I know health is really really important to us because without health, we won't be able to do our education well and any other things that come after health. So, I reach out. all those *tofa* that you have, help and guide us, you have to have really good listening skills; that is not a leader, that's a service. We listen to our pasifika communities for what they want, and how they want it, and that's how you do your work effectively, and you get good outcomes out of that if you're a good listener. I've learned a lot because I've worked a long time with them. So, my role is with health education, health promotion, and also with pasifika people, the health literacy and the health system here in New Zealand, it's really hard for them to navigate them. And to influence our policies for how our people want them. We have to put something in there that's going to work for us because it's not going to work the way the Palagi system works. So, health is really broad, but I see good outcomes when our people are well and happy, and most importantly, do it with love and also in a cultural way.

Navigator

Work is informed by ancestors

A listener

Do with Love (Alofa)

Wonderful Matt, that's fantastic. Yeah, so, in your role, as a principal, what commitments or obligations, responsibilities do you believe you have for your Pasifika children, their families and community?

Matt Bateman *Matae̅o̅*

I think their success should be measured by their communities and it should be reflected into all the other communities, it shouldn't just be measured by a Eurocentric measure. And if we're giving children back to their communities, their Pasifika communities and we've told those committees that they're failures because their reading isn't up to here, or their writing isn't up here, or their maths isn't up to here, then we've failed them, big time. So, getting that message to teachers that you can elevate all children's learning by engaging with their families, with their communities, with their culture. And I think national standards for me was an absolute disaster for education. But it wasn't a disaster for Burnside Primary, because I used to tell ERO that I thought it was rubbish, because you're only looking at reading, writing and maths. And from a Eurocentric perspective. I'm not going to be telling my Pasifika children that these tests are the be all and end all of their life and that they didn't get 50% or more. So, what we've done is we've made our teaching and learning, culturally engaging for all of our communities and particularly our Pasifika communities, you know my wife is Rarotongan and I have always had a real connection with Pasifika values and Pasifika needs. My children, as a consequence, are Pasifika. So, I want them to stand tall in whatever world, but especially their world and not have their lives separated and judged by just one set of values. So, I think it's really important to show value to cultures, Pasifika cultures, and look at the strengths that they have had over 1000s of years and bring those into a modern context. I think they look at the New Zealand curriculum for our Maori families who have all come through that Pasifika journey anyway. So, our Maori Whakapapa goes back to the Pacific. We are Polynesian, we are Pasifika. So, I think that's going to be a real opportunity now to strengthen for those Pasifika learners as well. And give them that feeling of confidence and quite justifiably.

Tufulasi Taleni So, we're very much sort of finished that part now. I think the last couple of questions is actually focusing on what you do, I guess to inspire your staff. Because at the end of the day, you're not doing all that, you're actually driving or you're leading to inspire your staff. So as a school leader, how do you inspire and motivate your teachers to help your Pasifika learners make a better start in their learning and wellbeing? How do you inspire them?

Gary Roberts

Okay, I've probably touched on these but that's okay. So, I lead by example, they you know, the staff will see me, like it's just a small thing. So, for example, at assemblies I'll mix it up, "Will Miss Roberts come forward and present the certificates, Tēnā Kotou Tamariki Mā." But next week it could be "Tālofa Lava, Mālō E Lelei, Kamusta, Kia Orāna, Salam Alaikum." So it's certainly getting out there, leading by example, you know, being passionate and demonstrating that and consistently coming back to, you know, so I have an expectation that every teacher, so our little catchphrase is 'knowing the learner', so I expect you

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Yeah, absolutely. With all these things you've mentioned about your commitment, obligations, responsibilities as you want to serve the kids and all that. So why are these things important to you? All the great things that you've said, and you've done. I think you've already answered it, but is there anything else to add to that? You know, why are you doing these things? Why are these things important to you?

~~Paul Dolan~~ Pola

That's the role. Or at least it should be. If that's not who you are, then I'm not sure you should be doing it. It's not just data, they're kids, they're children. So, it's about doing the very best for them. You want them to have good futures, isn't it? Yeah, we're wanting the very best for them. Talk to the staff, it's about a wee tomato plant, we don't see the tomatoes, but we've got to create that strong wee stem and those first few leaves., so then when we pass that plant on that it's encouraged and nurtured and ready to flourish.

~~Tufulasi Taleni~~

Absolutely. So, the next question really is that 'In your role, what commitments obligations and responsibilities do you believe you have for your Pasifika children, their families and their community?

Teu le va nurture Relationship

~~Janeane Reid~~ Penina

I think probably the most important thing here is that you can build a relationship with our Pasifika community, that they trust that you value their culture and I think for us here, one of the key things is

Importance of culture / opportunities

celebrating their culture and making them proud of who they are and giving them plenty of opportunities to genuinely be who they are and express their culture. But it is that opportunity to celebrate it is a positive strength to our school that they're bringing. So I guess that value that you can give back to the Pasifika community around, we're so lucky to have your culture within our school. Yeah, definitely really important that we're, because some of our families don't necessarily naturally believe that they have something to offer, showing them the great strengths that they bring to our school. So, I think the leadership in that is building that relationship with them, providing those opportunities for them to shine and to have an influence and an impact on the school. And again, it's not just our Pasifika families, but we try really hard in the leading of the school to pass it back to the community and say this is your school, we're getting employed to come in and run it for you, so you need to tell us what you want it to look like. So rather, instead of us delivering to them, it's actually them telling us what do you want from us? Often our parents think that they have to follow our guide, that this is what the school is telling you, but instead actually they should be thinking, this is their school, what do they want from us and we're employed to serve them. I think it's important that our community sees this is their school. And they don't always naturally know that, that this is their school. You know, the government's giving money to the school to serve them, not for the school to tell them how they will operate.

Key Relationship Teu le Va

sense of belonging

Taufua (Service)

Community ownership of the school

~~Tufulasi Taleni~~

Absolutely. So, the next question really is that 'In your role, what commitments obligations and responsibilities do you believe you have for your Pasifika children, their families and their community?

Samoa Indigenous Leaders
(Matai)

~~Tufulasi~~: O lea o le a tatou agai atu i mea ia o mitimitiga

Ia faapea la o oe o le matai o le avea la o oe ma ta'ita'i ma matai Samoa i lou

aiga, lou atunuu ma lau Ekalesia lea sa ou taua muamua. O a ni au mitimitiga

ma ni fa'amoemoe mo ou tagata?

O a ni mea e te miti ma fa'anaunau mo ou tagata?

As a Samoa Matai what are your dreams and aspirations for your family,

children and village/community for the future?

Tufuga
~~Sula~~: Fa'afetai ma le avanoa. O la'u a miti ma o'u manaoga, ia maua pea lo'u

malosi mai le Atua, aua le fa'amoemoe ina ia tututpu a'e fanau a o la e maua pea

feso'otaiga.

Fititoa
~~Lemulu~~: I le avea ai o a'u ma matai, faiaoga foi i alo ma fanau aemaise o le

a'oa'oina o le gagana. Ia ola ma malamalama, nonofo fealofani ma alolofa fanau.

Ia uma atu la'u tautua, aua e tele se a'oga o la'u fesoasoani i alo ma fanau a le   *Importance of Service*

atunuu, ma lau Ekalesia, ma aiga ma lo tatou community.

Malotau
~~Segala~~: O le mitimitiga o le mea o le miti, aua pau a le mea o le miti a o le tagata i

lona to'alua. Aua le miti fua le isi i leto'alua o le isi. O lo'u lagona fa'atama i

totonu o lo'u aiga o le gagana. O le mea pito i taua a lena o lea ou te unaia ai la'u

fanau. Ia malamalama uma i le gagana Samoa. Aua po o le a lo tatou fai atu ia

tatou i le a ma le a ma le a. E malamalama lelei tamaiti i le uiga o upu, i upu   *Imp of*

fa'afaigata o le gagana e le malamalama ai tamaiti.   *teaching chn with Samoan*

A e taumafai e fai lau galuega lena i totonu o lou aiga, o lou sao la lena aua o   *Language*

fanau. O lea tatou te talanoa i Niu Sila, o le tele o tamaiti e le mafai ona tautatala

mai i le Gagana Samoa. E le malamalama foi latou i le loloto o le FaaSamoa lea

tatou te o mai ma tatou. E pei la o la ita lena naunautaiga i lo ta finau iai i fanau e

Main Themes	Sub Themes
• Tautua (Service)	Influencer
• Alafua (Vision)	a bridge
	Navigator
• Faasinomaga (Identity)	Encourager
• Auala a'oa'o (pedagogy)	an instrument
• Tausimea (Keeper of family treasurer)	importance of Language and Culture
• Taimua (lead from the front)	
• Agaga ma le loto (spiritual /emotional)	~~Spiritual~~

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Epilogue

The echoing sound of the Foafoa throughout the village signals the safe arrival of the Tautai (navigator) and the voyage to shore.

The completion of this doctoral research is gifted from myself, my family, my village, my wife Jane and my children Lehman, Hiram, Seth and Sieni-Jane to the research community both nationally and globally, as a contribution to education.

E tu manu ae le tu logologo

The influence of ongoing dialogue and communication makes a difference to families, communities and the world for the betterment of children's education, health and wellbeing.

The voyage continues.