

Straight Talk | Crooked Thinking

Reflections on Transforming Pacific Learning and Teaching, Teachers and Teacher Education for the 21st Century

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Abstract

Transforming Pacific learning, teaching and teacher education requires rethinking. This paper is premised on the ideal of educational reform focused on achieving sustainable Pacific societies. It offers a futures-thinking approach to the rethinking of quality Pacific education centralizing the role of the teacher and teacher education. At the core of this discussion are local approaches to teaching and learning and the significance of research in understanding and improving teacher performance. It argues that a review of teacher standards and attributes is necessary covering issues such as aptitude, literacies and competencies required for teaching in the 21st Century Pacific. It is postulated that education for sustainable Pacific societies must begin with an education system that brings together the best of both worlds inclusive of mainstreaming western knowledge systems and philosophies and Pacific indigenous education ideologies and approaches. The onus will be on Teacher Education providers to ensure that the Pacific teacher is one who is confident in his or her identity, armed with the necessary set of values, attitudes and skills to be agents of change. A Pacific transformative learning theory is presented as an example of ways by which we may begin to rethink teacher preparedness as well as reconstruct what we assume to know about the way we teach and learn.

Prelude

Nelson Mandela is famously quoted as saying “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Teachers and teacher educators the world over use this and other quotes as a source of inspiration to drive home the belief that education changes lives and liberates. Similarly in Pacific Teacher Education classrooms and online portals would-be teachers deliberate the functionality and liberal nature of education and the role of effective teachers. Each of these teachers-in-waiting aspires to be an inspirational role model for the hundreds of students who will journey through their classrooms. They share the collective belief that teacher education will provide the necessary competencies to be effective and inspiring.

My life as a teacher and ongoing Talanoa with Pacific teachers and education students however, has provided increasingly awareness of the gaps that exist in Pacific Teacher Education. In fact, many Pacific teachers believe that they were ill-prepared for the realities and challenges of the school in their respective communities. This realization coupled with a growing awareness of the politics of Pacific education systems culminate in this paper. I bring to this Vaka Pasifiki Conference a humble offering, honouring the *straight talk* that the founders of RPEI began 15 years ago. I also offer a warning about the *crooked thinking* that we continue to battle and sometimes unknowingly perpetuate in our quest for effective teachers and improved educational outcomes.

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My story

Nineteen years ago I stepped into my first classroom a 22-years old graduate armed only with my Bachelor of Education degree. I was excited and nervous at the prospect of teaching but, as a trained English teacher, I assumed that was ready for the challenges of teaching in Fiji. How wrong I was. My first posting was to a Peri-urban secondary school where I was given five English classes, ranging from Year 7 to Year 12. It was a rude awakening for a first year teacher to find that there would be no orientation package or teacher induction period nor an associate teacher to ease my transition into the school. There was no mention of the national teacher code of ethics, which I only became aware of ten years later at which point I had left for employment at the University. I was given a set of textbooks and told to teach the classes that I had been assigned. One week and two staff meetings later, I found myself in five classrooms with children who barely spoke English.

My biggest challenge was that 90% of the class were indigenous (iTaukei) and 10% of Indian descent. While these students were proficient in their own mother tongue, I was only proficient in English. As the weeks turned into months, I began to wonder why I had not learned to teach English as a second language. Secondly, I began with no clue of my students' home backgrounds and it was only after a whole term had passed with the increasing absenteeism that I learned three things which changed my approach to teaching forever.

First, my students came from farming communities and because they paid their fees in instalments many were often sent home until their fees were paid in full. This meant that many in an endless loop of catching up with missed work. Second, as a government school, text books were provided but there were never enough books to cater for all streams of classes and as a result, students could not do homework. Their commitment to homework was further affected by the fact that after school hours were often dedicated to working either in the gardens or selling produce. This inevitably meant that all school work had to be completed at school. And, thirdly, English proficiency was so bad that many had no idea what I was saying. I was startled by the Principal's response when I reported my disappointment that only 20% had passed the first term exam at which he was laughingly said that I ought to be pleased as this was in fact a very good result for the school.

Disappointed and frustrated, I began my own unlearning journey to rethink not only what I had learned at University but my own teaching practice. I began to look for ways to create a learning system that worked for these students. During class time we used text books and collected them at the end of the class, but instead of using up all my time in getting students to copy homework exercises as some other teachers did, I began to develop activities that did not require the text book. Looking back, I now realize that this had been a turning point in my teaching career when I learned the importance of curriculum development and thematic teaching. I was extremely grateful that I had chosen the curriculum stream in my Bachelor of Education degree as this helped me to frame my teaching practice. As a result of shift in my thinking and practice, I began to rely less and less on the text book. Student's results improved as did their English proficiency. However, another turning point came when I transferred to my second posting, an urban school. When I began applying the same approach that I had developed at my first school posting, I was frowned at and scolded for not following the text religiously by unit. It became clear that coherent development of ideas or concepts was not the priority and instead I was told to simply teach from the text book and to quickly complete the syllabus before the dreaded Ministry inspection visit. This inspection was highlighted as the second most significant academic event of the year, which declared a school ready for the big event - national examinations. The most significant academic moment of the year was the release of these results and clarification of the school's percentage pass-rates in these examinations.

Introduction: To transform is to decolonize

The violence of colonialism is alive and well in the Pacific islands. It may no longer exist in the form of occupied colonies but is evident in the onslaught of Western ideologies and irrelevant models of development and education that continue to bombard our 'sinking' islands. That we are sinking is as metaphorically significant as it is a very real Climate Change concern for 'smaller' island nations. We are sinking – as a region and as a peoples - into the abyss of the 'one-worldview' of one-size-fits all ideology of progress (Anuik & Gillies, 2012) in all facets of our daily lives – education and teacher education included. Consequently, there is a dire need for active theorizing, by Pacific islanders, of both quality education and teacher education, interrogating the drivers, agendas, needs and gaps in current mainstream thinking.

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This paper focuses on the essentiality of a deliberate paradigm shift from simply rethinking education systems to transformative thinking. It is a call to rethink the way that we currently think about transforming Pacific learning, teaching and teacher education and essentially de-program our current systems and the assumptions that are made in regard to what we think we know about the world we live in; 21st century Pacific island students; and, about the teachers who prepare these students for life beyond the school. It is an attempt to refine our lenses for the deep reflective unlearning of what has been ingrained in our minds about education as we think we know it. I am informed by Pacific and non-Pacific anticolonial thinkers and owe much to their reflections on the need to rethink, reflect, research and redefine our ways of thinking, doing and being. It is not my purpose to reconstruct the deliberations of these scholars but rather to emphasize the required shift in thinking and action. In my view, there is a need to move from straight talk to non-linear thinking and practice and in so doing re-frame things as they really are, glossy overcoats removed and down to the bare basics of the root of our concerns and without shame or apology begin anew.

Jean Baudrillard (2002) refers to the 'violence of the global' in a discussion on the homogenising power of a global system which he rightly terms terrorism in its worst form. This violence is inherent in the education systems and discourses in the Pacific, which, as they are elsewhere, intrinsically linked to Development agendas and discourses. Much of these are directly informed by philosophies and ideologies birthed in the developed nations of the global north with little room for alternative, contextual thinking. Langdon (2009):

Disciplines such as education and development studies have an important role to play in decentering the universal pretensions of Western thought through the introduction of other epistemic systems, such as those derived from Indigenous knowledges. This role is important not only because of the chequered legacy of both fields of thought, but also because each discipline represents an important site of implementation, where theory meets practice. The implications for both of these disciplines should they fail to become more responsive and open to other ways of knowing and being is the potential further alienation of the populations that developed these knowledges (Battiste 2008), but also the very real risk that failure to act will facilitate the continuation of the colonial legacy (p.10).

There is a plethora of writing on the decontextualized, irrelevant, culture-deficit models of education ascribed to in the Pacific¹, as well as, the politics of aid and the agendas of the dreaded 'foreign' consultant. Rather than revisit these works I will attempt to weave the words of the elders so that collectively, our song will sing of our reality in the 'shrinking', 'sinking' Pacific Ocean that is our sea of islands (Hau'ofa, 1994).

Pacific Education and Higher Education prioritizes the 'voice' and 'worldview' of the outside in a violent hegemonic paradigm that debases our humanity and amputates our capacity for human agency (Watts, 2013). This ingrained perversion has conditioned many to believe in its imported relative truth and in the bounded rationality that we are only as good as the outside world says we are (Battiste 2002; 2004). In her numerous works, Thaman reminds us that rethinking Pacific Teacher Education, means revisiting the purpose of the school and schooling and its place in the 21st century. She asks: "Pacific Education for what and whom? Whose values and what responsibility?" (Thaman, 2004) Similarly, we ought to ask "Teacher Education for what and whom"?

¹ See for example the works of Konai Helu Thaman, Manulani Meyer, and the speeches of Tui Atua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi Head of State Samoa. See also, Battiste 2002; 2004; 2005, Bishop & Glynn 1999, Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, Cottrell 2010, Metallic, 2002; Nabobo 2006; 2008, Teairo 2002 and countless others.

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To decolonize is to look at the past and the present for the future

In February 2013, Professor Sugata Mitra, the founder of the School in the Cloud, presented an inspiring TED Talk² in which he provides a succinct reminder of the history of formal education and schooling which is referred to as the Bureaucratic machine of the British Empire. This is not new knowledge for those of us schooled in the foundations of education. It is however, a reminder of the easily forgotten history and inherent philosophies and practices that educators and teacher educators continue to perpetuate in our own systems. Mitra's reminder is a stark reality check that we are clinging to a system that is out-dated and irrelevant in the context of the present and future learning needs of our changing societies.

Although Mitra's emphasis is on the use of technology to enhance learning, his insight into 'unknown' future challenges in society and the ever changing job market stimulates a tangent of thinking for Pacific scholars interested in educational transformation. *If we seek to transform our education systems, what might this transformation look like?* I argue that what we need are new models or theories for Transformative Pacific Education. This transformation begins with decolonizing the way we think about education, its purpose and function in the 21st century Pacific. Decolonizing Pacific education systems and the curriculum requires that we first decolonize our minds and so embark on the "quest for relevance" (Thiong'o 1986, p87). While Vaka Pacifiki is recognized as a relevance movement (Nabobo, 2006), there is much to be achieved in terms of revisiting the mechanisms that we employ to assess credibility, validity, quality, legitimacy, relevancy and sustainability in all forms and aspects of education.

Current mainstream educational paradigms are based on what the global north or the developed world considers worthwhile learning and teaching approaches and our models of Teacher Education are much the same. This means that the bulk of what we teach and learn in our schools and at our Universities and colleges in the Pacific, is what has been conceptualized and developed *in and for* the western world. A quick content assessment of what is taught at University and in Teacher Education programmes will show the disproportionality between western and Indigenous theoretical and pedagogical ideas and approaches. The challenge for Teacher Educators therefore is to critically analyse the extent to which students are exposed to Pacific content and contexts of teaching and learning; indigenous educational ideas, epistemologies and pedagogies, and preferred teaching and learning styles. More often than not, there was and is little critique of the foundations of education from a Pacific island perspective.

It would not be surprising to find that the predominant method of teaching was/is lecture style delivery resulting in passive rote learning. That is, western mainstream knowledge driven and assessment focused. Although a lot has been written and deliberated internationally about 21st Century education and skills, against the backdrop of Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals and the end of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, Pacific island educators have yet to engage in rigorous dialogue on what this all means for 21st Century teachers and students in the islands.

² Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) Conference began in the 1990s and has grown to an internationally recognized platform for the sharing of innovative ideas in all disciplines. TED Talks feature short conference presentations and are streamed live and free online. Available at www.ted.com

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'Quality' Pacific Education

The conversation about Quality Pacific Education is ongoing. The Forum Basic Education Plan (2001) is an important reference point as the first regional educational policy framework. FBEAP mentions quality three times in its goal statement alone where it refers to “*compulsory education of good quality*”, “*basic education of good quality*” and “*improving all aspects of the quality of education*” (p.2). That initial document presents a desire for comprehensive educational reform and it identifies systemic weaknesses in the broad areas of policy, planning and resources across the board. Specific areas of concern identified are:

- i. Access & Equity: To address disparities and ensure equal participation of disadvantaged groups across the rural – urban divide including gender issues and other disadvantaged groups.
- ii. Teacher supply: The number of trained and competent teachers and their teaching methods
- iii. Teacher Education: The need to improve pre-service and in-service teacher education
- iv. Curriculum: The quality and relevance of curriculum materials
- v. Pacific Foundations: The need for contextualized and relevant Pacific curricula
- vi. School infrastructure & administration: To improve School buildings, school management, leadership and school culture
- vii. Assessment: The validity and reliability of assessment
- viii. Financing of Education: The need to reprioritize education in national budgets
- ix. Stakeholder participation: To develop partnerships with CSO, NGOs and the private sector.

A close analysis of the Pacific Education Development Framework (PEDF) which replaced FBEAP, in 2009, shows that these areas of concern remain the regional priority. While FBEAP (2001) presented a brief summation of regional priority areas, PEDF attempts to flesh out these same issues, taking care to ensure alignment with global educational instruments in particular Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The three strategic goals identified in PEDF are: ‘Access and Equity’; ‘Quality’; and ‘Efficiency and Effectiveness’ (p.5). Six priority areas identified in PEDF include Early Childhood Education (ECE), Formal Education (Primary & Secondary Education); Technical and Vocational Education (TVET), Teacher Education (Pre-service & In-service); and Systems Governance and Administration. Each section is aligned to EFA and the MDGs with focused goals and indicators and includes some detail under the subheadings of Challenges, Priorities & Strategies.

While countries have committed to the PEDF, the reality of in-country educational reform and curriculum development and review is that it takes place against a backdrop of the sometimes invisible political agendas of Pacific education. Not least of which is the colonial legacy (Puamau, 2004; Thaman 2009, 2012) and neo-colonial tensions of the 21st century Pacific (Taufe'ulungaki, 2002; Puamau, 2004). Add to these, educational aid power relations (Baba 1987, 1989; Hindson, 1989, Thaman, 2001; Nabobo, 2002, Sanga, 2003; Puamau, 2004) and what ensue are pocket fixes rather than an overall review of education systems. In fact, Fiji is one of the only Forum member state to have conducted an education commission in the last decade (2000) with the Ministry of Education expressing a desire to hold stakeholder consultations in 2015 as a lead up to the establishment of a follow up commission.

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Despite these references to 'quality', there is little attempt to define what this means. Numerous scholars refer to sustainable quality education in/for the Pacific islands, again there is no attempt to define what this means. Some³ have identified various causal factors which prevent the achievement of high level transformation from within many of which resonate with the concerns raised in FBEAP (2001). Sanga (2003) provides some insight:

Three or more decades of sustained educational aid to Pacific Island countries (PICs) have not resulted in sustainable quality education in these communities. According to Pene, Taufe'ulungaki and Benson (2002:2), this is "because [Pacific Islanders] do not own the process, educational visions and goals of education". Instead, these are defined by donors and other external players. Aid to education will continue to be an integral component of educational development for some of these countries, but ownership of the process, the visions and the goals is a matter of concern (p.28).

The issue of not owning the "*process, educational visions and goals of education*" is the fundamental root cause of our inability to bring about the kind of transformation that we desire in the Pacific. Authentic and sustainable transformation can and will only eventuate when the issue of ownership and self-determination are addressed. If we assume the entry point understanding that education is worthwhile learning (Thaman, 2013), *quality education* may be elicited as contextualized, relevant learning where learning outcomes are of immediate and long-term benefit to the learners and their communities. This brings to the fore the issue of sustainability, and sustainable education. The question then, that emerges, is *what quality education for Pacific islanders in the islands?* The next sections attempt to flesh out two main issues within the broader quality education discussion: the context of the 21st century Pacific learner, implications for the 21st century Pacific teacher.

21st Century Pacific Learning contexts

A review of Pacific discourse on context and relevance of current Pacific education systems to meet the needs of Pacific island students locates much of the discussion as outlined in FBEAP and PEDF, in terms of relevance, access and equity issues. These writings emphasize the need to contextualize education, and to address issues related to equal participation. These discourses are both significant and relevant but there is a growing contextual gap –that of technologies. While the PEDF does introduce ICT as a cross-cutting issue, it is clear that the intention is to "*harness the benefits of new technologies and ICT*" (p.19). Scholarly discourse emerging from the Pacific and in particular from USP on ICT and Education has followed this same line of thinking⁴. Given that the University is shifting its focus from the traditional classroom to online learning, it is not surprising that conversations centre around elearning and the use of ICT in the development and delivery of university courses and programmes (e.g. Singh, Pathak & Naz, 2007; Raturi, Hogan & Thaman, 2011; Bakalevu & Tuitonga, 2003; Hazelman 2002). In fact, Nabobo (2002) stands out in her attempt to discuss the changing technologies in the region and their implications for educational decision making.

It is clear that the discourse on Pacific learning contexts needs to shift from this narrow compartmentalized perspective to a more holistic one. To demonstrate the complexity of the fluid and ever changing 21st century eduscape, I refer to a video that has gone viral since its inception as a power point presentation at a school gathering in 2007, in the United States. "Shift Happens" has since been modified with yearly updates available on the youtube

³ See for example *Tree of Opportunity: Rethinking Pacific Education* (2002).

⁴ See for example the 2005 USP report on ICT in Secondary Education in the Pacific Region which included a situational analysis of the status of ICT use in eleven USP member countries.

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channel online. It is estimated that over 20 million people have viewed this video. The original presentation is credited to Karl Fisch (2007) and later modifications to Scott Mcleod. This short video demonstrates the transitional reality of the world in which we live and thereby also changing the learning needs and expected educational outcomes of the schooling experience. *Shift Happens* emphasizes the fact that our education systems in the Pacific islands have not kept up with some of these immensely critical discourses.

Two particularly poignant items may be extracted from the long list of issues in the 2014 version of *Shift Happens*. The first is recognition that the internet is a source of knowledge with implications for both curriculum content and impacting on student learning styles and cognitive processes. And, secondly, changing literacy needs with implications for teacher literacies. The video ends with the question: "so, what does this all mean?" A away lesson that may be drawn from is that education and schooling must change to accommodate our shifting society and more importantly students' learning needs. Not surprisingly, Dewey's assertion that the School is a microcosm of society is still relevant. What we want in society, we must put in the school. If we ascribe to the line of rethinking that prioritizes context and relevance, it is essential that we take stock of what it is that we want in our society in both the immediate future and in the long term.

Against a backdrop of tremendous global and technological transition, the Pacific islands are riddled with challenges of our own. In the interest of brevity; some of the challenges which have been identified at national and regional levels include: the youth boom or ballooning of youth populations, increasing incidences of non-communicable diseases and obesity, sexually transmitted infections, teenage pregnancy rates, HIV and AIDS, Poverty, Culture and language loss, literacy and numeracy rates, Cultural appropriation, Climate change, Urbanization, Migration, Ethics/Values, High school drop outs, unemployment, the lack of Media literacy, the impact of Social media, the need for Financial literacy, Food Security, Mental health issues and suicide, and of course, Crime. While many of these are ongoing concerns, they remain for the most part on the periphery of educational discourse with educational outcomes and curriculum content and processes still largely academic-discipline based with an assessment outcome priority.

To engage in a discussion about transforming education and using quality Pacific education as our entry point, more questions emerge:

- How much of our current education system prepares students for emerging challenges such as these?
- How much of mainstream curriculum content and assessment engages students in the critical interrogation of such important regional and global concerns?
- How much opportunity do students have to learn problem solving skills which they may use in real-life situations to handle these and other new challenges which they will face in the world beyond the school? And, significantly,
- How much of our teacher education, prepares teachers to teach these knowledge and skills that will enable students to deal with such real-life issues?

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Preparing 21st Century Pacific Teachers

Before we begin to assess Pacific Teachers and their ability to effectively teach 21st century Pacific students, we need to assess our teacher education programmes against a set of prescribed criteria for 'quality' or 'good' teachers. In the absence of a concrete, measurable definition that attempts to quantify these very subjective and description terms, we may in all good faith – continue to run circles around ourselves. Again a series of questions must be considered beginning with what Pacific teacher education for the kinds of teaching and learning that we would like to occur. We also need to consider the core requirements and indicators of a 'good' or 'effective' Pacific Teacher Education Programme and seriously contemplate how Pacific teacher education should be differentiated from teacher education programmes elsewhere in the world such as New Zealand, Australia, the United States or the United Kingdom.

That there is a need to invest in educational research, as a theoretical as well as, an applied science is evident. Thaman (2000) provides the premise that “... *indigenous knowledge and values provide a useful alternative to the total framework of Western, scientific, and reductionist thinking, which continues to dominate education in Oceania, and which I believe contributes to many learning difficulties faced by students as well as teachers today*”(p.55). In order to do this, we must learn to value and encourage Pacific theoretical and methodological frameworks in our research undertakings. Policy analysis and discourse analysis is also necessary and must be undertaken as valid and useful research inquiries. This kind of transformative paradigm shift in our research ideologies will not be easy. The continued 'importing of educational models of so called 'good' practice begs the question how can a practice be universally good practice particularly if island contexts realities differ in all aspects of the 'foundations' of education?

Recent developments show that there is a desire for better education systems and processes – as evidenced by the critical commentary that is directed towards education, curriculum and teachers in the region. Much of this critique unfortunately appears to indicate dissatisfaction at teacher performance. This deficiency model of thinking situates – even in regional documents – both the learning and teaching styles as deficient or lacking (PEDF, 2009). If evidence-based educational research shows that students' learning styles are as distinct to an individual as is their cognitive and physical states and socio-cultural, economic background – how can Pacific students learning styles be lacking? What are the measures by which this conclusion has been made?

Of equal concern is the level of complacency in education discourse. For example, institutional plagiarism has gone unchecked to the point that teacher standards are 'borrowed' from Europe and curriculum is lifted from Australia. “ *Who is a Pacific teacher?*” What are the criteria on which we might begin to assess this ideal? Who has the agency to speak of and for Pacific peoples in this regard? Pointed research would allow for wide reaching stakeholder consultation to help answer this question.

In interrogating this idea of the ideal teacher, there is also a need to dialogue the role and function of the teacher educator. Just as teachers matter in their roles of enacting the curriculum and in shaping the teaching and learning that takes place in their classrooms, teacher educators also matter. It follows, that the quality of teacher education is also dependent on the quality and calibre of our teacher educator(s). What are the attributes of the ideal teacher educator? How much teaching experience is required and expected and what of lived teaching experience in the Pacific islands?

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In addition to reviewing the qualifications and competencies of teacher educators, mentoring is a largely ignored dimension of teacher education. My personal experience of mentoring has been through my engagement with the RPEIPP having studied and worked with each of three founding members in various capacities as student, as colleague and as mentee for over a decade. While this sheds some light on the mentoring power of the Vaka Pasifiki movement itself, it also has shaped my thinking about my personal identity as a Pacific teacher educator and helped frame my own rethinking journey. This kind of learning through practice has informed and enriched my personal and professional life in so many ways. I have learned that *mafana* and *malie* are important indicators of authentic learning spaces and I have tried to mirror the lessons learned from my own mentorship experiences. I am so pleased to have at this event, numerous students whom I have taught here in Tonga at the UG and PG level, and a number of research students at the MA and PhD level from Laucala here to present and participate in this conference.

As a Pacific teacher educator, the mentoring experience has legitimized the unlearning and relearning that I have had to do. Through a guided learning praxis approach, I learned to unlearn the pedagogies that were ingrained in my mind at the Undergrad level and I have learned that in the Pacific classroom – *positive relationships* are at the core of effective learning. In my own teacher education courses, I now begin from the central belief that when students no longer feel the pressure of having to impress me, the real learning journey begins. I work with students to help them find their passion which is at the heart of their teacher identity. This helps them to fine tune their (re)searching for new knowledge, higher levels of understanding and skills. I have drawn the conclusion that when you are mentored, you aspire to mentor others. What better way to begin the teacher education mentoring then beginning with the teacher educators themselves?

What kinds of Pacific teachers do we need and want? What skills, values and knowledge do we assume they ought to possess? The transformative rethinking process will include examining the very foundations of teacher education and therefore, Curriculum review of teacher education is both necessary as it is critical. It must begin from a place of open inquiry where it is differentiated from teacher training. The distinction may be found in the very concepts of 'education' and 'training' where education emphasizes the link between epistemology, methodology and pedagogy while, training is primarily focused on imparting practical 'teaching strategies' and content. On the one hand, we are interested in holistic education of the teacher as a 'professional' (FBEAP, 2011) who understands the bigger picture of education and is able to engage as a reflective curriculum practitioner and leader, and on the other, we are focused on a technocratic approach which denigrates the teacher to a technician who has mastered the art of 'doing' whether it be in correlation to the wider disciplines of education or not.

The technocratic approach advocated maligns the student-teacher to a learning process that is governed by 'content subject knowledge' and 'teaching strategies'. Unfortunately, far too many educational leaders are ill-informed of the distinction between the two and this may be referred to as the blind spot in teacher preparation which allows for the perpetuation of the view that anyone can develop curriculum. When teacher education programmes fail to recognize the place of curriculum development and of learning educational theories (both classical western and Pacific cultural theories of education) we find ourselves in a dangerous spiral where teachers are relegated to the periphery as non-thinking baristas who serve up the menu of the prescription in predetermined ritualistic performance or delivery.

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Contrastingly, when we view teachers as professionals, teacher education becomes the prerequisite for the professionalization of the teaching workforce. In this way, teachers – like lawyers, accountants and doctors are held accountable to a set of locally designed and internationally informed assessment that enables entry into the profession (i.e. criteria for registration) and, validation/proof of worthiness to remain within that profession (performance reviews). As someone dear to me once said, you would not send a soldier to war without teaching him to use a gun, nor would you employ the services of a mechanic to perform surgery on your child. Why then would we assume that anyone can teach knowing full well that the ability to make or break a child's critical and creative thinking lies in the hands of that person. What power teachers' possess. The thrust of teacher education is the underlying understanding that *good teachers' matter*.

A rigorous teacher education programme is one that is conceptualized on critical pedagogy (Paulo Freire) and it then becomes the collective responsibility of teacher educators to devise a well-grounded thesis, a set of theories of Pacific Teacher Education premised on who we are, where we are and what we stand for. If current thinking is correct that learning acquisition is directly correlational to teacher quality then it stands to reason societal questions about sub-standard, mediocre teachers may also be a reflection of their preparedness and training. It is perhaps long overdue that we take the time to consider what 'our' standards might be – not UK standards or Australian standards –but our very own benchmarking of quality teachers and teaching practice.

It is true that just as no man is an island, no island can exist freed of the shackled of globalization, so it would be suicidal to consider developing curriculum and standards in isolation. However, the point is clear – we must devise our standards and programmes in consultation, in collaboration and in consideration of global trends, evidence –based and Pacific contextual epistemologies that are grounded in our own ontologies.

From Theory to Praxis

This final section offers *Tuli – a Transformative theory for learning and teaching in the Pacific* (Koya, 2013). Tuli was developed as a result of my own research in which I attempted to address the core issues of relevance, context and quality. It draws from the notion of the relevance movement that is Vaka Pasifiki which brought to my attention the two-pronged inquiry into quality education and quality teacher education. Tuli evolved from a focused inquiry into education for sustainable Pacific futures which I examined through a study of Tapa and Tattoo practice in Samoa and Tonga.

This transformative theory for teaching and learning in the Pacific, Education for Sustainable Pacific Societies OR: Education for the present and future – is essentially about finding the balance – the synergy or the space between global education agendas and Pacific agendas. The argument is that in finding the balance, we will reconceptualise quality Pacific education with the main educational outcome of resilience. That is, resilient individuals equipped to engage in critical thinking and problem solving and who will ultimately become active agents in shaping and maintaining resilient sustainable societies.

While the majority of sustainability discourse focuses on environment, economy and society as if these are separate and distinct from people, my study found that from a Pacific perspective, when we talk about sustainability we are talking about people. More specifically, the Pacific understanding and use of the word sustainability comes back to the human capacity to survive and thrive – to do well, adapt and maintain continuity amidst great turmoil or challenges of life. Tuli as theory presents a resilience literacies model (Koya, 2013) which comprises a set of attributes and competencies that enable the individual and the communal

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to achieve sustainable livelihoods and sustainable lifestyles. Resilience Literacies are defined as that set of attributes and competencies which enable individuals/community to:

1. **Believe** in the personal ability to effect positive life changes;
2. **Respond** to unpredictable life challenges (i.e. adversity and stress)
3. **Resist** change that may bring about instability;
4. **Appreciate** change as inevitable but manageable; and,
5. **Thrive** (do well).

Tuli includes four Attributes (quality or characteristic) of a resilient individual (applicable to both teacher and student). These attributes are referred to as *Resilience Attributes* and comprise:

- i. Self-esteem – sense of self-worth and pride in self and abilities
- ii. Self-efficacy – belief that you are the master of your own destiny
- iii. Self-determination – ability to make decisions for yourself, to reason these choices without feeling pressured to think, be, do a certain way
- iv. Agency – to make choices and to enact these choices

It also includes five competencies referred to as *Resilience Competencies* applicable to teachable and learnable competencies for students and teachers. They include:

- i. Beliefs, Attitudes, Values (affective domain)
- ii. Knowledge (cognitive domain)
- iii. Logical Reasoning (cognitive domain)
- iv. Skills (psychomotor domain)
- v. Contextual Application/Synthesis (combination of all 4)

These attributes and competencies culminate in a framework that is presented cyclically to demonstrate the holistic nature of human development for futures-thinking of sustainability. The argument is that with a strong foundation, we can and will grow resilient Pacific societies.

Figure 1 Resilience Literacies Model

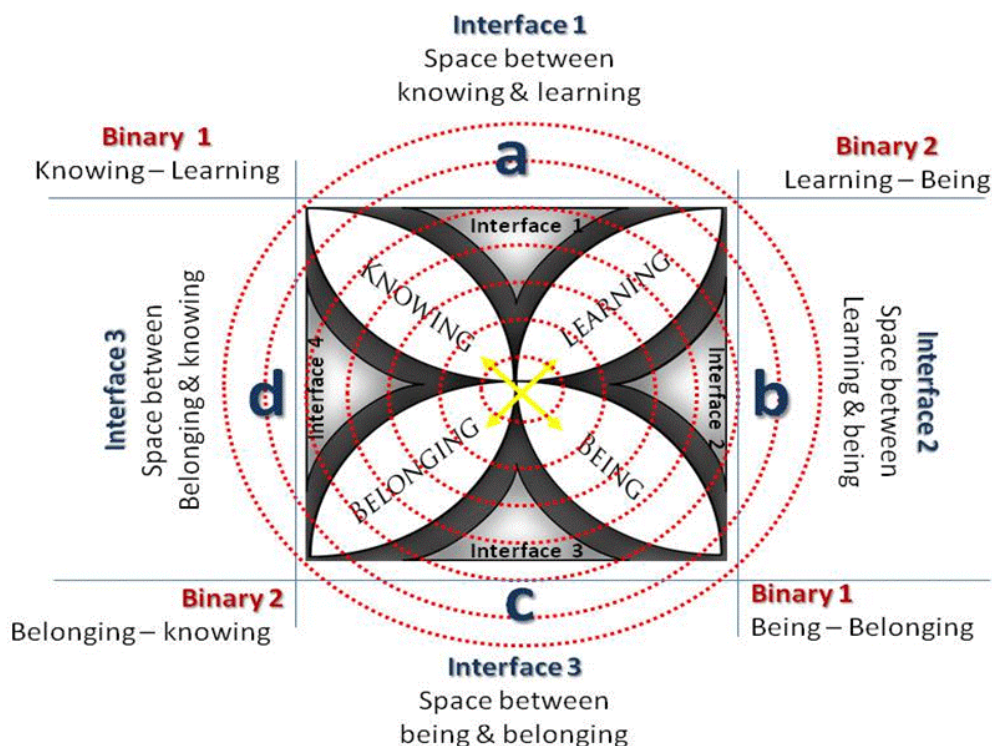


A critical turning point in the development of this transformative theory of learning and teaching is the reaffirmation of the centrality of positive relationships. There has been quite a bit of academic discourse on *Va* (relational space) and *Va Tapuia/ Veitapui-* (sacred spaces)⁵. In my study, I found that *Va* is central to understanding sustainability. It is not a metaphor for sustainability. It is the lived praxis of sustainability – we nurture the spaces between people, between humans and nature, and between communities and the cosmos. As a philosophy, a worldview, a pedagogical practice – a praxis - *Va* is the embodiment of sustainability and resilience and therefore critical to the learning and teaching and teacher education dialogue. It was this understanding that brought the various components of the Tuli framework together into a cohesive holistic model.

⁵ See for example, Wendt, 1999; Mahina, 2002; Bryne, 2005; Poltorak, 2007; Ka'ili, 2008; MacIntyre, 2008; Thaman, 2002, 2008; Anae, 2010; Peteru & Percival, 2010; Saltiban, 2012; Van der Ryn, 2012.

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Figure 2. A transformative theory of learning and teaching



In line with the idea of contextualized educational research by and for Pacific peoples, it was important to rethink the theoretical and conceptual framing as well as the visual layout of the theoretical map as it was drawn from a shared design element of Tongan Ngatu and Samoan Siapo (Koya 2013, p224). Tuli as theory, the final map includes 4 binaries or 'pairs' and 4 interfaces – or spaces between where the Va – or relational spaces i.e. inherent connections between the binaries - become operational.

The first binary (or pair) is *knowing and learning* in line with Delors' Learning to know and do (ako/ a'o). This is a curriculum strand that brings together the foundations of education (philosophy, sociology and psychology) in particular ontology, epistemology and pedagogy.

The second binary (or pair) is *being and belonging* – in line with Learning to be. This strand comprises the process of positioning of the self within the broader socio-cultural context of the family unit (extended) and the wider community. It represents the negotiation of the individual sense of purpose and connectedness within society imbued with a sense of connectedness – as being part of an active, evolving whole system.

The third binary – *learning and being* – in line with learning to learn and brings with it the idea of learning to unlearn and relearn. This strand is about the process of self-realization/ actualization where the learner becomes (through the teaching – learning process) aware of his/her sense of self, strengths, weaknesses, abilities and is able to articulate a person sense of self-worth through active participation in the teaching and learning process.

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And, the fourth binary – *belonging and knowing* – is in line with learning to live together. This strand follows from the community standpoint, in which collective knowledge becomes accessible to the individual (insider knowledge) and through practice and experience, s/he is able to access a deeper level of knowledge as a privileged insider of the wider community.

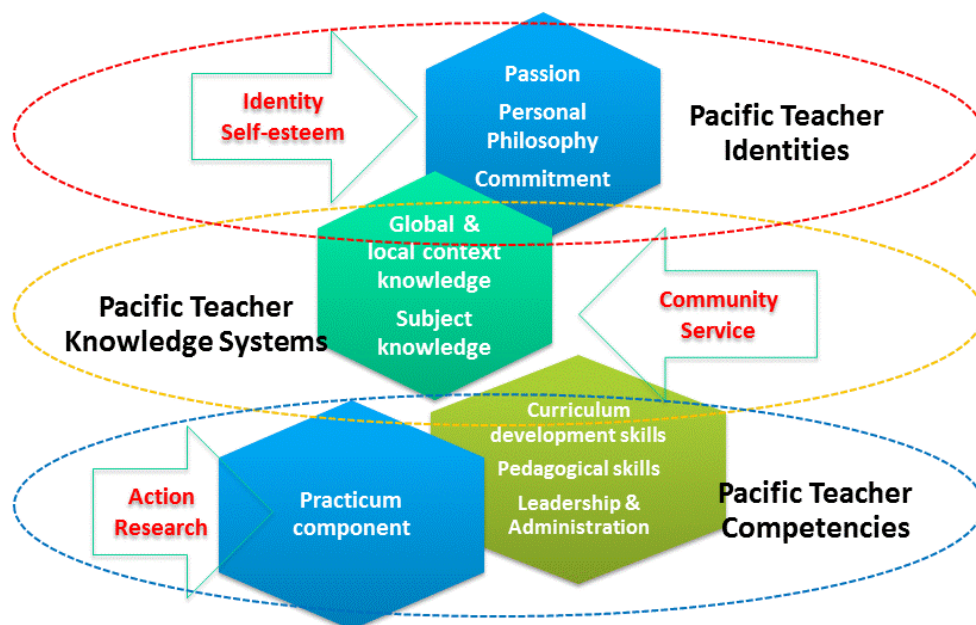
In this conceptualization of transforming Pacific teaching and learning, the interfaces or spaces between the binaries are of particular significance, drawing on the concept of relational spaces (Va). It suggests that by transitioning from the binaries to the spaces between that we may be able to design education systems in a more holistic way, ensuring contextualization, relevance and quality. The space between Knowing and Learning brings attention to Cosmology, Cosmogony, Ontology, Epistemology, Pedagogy, while the space between Learning and Being interrogates issues related to Internalization, self-realization, self-actualization, personhood, sense of self-worth, purpose. The space between Being and Belonging emphasizes the process of Conscientization (Friere, 1970), and the influence of family and community with a focus on conceptions of group affiliation, civics, citizenship. And, the final space between Belonging and Knowing hones in on our understandings of Life-long learning, contextualized praxis as 'learning' and 'relearning' over changing times and spaces. This takes into account new knowledge, experiential knowledge, knowledge acquired through relationships and active participation in the socio-cultural dynamic of the wider social network.

Drawing from Tuli, I present a framework for reconceptualising teacher education for the future with three main priority areas:

1. Pacific Teacher Identities;
2. Pacific Teacher Knowledge Systems; and,
3. Pacific Teacher Competencies.

Reflecting on the learning contexts of the 21st century Pacific learner and the challenges facing Pacific island nations, the implications become clear. 21st Century Pacific island teachers must be equipped with the personal attributes, knowledge and skill-base and a dual-sense of the purpose of education and the teachers' role in ensuring authentic teaching and learning spaces. There is a real need to engage in conceptual framing and theorizing Pacific Teacher Education models for the future and the framework below is presented as a starting point for this dialogue and to stimulate our collective thinking for the ongoing discourse.

Figure 3 A model for the discussion on Pacific Teacher Education



Conclusion: Transforming Pacific Teaching & Learning and Teacher Education

Transforming Pacific teaching & learning and Teacher Education will require rethinking the roles of the teacher, the student, and the teacher educator and re-examining the gaps in teacher preparedness. Teacher education and training institutions will need to interrogate teacher education programmes and the critical roles of teacher educators. *What resilience literacies should teacher educators possess? What transformation do our teacher education programmes and our educators need to undergo in order to effectively bring about the transformation we so desperately seek?*

In the final analysis I offer three tenets for transformation of our education systems.

1. Quality Pacific education recognizes that the one-size-fits-all, one-worldview, the grand white-washing theory of colonialism (and neo-colonialism) cannot and will not EVER work!
2. Quality Teacher education must de- and re-construct human capital theories and theories of adult learning in the Pacific from a Pacific standpoint that consciously and selectively draws from evidence-based practice in the Global north but ONLY if, when and where appropriate.
3. Quality teaching and learning is not about 'programmed learning to produce teaching or learning machines'. It must always remain a creative human endeavour towards a meaningful social learning experiences developed on a curriculum framework firmly embedded in our contextual realities and places the Pacific 'learner' at the centre of Pacific education.

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An important imperative is the reflective evidence based approach to thinking and rethinking for transformation. As a collective of Pacific education scholars representing various higher education institutions and Ministries of Education, we must all agree to begin from the same starting point – that of utmost honesty in acknowledging what is and what should be; what works, and what does not work in our education systems.

Quality education in and for the Pacific islands will not come from seeking the most expeditious means by which to adopt each new educational innovation that emerges from abroad. Ultimately, we must come to the realization that transformation will be achieved if we are able to engage in *straight talk* and honest thinking and rethinking. Post- Colonial Thinker Césaire is succinct:

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization. A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization. A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization (Césaire 2000, p.31).

If, as a collective, we are genuinely interested in conscientization and agency towards resilience in Pacific education and Pacific teacher education one thing is clear. “*We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom...*” (Hau'ofa 1993, p16) - to actively participate in our own liberation.

I believe that by the sheer agency of Vaka Pasifiki – and the tremendous dialogue, and research that has taken place since its inception in 2000 - the revolution has already begun.

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