Kakala Research Framework

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44.1 Brief History of Kakala Research Framework

The Kakala Research Framework, developed in 2006, is an extension of the Kakala Framework, originally designed by Konai Helu Thaman, (1997). The original Kakala framework was based on Helu Thaman's conceptualisation of teaching and learning. It was intended to encourage Pacific students to articulate theories from their perspectives and to recognise Pacific world views in their thinking and learning. The Kakala Research Framework was put together by Konai Helu Thaman, Ana Taufe'ulungaki, and Seu'ula Johansson-Fua, (2009) with additional ideas from the work of Manu'atu, (2001). It was purposely designed to conduct a study in Tonga on sustainable livelihoods (Taufe'ulungaki et al., 2007). The Kakala Research Framework is based on traditional Tongan knowledge of stringing a garland and the practice of traditional dance performance. The Research Framework, then, consists of six steps based on traditional concepts—teu, toli, tui, luva, malie and mafana. These traditional concepts are further detailed in this chapter as a guide for interested researchers. Although it is based on Tongan knowledge, the Kakala Research Framework offers similarities to other Polynesian contexts. The design of the Kakala Research Framework is based on social constructivism and a qualitative approach with concerns for context-specific knowledge, finding solutions to real problems, and the honoring of indigenous/traditional world views, including those of Tongans and Polynesians.

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44.2   Methodology of Kakala Research Framework

The Kakala Research Framework and its associated concepts are qualitative in nature. The Kakala Research Framework is underpinned by Tongan ethical research protocols that observe and honors relationships, reciprocity, respect, and humility. The key to Tongan ethical research protocol is the researcher's demonstration of appropriate ethical conduct at all times. In order to access traditional knowledge systems that are often protected and guarded by families, it is critical that the researcher exhibits appropriate ethical conduct in order to gain trust. In such contexts, the ethical protocols of universities and governments are just part of gaining access to the field; it is the relationship between the researcher and the community of participants that is critical for gaining access to authentic data. The Kakala Research Framework also encourages applied research and tangible impact on the participating communities that are part of the research. The Kakala Research Framework values reciprocity and ensuring that traditional knowledge systems are protected. The Kakala Research Framework is also based on the fundamental belief that research must benefit the people who have shared their knowledge.

Furthermore, the Kakala Research Framework offers two key research tools, Talanoa and Nofo. Talanoa, a term used by Tongans, Samoans, and Fijians, refers to conversations, sharing of ideas, and talking with someone. Talanoa is used for different purposes and in the Kakala Research Framework it is used to build relationships, to collect information, and to analyse data. Talanoa is context-specific in that the topic, the audience, the place, and time influences the language being used, or not used. As such, the language used to gather information is also critical in gaining access and understanding the context of the research. Talanoa is a paradigm shift from that of an open interview, as key to Talanoa is Fanongo or deep listening and feeling/sensing. The researcher is required to Fanongo, to really listen, not only to the spoken but also to the unspoken messages, implied meanings, and silences of Pacific communities.

Nofo is a term that is shared by Tongan, Samoan, and other Polynesian languages and refers to place of residence, to live, and to stay. Nofo is used in the Kakala Research Framework as a tool for observation, shared experiences, and in-depth understanding of a context. In a Nofo, the researcher lives in the community, or home for a period of time, partaking in the everyday lives of the community. It is used as a tool for the researcher to learn new skills and appreciate alternative perspectives. It is a powerful tool that allows the researcher to use Talanoa and Nofo together in a lived experience within a community. As with Talanoa, the ability to use the language and appropriate ethical conduct is critical. The Nofo tool was designed to complement the Talanoa.

The Kakala Research Framework also includes components for monitoring and evaluating the research process in the belief that it is in the *process* of research that we gain authentic data and that the concern for validity, reliability, trustworthiness, and worthwhileness are part of a cyclic process of questioning and re-questioning.

44.3   Applying the Kakala Research Framework

The Kakala Research Framework can be used in research studies conducted in social science and with qualitative approaches. Primarily designed to conduct studies in Tonga and other Polynesian contexts that share similar cultural and social contexts, the Kakala has been used also by diasporic Polynesian and Pacific people for studying phenomena that impact the lives of Pacific people.

This method may be used when working with Polynesian or Pacific communities in the Pacific and around the diaspora. Used correctly, it should help in gaining in-depth understanding of context, locating accurate data, and finding relevant and practical solutions. It is valuable in building trusting relationships with Pacific communities and supports long-term engagement in research and development.

My application of the Kakala Research Framework has been based on a fit for purpose approach. Sometimes, I do not use all of the tools suggested, but I use what is appropriate with the scope of the study. For example, I do not always use the Nofo in all of my research studies, but I do use Talanoa more often. I have also used both Talanoa and a close questionnaire from a quantitative perspective. However, there some key aspects of the Kakala that I ensure are always applied regardless of the scope of the study. These include the use of the appropriate ethical protocol, the opportunity to co-analyse with the participants and that the study benefits the participating community.

Sample domains for the Kakala Research Framework include Education, Development Studies, Comparative International Education, Social Sciences, and Health.

44.4   Process for Using the Kakala Research Framework

Step 1: Teu means to preparing something or for an event. Teu is the preparatory stage, where key questions are conceptualized and defined. These are some of the key questions at this stage: How do we define the problem? What does the problem mean for us? What is our source of conceptualization? Who? Why? These questions help us in the design of the research and for planning the work.
Step 2: Toli, means to picking a flower, or choosing an object. Toli is the data collection phase, where the researcher is involved in the field work. In this phase, two key Tongan research tools are used—Talanoa and Nofo. The two tools align with a qualitative approach and they are designed to complement one another. Key to using Talanoa and Nofo are the application of Tongan research ethics and competency in using the language of the participants.
Step 3: Tui has several meanings including "belief," "knee," or "to string a garland." Tui is the data analysis phase, where the researcher and the participants are part of the conversation to ensure that the data collected are accurate including the accuracy of the translation. In the Tui stage, it is important to recognize that the process of analysis requires negotiations, re-conceptualizations, re-collection, and readjusting of initial plans depending on the patterns that

emerge from the data. This process of Tui is designed to gain in-depth under-standing of the data within the context of the study. As such, the participation and co-construction of meaning and possible solutions are done in collaboration with the people who shared their knowledge in the Toli stage. The Tui, or the data analysis, in the Kakala Research Framework must be done in collaboration with the participants; it must not be done in isolation from the participants.

Step 4: Luva means a gift from the heart and that it is given with sincerity, humility and to honor someone. Luva is the reporting and dissemination stage, a process of returning the gift of new knowledge to those who have given the knowledge. This involves gifting the study results/findings to the community and ensuring that the study honors the people who shared their knowledge. Fundamental to the Kakala Research Framework is that research conducted on Pacific people must firstly benefit Pacific people. The Luva stage may include a one-time event of presenting the report findings. The Luva stage may also involve more elaborate processes; that is, a longer-term engagement of researcher with the community in designing and implementing projects based on solutions offered from the study. It is also important that in the reporting process attention is given to Pacific voices; that they are expressed with care, with honor, and always to protect Pacific knowledge systems, and ensure that it serves the needs of Pacific people or the people that shared their knowledge.

Step 5: Malie means 'well done'. It is a term used when the audience appreciates a performance. This stage refers to the monitoring of the process, and that monitoring is a continuous part of the research process. As in traditional Tongan performance, there is a certain level of understanding that is shared between the audience and the performers, as well as understanding of the costume, the music, and the story being told. In monitoring a research project, there are also multiple factors that require understanding in order to gain authentic data. As such, in the monitoring process several questions are asked. Was it useful and for whom? Was it worthwhile? Who benefited from the research process? Were the Talanoa sessions meaningful and honest? Did the Talanoa session make sense? Did the Talanoa session serve the needs of our communities? These questions are asked repeatedly throughout all parts of the Kakala Research Framework.

Step 6: Mafana means 'warmth', something that is heartfelt and emotional. In a traditional Tongan performance, there are moments of great exhilaration when a member of the audience joins the performers on stage. It is a moment of transformation and willingness to be part of something exciting.

In the Kakala Research Framework, the Mafana is the final evaluation where we seek transformation, application and hopefully, sustainability. It is a moment where the researcher and the community have created a new solution, an innovative approach to existing problems—it is a moment of transformation. It is transformational in the sense that it recognizes peoples' ability to solve their own problems and the researcher is part of that journey. The Mafana, like the Malie, is part of the process; it must be carefully crafted from the design phase (Teu) and woven

throughout the whole framework in order to find that transformation. In the Kakala Research Framework we ask questions such as: Were the outputs practical and sustainable? Were the participants empowered to make some real changes? In what way has the researcher learned and been transformed in the process? What is the impact of the research? The evaluation process expects to see transformation for the researcher as well as for the community/participants who were part of the research.

44.5 Strengths and Limitations of Kakala Research Framework

The framework can identify context-specific data with improved accuracy. With an in-depth approach to understanding the context, this research framework also supports the co-construction of relevant and meaningful solutions to real problems. Such a framework appreciates the context and begins from a strength-based approach. In this framework, it encourages the researcher and the participants to build meaningful and trustworthy relationships. The processes of the Kakala Research framework support transformational learning for the participants and the researchers.

However, the use of the framework should be carried out with caution. Without careful planning, the full application of the Kakala Research Framework can be labour intensive and time consuming. The application of the framework requires a good working knowledge of the language used by the participants and an effective use of the framework requires strong partnership with the participants. The application of the framework requires ethical researchers who are willing to adopt cultural protocols of the research context.

Engagement Activities

1. Think of a research project that you are interested in conducting, and ask yourself how the project will benefit the people that you will invited to participate in your study? What are some of the tangible benefits do you think they will get out of participating in your study?
2. When designing your next research project, consider why it would be useful for your study that you understand the ethical protocols of your participants? How might your study differ if you were to have an in-depth understanding of the language and ethical protocols of your participants?
3. What new learnings or understandings do you expect to gain from your research experience? How might your research experience be transformational for you as an emerging researcher?
4. When designing your research project, how might you ensure that your data collection is meaningful, honest and worthwhile for your participants?

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Additional Resources

https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/14973/1Kabini%20Sanga.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1233135.pdf

http://www.journal.mai.ac.nz/sites/default/files/MAIJrnl_7_2_Faavae_FINAL.pdf

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Trisia-Farrelly/publication/270912502_Talanoa_as_empathic_apprenticeship/links/5d0ff6d9a6fdcc2462a02874/Talanoa-as-empathic-apprenticeship.pdf

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