You say that you think
Therefore you are
But thinking belongs
In the depths of the earth
We only borrow
What we need to know

These islands the sky
The surrounding sea
The trees the birds
And all that are free
The misty rain
The surging river
Pools by the blow-holes
A hidden flower
Have their own thinking

They are different frames
Of mind
That cannot fit
In a small selfish world

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I sincerely acknowledge the indigenous people of this land and thank the organisers of this conference for the opportunity to share ideas about teachers and their potential to transform people and communities, especially indigenous communities. It is a privilege for me to be presenting this in Australia, a country where Indigenous peoples are both celebrated and marginalized, pretty much like most indigenous peoples everywhere, including in the Pacific Islands. Because this presentation is about the role of teachers in the education process it is inevitably about the need for Oceanic cultures to underpin teaching and learning in order to make formal education relevant, meaningful and sustainable.

As most of you know, teachers are the only professionals who are licensed to change people – to add to their knowledge, help develop skills and understanding and change their attitudes. This is an awesome task – making the teaching role a matter of life and death. In Oceania, the role of teachers today would largely reflect the societal expectations placed upon them as a result of various reforms and restructuring. Furthermore, we have witnessed a gradual change in relation to models of teaching advanced by the international community from self-contained school education to school education as a foundation for lifelong learning. As we look ahead to the future the teacher’s role will also depend on the future role of schools - whether this is to decline or expand. In many so called-developed nations such as Australia, the role of schools may decline with the increasing use of ICTs and greater individualization of modes of learning. But in most PICs the role of schools and teachers continue to expand and increasingly teachers are expected to be role models, professionals, experts, substitute parents as well as community leaders. Consequently those of us who train teachers would need to ensure that the curriculum of teacher education is helping teachers develop the necessary expertise and continue to upgrade their qualifications through continuing professional development; continue to focus on the development of high level skills such as willingness to learn; creativity and cooperation rather than just memorizations for examination performance; help teachers understand the pedagogical potential of ICTs and integrate these to classroom strategies; help them function well as part of a learning organizations and learning from one another; be flexible as professional requirements may change in the course of their careers; be more mobile and willing to move in and out of teaching; and have the ability to work with parents and other community leaders and others in the society in which the school is located. In PICs, these expectations mean that teachers need to be professionally as well as culturally competent. So far, teacher education institutions seem to be doing o.k. insofar as professionally preparing teachers but not so o.k. in relation to ensuring cultural competencies, with destructive consequences, especially in indigenous communities where schools, and now higher education institutions, continue to be sites of struggle for the majority of learners. I recall my university experiences in Auckland, in this poem

A weekend in Auckland is good  
For discovering again  
Old meeting places  
In the park  
Hoping they have stories  
To tell about the adventures  
Of a once youthful time

Down under the magnolia trees  
The bench that took our first kiss  
Is still there  
The fountain continues to beat  
Like an artificial heart  
And the flowers continue to die  
With each passing day
And there hovering high above  
Is the tower clock  
Now dwarfed by the reality  
Of its own time  
Its striking shadow a reminder  
That the heart’s best defense  
At this time  
Is forgetting

We live in a region where there are literally thousands of vibrant indigenous communities, each with their own unique cultures and languages that express what is worthwhile knowledge, skills and values necessary to be learnt for cultural survival and continuity. Sadly though, many of these are at risk of disappearing simply because of their small sizes and populations. Worse, since the arrival of foreigners in the region indigenous peoples have been denied opportunities to learn about their own cultural knowledge and value systems in schools and higher education institutions, where teaching and learning continue to be underpinned by foreign knowledge, skills and values, much of which had been literally and metaphorically destructive of indigenous peoples and their communities. Nevertheless, with a little help from the international community and a few well wishers from more powerful nations, we are now able to better advocate for our cultural survival and the continuation of our region’s cultural diversity. In this task teachers are vital for the success of our mission. Before sharing some experiences let me remind you of a few theoretical pointers about culture, teaching and learning.

As alluded to earlier, a discourse on teachers and teaching inevitably involves culture and language. Culture is here defined as a way of life, thinking and being, of a group of people, which include their language, knowledge and value systems. Western social scientists have long recognized the role of Culture in shaping people’s beliefs and attitudes, their roles and role expectations as well as the way they interpret and make meaning of their own and other’s behaviour (Eagly and Chaiken, 1998). Roles and role expectations, they say, are learnt and internalised through socialization and they help guide our behavior towards one another. However, they also warn that when people from different cultural backgrounds use their own individual cultural norms to define and interpret the role expectations of others, role conflicts often arise. This apparent lack of knowledge and understanding of different cultural norms and cues often cause communication problems and makes it difficult to interpret the behaviour and conduct of people who are involved in the communication process, such as, for examples, between teachers and their students (Riley, 1985; Widdowson, 1987; Ninnes, 1991; Taufe’ulungaki, 2000). Coleman (1996) suggests that there exists a role boundary in the teaching/learning process and when it is breached and unfulfilled, there is conflict (Coleman, 1996). This notion of role boundary seems to be similar to the Pan-Pacific notion of va/wah, which refers to a metaphorical space that defines and sanctions inter-personal as well as inter-group relations and communications (Thaman, 2002; 2007).

Cortazzi (1990) however, suggests that a key factor in the success or failure of the teacher-learner communication process, is pedagogy but some social scientists say that even pedagogy is shaped by the cultural values and ideologies of the society in which it originates and cultural values are embedded in the teaching approaches of teachers (Barrow, 1990; Leach, 1994; Kelen, 2002). In the cross-cultural classroom therefore, a teacher’s professionalism as well as cultural competence are important considerations for successful learning (Thaman, 1999a). A distinction is made here between culture and ethnicity, with the latter primarily based on biology and shared gene pools whereas Culture is a social concept, based on shared values, behaviour and performance. People may belong to a particular ethnic group but do not identify culturally with that group. Anthropologists Linnekin and Poyer (1988) suggest that Pacific Island peoples did not have a notion of ethnicity before European contact although had a concept of culture in that they were aware of people who were different from them because they behaved differently. It is unfortunate that many people today tend to use culture and ethnicity interchangeably. The distinction is of particular interest to educators in that while a person’s ethnicity cannot be changed, culture is learned and a person may indeed choose which cultural group(s) s/he may wish to be identified with and/or belong to.

Members of a cultural group normally share a cultural history, sustained and maintained by a language, knowledge system and worldview. In Oceania, indigenous cultures particularly those of Australia, have very long histories – thousands of years in fact, and different cultural groups have developed particular knowledges, skills and values that together form the bases for the lifelong learning of group members and their different ways of
responding to the various onslaught of foreign, often destructive forces such as colonialism and now modernisation and globalisation (Linnekin and Poyer, 1988). In the discourse on culture and education in PICs two types of relationships usually emerge: the first relates to the conflicting emphases of formal education (schooling) with those of the home cultures of learners resulting in what Little (1996) calls ‘cultural gaps’; and, the second relates to the role of schooling in the development of cultural and/or multi-cultural literacies along the lines that Hirsch (1988) suggests. Both of these are important considerations for teacher education in Oceania and underlie much of the work that we do at the University of the South Pacific (USP), a regional university serving 12 small Pacific Island Countries.

During the past two decades an increasing number of indigenous educators in PICs have been re-thinking and re-examining their own education as well as their own nations’ education systems in general, trying to clarify for themselves the differences between their received wisdom (from their formal, mainly Western education) and the wisdom of the cultures in which they grew up and were socialised, and from which they continue to learn important knowledge, skills and values (Thaman, 1993; Nabobo and Teasdale, 1993; Taufe’ulungaki, 2000; Bakalevu, 2000; Thaman, 1988; 1992; 1993). This is important especially for teachers in light of Little’s (1995) suggestion that the difference between these two sites is small for those students whose home cultures are attuned to the culture of schooling but large for those mainly rural and indigenous (students) whose home cultures are vastly different from the culture and expectations of the school, particularly the curriculum.

It is interesting to note here how Lawton (1974:1) a British curriculum expert, defines curriculum – as ‘a selection of the best of a culture, the transmission of which is so important that the task has been designated to specially prepared personnel - teachers’. It is this definition of curriculum that, in my view, makes teaches ‘deadly’ and teacher preparation a matter of life and death. In PICs the curriculum of formal education has always been associated with the transmission of foreign cultures ever since schools were established by Christian missionaries in the early 19th century. It was a cultural agenda that was NOT underpinned by the cultural values of the people of Oceania - cultures that, for millennia, provided the only lens through which people saw themselves and which framed their ways of learning, seeing and behaving. These values were reflected in intricate webs of relationships that provided meaning to and guidelines for wise, sustainable living and cultural survival. Such frameworks not only defined particular ways of being and behaving but also types of knowledge, wisdom and ways of knowing as well as methods of passing on this knowledge to future generations. However, in Oceania today, despite the alienating ways of school and university education, many indigenous people in Oceania continue to believe that for the sake of their cultural survival and continuity, schools (and in turn teachers) should have a role in the transmission of the best of their (Pacific) cultures, including their languages, to future generations (Taufe'ulungaki, 2002), a desire that is particularly important today as the global market-place and ideology pervade the lives of even the smallest and most isolated Pacific Island community.

Many of you here today are no doubt familiar with the conflicting and often different emphases and expectations of university education and our indigenous cultures. For example, the emphasis on abstract rather than practical knowledge; of logical, linear thinking compared to indirect and circular thinking; of empirical knowledge rather than knowledge of everyday life; on objectivity, clarity and precision of expression of thought rather than imaginative and emotion filled expressions; and now, of the importance of student numbers rather than students. There are also challenges in university management and the new culture of managerialism which runs the university as a business corporation with knowledge being commodified and economic concerns often overtaking social ones. We and our students have become producers and consumers of knowledge as our universities are being more de-humanised. This is the environment in which a great number of our teachers are being prepared.

As indigenous teachers we are expected to mediate the interface between the different languages and cultural systems of meanings and values that continue to exist in our various educational institutions. The stimulus for this mediation comes from our professional role, which mandates intensive interaction with other people’s children as well as their parents and communities. In the classroom, points of conflicts are usually communicated to us directly or indirectly by the behaviour of our students as they move between their home cultures and that of the school or university curriculum. In this context, we need to know and understand the differences as well as commonalities between different cultural perspectives that we encounter. In order to do this we must be able to theorise own
education in order to find ways of integrating and harmonising the different cultural perspectives that have contributed to our own professional as well as personal development.

Unfortunately teachers as a group have not been the focus of many educational reforms in our region, a factor that in my view, contributed to the many failed educational reforms that I have witnessed in more than 30 years working at USP. In Pacific Island schools, teachers occupy an important but culturally ambiguous position. On the one hand, their professional training commits them to the rationale and practices of a western-derived school curriculum, while on the other, their personal identities are often rooted in their own cultural traditions and norms. Their training at universities and/or teachers’ colleges, makes them part of an intellectual elite whose knowledge, skills and attitudes often set them apart from the rest of society, yet their early socialisation was largely in the medium of a local or indigenous culture that is very similar to if not directly continuous with that in which many of their students grow up. In most Pacific communities, school children’s relationships with their parents and other elders continue to be negotiated within the terms of reference of local and indigenous education systems that have their own ideas about cognitive development, interpersonal relations and social responsibility, as well as the development of wisdom (see for example, Thaman, 1988; Nabobo, 1996; Teaeo, 2003). But at school, Pacific cultural values and ideals are often de-valued and discouraged because they tend to conflict with the values that the school is trying to promote. For example, while schooling and the educational bureaucracy rely on notions of universalism and impersonality, indigenous education systems rely on specific contexts and interpersonal relationships. Schooling promotes individual merit while indigenous education is rooted on the primacy of the group (Thaman, 1988). The extent to which the school represents the cultures of Pacific Island communities continues to be minimal as the officially sanctioned values are those of the school structure, the approved curriculum and the teaching profession, rather than those of the cultures to which most students and teachers belong (Sanga, 2000). At best schooling offers the lucky few (less than 5%) access to the modernised, monetised sector; at worst it is a recipe for the destruction of the best of our cultures.

The neglect of teachers mirrored the global situation where the role of teachers was not usually seen as central to international debates and discussions about education despite the 1966 Geneva Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers which later included higher education personnel. As late as 1995 a World Bank Education Sector Review of Six Key Options for reforming education systems did not even mention teachers, their selection or training. Leaving teachers out in the periphery of educational debates helped reinforce a belief that educational systems could be changed without having to deal with teachers. As a result, by the mid 1990s teachers throughout the world had been relegated to an inferior role both in relation to their working conditions and to teaching itself, a state of affairs that must have prompted the then Deputy Secretary General of UNESCO to ask an audience during a World Teachers Day celebration, “Would you let your son or daughter become a teacher in your country today?” Thankfully, the 1996 Delores Report, Education for the Twenty First Century: learning the treasure within” did help to shift global attention to teachers and teaching by devoting a whole chapter to teachers. Entitled, Teachers: in search of new perspectives, the authors assert that countries who wish to improve the quality of education must first improve the recruitment, training, social status and working conditions of their teachers and encourage teacher participation in policy decision-making.

In our region, the neglect of teachers in the educational decision making processes of many PICs also reflected a global trend in child-centred teaching approaches advocated by foreign technical experts who came as part of bilateral and multilateral aid and reform packages. Most Pacific indigenous languages do not easily distinguish between teaching and learning and many have their own notions of worthwhile learning, knowledge and wisdom and how these should be structured and/or assessed (Thaman, 1988, 1993, 2003). Furthermore, most Pacific teachers do not characteristically interrogate the teaching and learning resources that are provided as part of bilateral and/or multilateral donor-funded educational reform projects, largely because they fear that questioning the work of ‘experts’ might be interpreted as ungratefulness or impoliteness (Thaman, 1992).

However, there have been a few attempts to focus attention on teachers as curriculum implementers. In 1992 a UNESCO sub-regional workshop held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands reaffirmed the need for ownership of school education by Pacific people, if improvement in student learning outcomes were going to occur. The Rarotonga declaration also noted the vital contribution of teachers towards such a process. (Teasdale and Teasdale, 1992). Later in the same year, the Pacific Association of Teacher Educators (PATE) was formed by heads of teacher education institutions who resolved to re-examine their curriculum with a view to making it more
culturally inclusive of both students as well as their teachers. The implementation of this resolution was
strengthened in 1998 with the establishment, of a UNESCO Chair in teacher education and culture at the USP,
tasked with advocacy, teaching, research and publications devoted to teachers, teaching and the central role that
culture plays in teacher education and curriculum development.

The school curriculum is a good place to start if one wants to find out what a society considers important and
worthwhile for young people to learn. However, I had alluded earlier to the foreign nature of the Pacific curriculum.
For many years, I have argued that integration of indigenous knowledge and values into the curriculum of PICs
will enhance the learning opportunities within school communities and students would be assisted in developing
these values through discussion and modeling as part of the learning and in teaching processes within a school
environment (Thaman, 1993). However, most educational reformers have not always emphasized the
importance of values in the various reform projects in which they are involved. For example, apart from an
emphasis on citizenship education in the early 1990s the focus of curriculum reformers since 2000 had been on
four key functions of i) establishing entitlement; ii) establishing standards; iii) promoting continuity and coherence;
and, iv) promoting public understanding. In all these, the scope and nature of the curriculum remained
unquestioned.

This is because in a world where education is increasingly being called upon to provide the bases for modern
economic development as well as an introduction to and success in the global cash economy, it is not easy to
advocate for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge, skills and values in the curriculum of our schools and
universities. Many including Pacific Island people themselves regard their cultural knowledges as having little
contribution to make towards the achievement of the over-riding economic goals of national governments as well
as educational institutions. Consequently many students as well as teachers continue to miss out on basic life
skills associated with their various cultures and societies, a factor that is increasing being seen as contributing to
many indigenous students’ underperformance in formal education. Furthermore, the curriculum of many Pacific
schools and universities continue their wrong assumptions indigenous learners, despite the fact mentioned earlier
that the socio-cultural system of a student’s home and community is influential in producing culturally unique and
preferred modes of relating and communicating to others, thinking, learning, remembering and problem solving
(Leach & Little, 1999). In other words, the learning environments for most indigenous students continue to be
culturally undemocratic. Today, most indigenous educators in our region would agree that cultural democracy in
education in general and teacher education in particular in Oceania, has not been adequately addressed
(Taufe’ulungaki, 2003; Thaman, 2011). It is particularly difficult at our university where teachers from ECE to
tertiary receive their training, and where the curriculum continues to be influenced by the experiences and
ideologies of Euro-American cultures. It was only two years ago that our university was willing to include Pacific
societies and cultures in its list of research priorities and Pacific Studies a compulsory course for all
undergraduate students.

It is possible to view cultural democracy in teacher education from three vantage points: language, values
and teaching/learning styles, areas where there exist marked differences between what many students may learn
formally and what they know to be true as a result of their informal learning and socialisation in their home
cultures (Thaman, 1988; Nabobo, 1995). Language is probably the best indicator of a culturally undemocratic
learning environment. While English is the medium of instruction at our university it is a foreign, second or third
language to at least 95% of all of our students. It is an understatement to say that most of our students have
difficulty expressing themselves adequately in English, whether orally or in their writing. Our students bring with
them not only different languages but also different learning and thinking styles. For example, the Tongan tradition
of inquiry, unlike Western, scientific traditions are less abstract and analytical and more practical and substantive.
It does not place great emphases on logical thinking as described by Western philosophers although this does not
mean that Tongans are not able to think and analyse; rather it means that learning and knowledge are closely tied
to the realities of everyday life, and experiences and ideas are expressed through people’s experiences over time,
thus suggesting a strong utilitarian emphasis (Helu, 1999). At university many teaching personnel are
preoccupied with students’ clarity of expression of thought, and often de-emphasise subjective, emotion-filled
expressions of language, the very things that characterize many Tongan students’ cultural expressions and
language. Other Pacific languages also do not clearly distinguish between objective and subjective statements
nor have they the equivalent structures to describe these, but they are ideal for communicating beliefs, sentiments
and attitudes and in the context of culture, they are highly functional and practical (Bakalevu, 2003). As alluded to
earlier, most indigenous Pacific students’ thinking and learning are integrated into a cultural system where human
relationships as well as human activities are extremely important (Thaman, 1988:89-125). The implications of these for our students' use of English (or another language) to communicate their ideas cannot be over-emphasised.

Cultural values, because of their nature, form and expressions, also present some difficulties for many of our students. This is further complicated by our university's early indifference to the teaching of Pacific cultures and languages that could have exposed many to the sociological, psychological, anthropological or artistic characteristics of different cultural groups that constitute Pacific island populations. A reason that was commonly advanced had to do with a perceived difficulty of choosing which cultures and/or languages to include in the university curriculum. The real reason might have something to do with the Euro-centric perspectives of USP's founding fathers (most were males!!) as well as university staff themselves. What is even more disappointing has been the tendency, until recently, of some Pacific staff and students themselves to view their own cultures and values as unimportant for their advancement as academics and/or researchers. This year (2012), more than forty years after the founding of our university, a compulsory course in Pacific Studies was implemented. This is a good start although cynics say that this is tokenism since the other 23 courses would be business as usual.

In relation to teaching and learning styles go, Bernstein (1961), Hess and Shipman (1965) and Harris (1992) claim that ethnicity and differences in cultural values are as important as socio-economic class, if not more so, in determining the characteristics of a student’s learning style. Little has been done to examine the teaching styles that are characteristic of different cultural groups in the Pacific Island region. Landbeck and Mugler (1999), staff of our university, had identified a predominantly teacher-dominated communication and learning style at the USP, urging more student-based teaching, with teaching staff taking on a more facilitative role. While I agree that student-centred learning may work with some students, my experience in over 30 years teaching at USP suggest that it is not so much getting students to work on their own (teacher as facilitator) as assisting them and genuinely showing personal interest in their progress. A recent survey conducted by the USP division of Distant and Flexible Learning (DFL) among distant learners indicated many students' preference for face-to-face interaction with their tutors and lecturers. This is despite the requirement that DFL courses are 'stand-alone'. During many discussion sessions with undergraduate as well as postgraduate students that I teach, the majority indicated their preference for lecturers who empathized with their language problems and who use examples that they could relate and understand instead of those that were in the text books, internet and other sources. In a recent study by one of my postgraduate students, it was found that the majority of postgraduate learners preferred a Blended mode of delivery (F2F plus on-line teaching) to a totally on line mode (Raturi, 2010). Despite attempts by the university to assist staff improve their course delivery, the fact remains that not everyone is taking the opportunity to improve course delivery or make teaching and learning more flexible and culturally democratic. Some staff see themselves as helping to re-educate students perpetuating a cultural deficit model of teaching that reinforces the idea that there is something wrong with students’ home cultures and that everyone needs to conform to the cultural expectations of the university which in practice often means the lecturers’ own cultural expectations.

The perceived need for university staff to treat all students equally is of course based on the assumption that students are a homogenous cultural group. Such an assumption prevents educational institutions from formulating a coherent teaching/learning policy that realises the goals of cultural democracy. This form of cultural blindness is usually the result of a reluctance to acknowledge that students come from a diversity of cultural backgrounds and that they experience different socialisation practices which affect their behaviour, including how they learn. Sadly our new Teaching and Learning Policy would fall into this category.

However, some small attempts to address the teacher-student communication challenges in higher education in the Pacific. Important policy changes at USP relating to research and teaching has been mentioned. In other areas, the School of Education in conjunction with the Institute of Education have been encouraging the documentation and publications of studies in the general area of culture and education. 'Educational Ideas from Oceania' published in 2003 and revised in 2009, has been a useful resource for our teachers and post graduate students who are interested in the educational ideas of selected Pacific cultures. All authors are Pacific staff and students. This publication was a milestone in our attempt to encourage indigenous staff and students to critically analyse, theorise and reclaim their education as well as learn about other people's educational ideas and values.
Before the publication of ‘Educational Ideas’ a series of Teacher Education Modules on selected aspects of the teacher education curriculum was published in 2000, targeting primarily teacher educators. Some of the titles include: Towards culturally democratic teacher education (Thaman, K); Vernacular languages and classroom interaction in the Pacific (Taufe’ulungaki); Incorporating local knowledge in teaching about society (Nabobo); Making sense of human development: beyond western concepts and universal assumptions (Tupuola); Ways of mathematising in Fijian society (Bakalevu); and, Learning from indigenous leadership (Sanga). Feedback from some teachers training college lecturers indicate that they as well as their students found the Modules useful.

As well as materials production, postgraduate students at the School of Education are encouraged to use and/or adapt indigenous research frameworks and methodologies in their research studies and possibly develop their own personal philosophies of teaching and learning. Pacific frameworks including Kakala (Thaman, 1993) Kurakaupapa Maori (Smith, 1999), Fa’afaletui (Tamasese, et al 1998), Naauao (Meyers, 1998), Fonofale (Sauni, 2001), Malie and Mafana (Manu’atu, 2001), Vanua (Nabobo-Baba, 2006) and Manulua (Vaioleti, 2010) and Iluvatu (Naisilisili, 2011) often inspire Pasifika students to look towards their own cultures and knowledge systems for knowledge, skills and values that they might use to further their formal education.

Such valuing of Pacific cultural resources was exemplified in a regional Sustainable Livelihood and Education Project (SLEP) of the USP Institute of Education. An initiative of the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI) the study was carried out jointly by staff of USP and those of the Tonga Teachers’ College and used the Tongan research framework Kakala as well as Tongan research methodologies of nofo and talanoa. Valuable data about people’s conceptions of what sustainable living in Tonga meant were obtained. Tongans referred to a notion of Mo‘ui fakapoto poto which links life (mo‘ui) and wisdom (poto), and assumes a type of learning that is underpinned by the core values of faka’apa’apa (respect); feveitokai’aki (reciprocity); loto-to (sharing); and, tauhi vaha’a (relationships). Researchers later presented their findings to the Director of Education who informed them that the information gained from the project would be used in that country’s curriculum project. According to the principal researcher, Johannson-Fua (2007) the data obtained from the Tonga project were robust, rich and informative on several educational fronts. As well as data relating to knowledge, skills & values associated with sustainable livelihoods in Tonga, information about other areas of concern such as students’ learning styles, team strategies, evaluation and monitoring processes and their implications for teaching and learning were also obtained. For example, the research showed how learning in Tonga usually involves sio (observation); a la (touch); fanongo (listen); and ta (perform or act). This meant that a teacher would need to be able to demonstrate ion (fakatata), important knowledge and skills, working together with the student (kaunga ala), interacting with them (talanoa) and closely observing their performance (sio). In other words, the notion of the teacher as role model which I described twenty years ago (Thaman, 1988) seemed to be important still for Tongans. SLEP also identified values similar to those that I had identified as ‘valued contexts of thinking’ in 1988 which included emphases on the supernatural; formal comformity; rank and authority; concrete and context-specific behaviour; restraint behaviour; good inter-personal relations; loyalty; and ‘ofa (compassion) ‘Ofa was an important value as well as the main motivation for all good and positive deeds. These Tongan values are quite different from those that have been identified as core values for other nations, such as the USA which list life; liberty; pursuit of happiness; common good; justice; diversity; truth; popular sovereignty; and patriotism as core values (Folterman, 2007); or Australian core values such as the pursuit of knowledge and a commitment to achievement of potential; self acceptance and respect of self; respect and concern for others and their rights; social and civic responsibility; and environmental responsibility as identified in the Western Australia Curriculum Framework.

The valuing of Pacific indigenous cultures and their knowledge and value systems has been a major focus of the work of the UNESCO Chair in teacher education and culture of which I am responsible. Besides advocacy through public lectures, seminars and conference addresses, I work with curriculum planners and teacher educators, encouraging them not only to consider students’ cultural backgrounds in their work but also to incorporate Pacific knowledges and values in the curriculum resources that they develop. Some of my graduate students are school head-teachers and principals, who have a lot of influence in what teachers do in school. They too are targeted in the work that we do. Teacher educators also are major clients and we have developed materials that would help them to more effectively contextualize their work. More details about these and other activities of the UNESCO Chair can be accessed on www.usp.ac.fj/unesco-chair/
The Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI) is also serious about the role of culture in research and educational development and it encourages researchers and educators to interrogate what is being imported to the region in the name of education, and to re-think this in the contexts of Pacific cultures and their realities. Since 2001, RPEI has sponsored national as well as regional conferences in the Pacific on a variety of topics ranging from educational aid, to curriculum development, research and leadership. RPEI is a network of Pacific educators who are united in their commitment to improving the quality of education in the region. A symposium held in 2011 to mark the tenth anniversary of RPEI focused on two main themes: research and leadership. More information on this may be obtained from the [www.nope.org](http://www.nope.org) or Vaka Pasifiki FB.

(The issue of ethics in research is also an important area for teachers and teacher educators. Because ethics has to do with appropriate behaviour it follows that its interpretation in one society may not necessarily be the same in another, especially in a region that is so culturally diverse as the Pacific Islands. Wax (1991:432) had suggested that while both researchers and researched have standards for assessing conduct in most cases, these standards are incommensurable for the parties, if they do not share a common moral vocabulary or a common vision of the nature of human beings as actors in the universe. As suggested by Smith (1999), much of the thought behind the idea of respect for human dignity, for example, could have served to create and perpetuate unethical conduct, attitudes and behaviour in the practice of research by some Europeans on aboriginal people in the past (and perhaps even now). The desire for an ethical framework in indigenous research is an attempt to restore order and balance to people’s daily lives which comes with the assertion of traditional values and ethics (Castellano 2004; Maka, et.al, 2006). In analyzing ethical issues in Pacific research therefore one needs to look at themes such as: interpretation of ethics; depiction of Pacific people in research; scientific methods; academic freedom; Pacific experts; appropriation of knowledge; collective ownership and consent; benefits and distributive justice; and of course confidentiality. This last issue is tricky when it comes to considerations of individual vs collective rights especially in some societies where the views of the group may take precedent over the view of the individual).

An important challenge in relation to teaching and research in higher education in PINs have had to do with ownership, control, access and possession of knowledge – issues that are closely linked to the agenda of Pacific people’s self-determination. They serve as guides to the re-appropriation of research activities and outcomes in Pacific research within the context of the agenda to develop a Pacific indigenous worldview-based research paradigm. RPEI is encouraging the development of Pacific research frameworks for the Pacific Indigenous Research Agenda which also serves to enhance capacity building of indigenous researchers by bringing concepts of ownership and control to the attention of Pacific communities. At USP SLEP was part of an attempt to develop community based research guidelines and agreements, paying attention to how communities-based research information is accessed and how research is conducted. We wanted the various communities that the university serves to have some control over research activities in their areas. Such empowerment would engender a sense of interest and responsibility at the community level as people become more involved in the processes of research and activities that support the institutions where their young people study. A good example of such empowerment may be seen among Maori in Aotearoa New Zealand where Maori community research guidelines have become valuable tools for asserting indigenous people’s jurisdiction over community (cultural) resources. Community guidelines are different from university guidelines, which often do not recognize indigenous rights and jurisdictions. I am personally concerned about the effectiveness of institutional guidelines to adequately address local and indigenous issues in our part of the Pacific. However, the recent endorsement in 2010, by Forum Education Ministers of the Regional Culture and Education Strategy may help steer Pacific ministries of education towards a path of more culturally inclusive teaching, learning and research in our region. Finally in relation to policy and planning, a major EU-NZAID funded Pacific Regional Initiative in Development and Education (PRIDE) 2004-201 has also contributed to the valuing and acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge systems and championed the better contextualization of policy development, curriculum development as well as teacher training.
I conclude by identifying a few challenges that we continue to face.

1. There are not enough research activities in the region that utilize Pacific knowledges, frameworks and methodologies. We need to develop more Pacific research frameworks and critically assess the usefulness and relevance of current ones in order to ensure their robustness and relevance for the purposes for which they were developed. Pacific scholars in New Zealand are beginning to do this. Koloto’s work (2001) is instructive here, and she has written about the use of Kakala (Thaman, 1992); Fa’aafetalu (Tamasese, et al. 1998) and Tivaevae (Maua-Hodges, 2000); Vanua (Nabobo-Baba, 2006); and Iluvatu (Naisilisili, 2011)

2. Some critics say that Pacific teaching and research frameworks are not transferable; that they do not work across cultures. Well, one can say this about most research frameworks and models. For most indigenous cultures, knowledge and techniques are context specific and this is probably why many Western models and paradigms do not seem to work with Pacific peoples. The issue of cross cultural applicability may not be a serious challenge to some. So far, my framework, Kakala, seems to work well for most Pacific students perhaps because they could find equivalent notions in their own cultures (e.g. the Fijian salusalu, or the Hawaiian lei).

3. There is lack for overt institutional support for indigenous education and research. A lot of aid money is tied to aid projects with their own strings and conditions. Indigenous knowledge systems and research using indigenous paradigms are not well understood, or popular with aid donors, or consultants who often make decisions about what is worthwhile to include in curriculum and/or research projects. For example, the inclusion of Pacific knowledge systems and Pacific research protocols in our university’s Research Strategy was greeted with mixed reactions, with the most positive one coming from Education, indifference from Business and Law and disbelief from Science and Technology!

4. Although an increasing number of indigenous teachers who are postgraduate students are keen to explore their own cultures, values and knowledges for their higher degree studies, it is an uphill battle to find supervisors who share the passion for indigenous education and research. In fact a few colleagues have branded our activities as minimalist and cultural politics implying that mainstream approaches to education are culture-free.

As well as global knowledge and skills, many indigenous leaders and educators are now of the view that the collective wisdom of their cultures need to be taught to young people so that they are well informed about their in the current curriculum re-development work that would ensure a more prominent role for Tongan culture, language, cultural values as well as Tongan knowledge system, in the curriculum of formal education. In this, the teacher plays a vital role. They too need appropriate education so that they can assist students in their learning task. After all, this is what happens in developed countries, including those that offer assistance to us in the Pacific. We cannot ask for anything less.

Come take this kakala
Symbol of life and love
Tie it around you
Where it will grow
In the nourishing flow
Only the sky knows

(Thaman, 1993: 12)
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