

## Indigenous approaches at play in creating positive student outcomes in a tertiary institution

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Talofa lava, Fakaalofa lahi atu, Kia orana, Malo ni, Malo e lelei, Fakatalofa atu, Ni sa bula, Warm greetings  
O aganu'u masani e fafau ai se manuia au i luma i a'oa'oga maualuga (Samoan) /  
Ko e ngāue'aki e anga fakafonuá ke ola lelei 'a e ako faka'univēsiti (Tongan)

### Abstract:

*This paper demonstrates how the weaving of indigenous Pacific research, pedagogical approaches and methodologies can be effectively employed by Pacific peoples in a blended learning tertiary environment to both promote and modify academic and information literacy skills (AIL). AIL skills are part of the key attributes of the University of Auckland Graduate Profile which the University believes students require to succeed in academia. The use of Pacific indigenous methodologies like Teu le va/Tauhi va (Samoan/Tongan relationships), Tālanoa (Pacific discussion formal and informal) and the Kakala framework (Tongan pedagogy) in working with students and staff build on existing knowledge, experience and values of many students. The approach adopted has also contributed to a change in academic staff and student perceptions of AIL as 'library' only skills in a Pacific Studies undergraduate programme at the University.*

*The application of an expanded "culturally and linguistically sustaining" (Paris, 2012) integrated approach in our study is producing research based positive outcomes such as: increased academic staff support for AIL integration; increase in student participation and engagement in Libraries and Learning Services workshops and First Year Students Targeted Learning Sessions.*

*The close collaboration va/relationships and tālanoa with staff and students help address areas for further collective development, such as scaffolding and expanding research skills*

*into the next level courses and better transparency of research skills in course assessment. This paper will be of interest to institutions with growing Pacific and other minority populations, seeking to assist students achieve positive academic outcomes.*

**Keywords:** Indigenous Pacific pedagogical approaches, student engagement, academic information literacy integration.

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## **Introduction**

Many tertiary institutions are seeking greater understanding of indigenous frameworks and how these can be effectively blended with academic and information literacies (AIL) to enhance teaching, learning and research. Of particular importance is making transparent academic and information literacies discourses and pedagogical processes.

This includes interactive pedagogies, critical analysis and critical perspectives on power. These important aspects of student academic competency are however already found in Kaupapa Māori (L.T. Smith, 2012, 2014, 2015; G. Smith, 2003) and the related Mātauranga Māori (Royal, 2012) indigenous research theories, models, and processes that do provide an indigenous model for incorporating these elements. They are also strongly oriented towards gaining autonomy over the skills needed for life in a modern complex society (Drury, 2001). These include:

- historical Māori experiences with, and perceptions about research,
- Māori perspectives about the world,
- Māori values and expectations around ethics,
- Māori cultural values and practices,
- Māori knowledge.
- The place and status of Māori people, language and culture in society and the world. (Rangahau, n.d. <http://www.rangahau.co.nz/>)

As world leaders in indigenous research and education Māori argue that Māori research needs to be led by Māori themselves (Rangahau, n.d.). This perspective is echoed by Pacific and indigenous research, scholars and educators “to take control and ownership of their formal education and to pay more attention to the important role that culture plays in the successful learning of Pacific young people” Helu-Thaman (2014).

A growing number of Pacific scholars argue for and are leading Pacific indigenous research based on Pacific perspectives, values, methods, approaches, epistemologies, worldviews, languages and cultures (Baba, Mahina, Williams, & Nabobo-Baba, 2004; Hau’ofa, 2008; Manu’atu, 2000b; 'Otunuku, Nabobo-Baba & Johansson-Fua 2014; Sanga & Helu-Thaman, 2009, 2014; Wendt, 1999).

Burnett & Lingam’s (2012) review of Pacific postgraduate education research undertaken at the University of the South Pacific from 1968 to 2009 shows they largely used an interpretive framework. The authors argue that a “Pacific education system underpinned by socially-critical theoretical perspectives, particularly deconstructive ones, can better respond to the twin challenges of creating universal and equitable access to education and arresting the loss of language, culture, identity, and life skills via rapid globalization” (p.221). The need for greater use of critical emancipatory paradigms and frameworks is apparent. Critical indigenous research models, theories and methods in Māori (L.T. Smith, 2012, 2015; G. Smith 2003) are now well established and in Pacific research (Anae, 2013, 2016; Baba,

Mahina, Williams & Nabobo-Baba, 2004; Hau’ofa, 2008; Helu-Thaman, 1992; Manu’atu, 2000a, 2003; Suaalii-Sauni, et al. 2014; Vaioleti, 2006) are widely used.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific research guidelines clarify key guiding principles, concepts, cultural values, protocols and pedagogies relevant to all research with and by Pacific people. These principles include maintaining ethical relationships, communal relationships, meaningful and reciprocal engagement, cultural sensitivity and respect, cultural competency, and understanding of Pacific worldviews and knowledge (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2005, 2014). The Pacific Education Research 2001/2010 guidelines have a major focus on Teu le Va relationships (Airini, Anae & Mila-Schaaf, 2010). Other guidelines including the Pacific Health Research Guidelines 2005, with a 2014 revised edition, and the 2011 Otago University Pacific Research Protocols support this emphasis. As such,

“When conducting Pacific research it is also important to [incorporate] consider Pacific knowledge systems and conceptual frameworks. They provide for perspectives of Pacific peoples to be represented in culturally appropriate ways that represent the diversity of Pacific Island indigenous epistemologies (cultural worldviews and theories of knowledge; Gegeo, 2008)...Pacific research models can also be adapted to different disciplines, or when using an interdisciplinary approach to Pacific research” (McFall-McCaffery, 2013, p.181).

The Pacific approaches, methods and framework discussed in this paper: Va (referring to relationships between people), and Tālanoa (shared dialogue which can be formal or informal) are key and underpin ongoing collaborations with students and staff. The project planning and implementation utilised a Tongan indigenous research framework called Kakala. This paper follows on from our THETA 2015 conference paper ‘Connecting through integration: Blending Pacific approaches with online technologies’ (McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2015) which covers the background to this project. It further elaborates on the place and role of indigenous Pacific approaches we employed in engaging with students and staff in an academic and information literacy integration (AIL) pilot project in Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland, and potential for future developments.

## **Overview to an Integrated Approach**

For educational institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand effectively engaging Māori and Pacific students in their education and equipping them with relevant lifelong skills useful to themselves, their families, and communities is a key priority. Pacific people in New Zealand are from different ethnic groups: Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and other Pacific ethnicities, and represent diverse, distinct cultures, and languages. Pacific people make up 7.4% of the New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand 2013 Census), and this is projected to grow to 9% by 2021. 66% of the Pacific population live in Auckland city where the University of Auckland (UoA) is located. A predominantly young population, children make up 35.7% of the total Pacific population. Research reports, “while some Pacific students enter tertiary studies in New Zealand with excellent entry qualifications, on average Pacific students enter with the lowest entry qualifications and take longer on average to complete their qualifications” (McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2015, p. 3). The structurally embedded underachievement issue for Pacific and Māori and the implications of not addressing these education issues are significant. This is recognised in the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission’s Strategy which identifies Pacific students as priority tertiary learners requiring special focus and attention. The University of Auckland is therefore committed to raising Pacific and Māori student achievement. This University policy

is reinforced by equity programmes that provide a range of academic study skills and mentoring support services.

The University of Auckland's Graduate Profile (2003) identified 18 key graduate attributes which students should be equipped with under three categories: specialised knowledge; intellectual; personal qualities and skills. Academic and information literacies (AIL) knowledge and skills are essential attributes in this Graduate Profile. Our 2012-2015 AIL project student survey findings showed that 96% of the 300 level (third year) students who responded to our survey were not aware of the Graduate Profile, nor did they understand its relevance.

### **Academic and Information Literacies: Integrated Approach**

Ways of providing AIL support services to students in Pacific Studies prior to our 2012 curriculum integration project have been found in this current project to be less effective than they could be. This is due to several factors:

- The perception of AIL skills and knowledge by students and staff as 'support services' delivered by Libraries and Learning Services staff and therefore not essential, not important, nor integral parts of the curriculum. AIL skills were therefore not being transferred to conducting research nor linked to inquiry or critical thinking skills.
- The belief that AIL skills are decontextualized universal skills independent of any particular cultural and linguistic factors.
- The lack of research knowledge of what students have already experienced, especially the discourse in secondary schooling AIL and Inquiry research skills.
- Provision of AIL learning to students sat outside of the department's curriculum. Workshops were extra-curricula, with lower attendance in the 200 to 300 levels workshops compared to 100 level or first year student courses.
- Collaborative best practice projects were ad hoc and not sustainable when staff left and postgraduate tutors moved on.

As previously argued (McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2014, 2015) indigenous Pacific approaches must also be blended with critically theorised research pedagogies that deal with issues of power and control (Bourdieu, 1977; Foucault, 1977, 1984; Grant, 1997; Jones, 1991) and move away from deficit approaches (Neito, 2010; Paris, 2012) which focus only on what students don't have and can't do. The deeper examination of critical analysis and critical perspectives on power is a further step in our collaborative work ahead with Pacific staff and students. This is necessary in the planning, development, communication and success dimensions of a culturally sustaining and integrated AIL project.

Adopting a critically integrated approach in mainstream education also required us to examine the AIL entry skill levels of Pacific students, especially first year students transitioning from secondary school to university using a formal survey. The AIL student survey which is yet to be fully analysed, was carried out over three years (April 2012 to April 2015) as part of this project to provide us with the data on first year and 300 level students AIL skill levels and knowledge. This data is enriching the feedback we receive from students via: library assignment workshop evaluations, voluntary personal reflections, informal and formal tālanoa, emails, meetings with lecturers, tutors, and student class representatives. Our own knowledge, experience and observations working with students and staff also help inform this data and picture of students AIL skills and knowledge application.

To build on what students bring with them to tertiary study and link with their prior knowledge and experience it is necessary to understand their secondary schooling experiences with research and investigation skills. In Aotearoa New Zealand the curriculum is using a research approach known as the Inquiry Process which is being widely taught in schools and increasingly in tertiary institutions (Murdoch, 2015; Spronken-Smith & Walker, 2010; Spronken-Smith, 2012). Inquiry is also the basis for research processes integration work in many international settings. However a number of inquiry process features are not yet explicit enough in many models of tertiary AIL curriculum integration. According to Spronken-Smith, inquiry principles closely follow the constructivist theory of learning, thus: “...effective teaching must offer experiences that:

- build on what students already know and can do so they can make connections to their existing knowledge structures,[and discourses]
- encourage students to become active, self-directed learners
- provide authentic learning opportunities
- involve students working together in small groups (i.e. in collaborative or cooperative learning)” (p.6-7).

### **Student focused programs: Critical factors for engagement**

As Aotearoa New Zealand’s population becomes more diverse, increasingly the importance of cultural IQ and capabilities (Chen, 2015) are necessary skills and strategies employers will be seeking. For diversity is now the norm rather than the exception not only in education but in all sectors of society. It is therefore essential to institutions and business organisations that diverse student populations also hold these essential employable skills and knowledge.

In exploring these essential skills with students, “Culturally [and linguistically, (Paris 2012)] responsive teaching has been shown to include validating student knowledge and prior experiences, using cultural references to impart knowledge and having innovative teaching and assessment strategies.” (Sheets, 2005 cited in Thompson, McDonald, Talakai, Taumoepeau & Te Ava, 2009). Paris (2012) and Neito (2010) argue that “cultural responsiveness” still presupposes a strategy only to “teach them [students] part of the acceptable curricular cannon” (Paris, 2012, p.95). In addition culturally sustaining responsive teaching pedagogies and approaches for Pacific students must be underpinned by Pacific values, and goals. As Thompson, McDonald, Talakai, Taumoepeau & Te Ava (2009) argue, “A culturally and linguistically responsive [sustaining, (Paris, 2012)] pedagogy for Pacific learners is therefore built around core Pacific values such as spirituality, respect, metaphors, stories, humility, humour, affection and relationships” (p.4). Inspirational examples in the work of Manu’atu (2000a, 2000b, 2003) and Manu’atu and Kepa (2006) show successful analysis and application of Tālanoamālie, a Tongan cultural pedagogy in teaching and fostering positive student learning outcomes in their Pō`ako or evening homework programme with Tongan students and their families.

Furthermore Koloto, Katoanga & Tatila (2006) recognised that “addressing the need for research into culturally and linguistically blended learning would add significantly to Pacific students’ academic success” (McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2015, p.2). Koloto et al also noted in their comprehensive commissioned tertiary report that a successful teaching and learning environment for Pacific students is contingent upon several factors. “Most important was the need for institutionally responsive tailored services for the diverse learning needs of Pacific students. Students did not respond well to ‘one size fits all’ generic services they perceive have few connections to their existing learning, lives, families, cultures, values knowledge

and experiences” (McFall-McCaffery & Cook, 2015, p.1). Pacific students’ cultures, knowledge and languages are integral part of their learning.

The majority of Pacific students at the University of Auckland are school leavers of <sup>1</sup>Samoan and Tongan ethnicity. Many including the growing number of New Zealand born students do speak their own heritage language or grew up in families that do use the languages (Auckland City Council, 2015). Thus the use of Pacific languages and/or English in <sup>2</sup>Tālanoa (dialogue) with students and staff, provides students and staff who speak or understand their heritage languages the choice to engage in Samoan or Tongan and/or English when exploring, explaining and discussing concepts and ideas individually, in small groups, or in workshops. The potential power and usefulness of encouraging students to use their heritage languages can be found in an earlier work by McCaffery and McFall-McCaffery (2010), and Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005).

Linguistic responsiveness was also a key element in a significant study by Pasifika Perspectives Ltd with Ako Aotearoa (2015) on Pacific learner success in the work place settings. It verified three key pillars for a holistic learning environment in <sup>3</sup>Pasifika learners success of people; place; practices and pedagogies.

- People include: teachers who are culturally and linguistically aware, knowledgeable and responsive, welcoming, caring, respectful, and who ensure learners feel a sense of belonging, who build strong relationships between them and students, and between students, and who actively foster student academic success.
- Place include: having Pacific spaces and family-like learning environments.
- Practices and pedagogies include: academic and pastoral mentoring, having strong connections with families and communities, having integrated curriculum approaches that are culturally and linguistically responsive, and cultivates group learning (Pasifika Perspectives Ltd, 2015, p.26).

## **Va : actioning relationships**

The concept of va is common in many Pacific cultures and relationships. Va in Samoa and Tonga, wa in Māori and in Hawaii, means the relational space between, which for the purpose of this project refers to the socio-cultural relationship between people. Similarly with Māori, relationships lie at the heart of effective intercultural engagement. In spite of knowing this, most western centric pedagogies in Aotearoa New Zealand at all levels of education still only pay lip service to establishing and sustaining such positive interpersonal relationships (Grant, 1997; Jones, 1991, 1993). Relationships are central to all positive ongoing and future engagements with Pacific students and staff, in the successful implementation of this AIL project, and staff uptake of further collaborative opportunities. Getting the relationships sorted at the beginning of the research and teaching work with Pacific staff and students from all Pacific ethnicities is essential.

There are various forms of va in Pacific indigenous relationships for instance, Va Fealoa’i in Samoan (spaces between relational arrangements) and Va Tapuia (sacred spaces of relational arrangements); relational spaces which are sacred and spiritual. These have been

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<sup>1</sup> Approx. 70% of the Pacific population in New Zealand live in Auckland. The largest ethnic group are Samoan at 144,138 or 48.7% of total Pacific population, Cook Islands is 2<sup>nd</sup> largest at 61,950 or 20.9% followed by Tongan as the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest ethnic group at 60,336 or 20.4% of total Pacific population in New Zealand (Tanielu, 2014). In Auckland city, 49.2% of the Pacific population are Samoans, followed by Tongans at 24.1% (Auckland City Council, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Tālanoa literally means a face-to-face dialogue between two or more people which can be formal or informal. Samoans (62%) and Tongans (63%) speak their heritage languages.

<sup>3</sup> Pasifika is a New Zealand specific term relating to Pacific people living in New Zealand.

comprehensively discussed by Anae (2001, 2013) and Airini et al. (2010). Teu le va (in Samoan) and tauhi va (Tongan) literally means to care for and to look after relationships. Va/relationships are also central in working with Pacific communities through ethical research principles as in the Pacific Education and Health Research guidelines. In particular, the principles of respect, cultural competency, meaningful engagement, and reciprocity (Health Research Council, 2014). As Anae (2013) noted of the va, “For Pacific peoples and for the advancement of Pacific issues, the best methodologies are those that are sensitive to contemporary Pacific contexts, capable of embracing existing Pacific notions of collective ownership, collective shame, collective authoritarian structures, and capable of withstanding the test of time” (p.154).

Negotiating the va or relationships between people is not always harmonious, and may involve conflict, renegotiating and rebuilding. Maintaining the va does not mean that agreement must always be reached, however for all parties involved seeking the optimal outcome is primary. Knowing how va operates in various contexts of power and control is important (Grant, 1997; Jones, 1991, 1993; Mahina; 2010). Foucault’s (1984) theory of power/knowledge and resistance, on recognising and understanding how power works in relationships/va is also helpful in analysing teaching, learning and research with teachers/tutors and the student, the librarian and the academics/tutors, the librarian and the student, and between students. As Foucault (1977) argues:

We should rather admit that power produces knowledge; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (p.27).

In our project, negotiating, establishing and maintaining the va/relationships can happen through formal and informal engagements and consultations. This is not only limited to assignment workshops, presentations and research queries or consultations and includes attendance of staff and student socio-cultural events, lunch-time seminars, meet and greets, often the first point of contact with new students, their families and communities. Va requires going “beyond the reef”, the extra mile which can be challenging but provides other opportunities for further engagement. These occasions where va is established and/or furthered enhances relationships of trust and fosters whānaunatanga (Māori) that is creating whānau or family type relationships. Fostering a family type and culturally safe environment at university encourages Pacific students to feel more confident to approach us or any librarian for help, and not feel ma (Samoan/Tongan for shyness) that they may sound or appear ignorant. Academic formal English is not the first language of any student and especially when many Pacific students have two first languages, English and their heritage language(s). Many students will almost always ask their friends first, before they seek help from their teacher, and then the Library staff - a feature which has also been confirmed by our project survey questionnaire. The one hour AIL Library workshop then provides an inadequate context for building effective, trusting, and supportive relationships. However the workshop provides the opportunity for further engagement and support.

For Pacific people, the va extends beyond the classroom and university environment to public, community events and fono (Pacific meetings). These reciprocal engagements inform my knowledge on significant Pacific and other developments relevant to students study, to our communities and to this work.

## **Tālanoa : actioning the talk**

Tālanoa is the culturally shared staged process by which we can build the relationships of the Va, the way in which we relate and connect with each other (Manu'atu, 2003; Manu'atu & Kepa, 2006) in many Pacific cultures like Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Cook Islands, Niue, Hawaii and the Solomon Islands (Prescott, 2008). Tala in tālanoa basically means to inform, tell, relate, command, ask and apply. The noa means any kind, ordinary, nothing-in-particular (Vaiotele, 2006, Otunuku, 2011). The word as a noun or verb therefore can mean to talk, talking, the talk, conversing, a conversation, to say, to dialogue, a dialogue, a story, and to relate experiences (Manu'atu, 2000a, 2000b). Tālanoa as a research method and methodology, "removes the distance between researcher and participant, and provides research participants with a human face they can relate to..." (Vaiotele, 2006, p.25). The cultural and social aspect of Tālanoa is what we are focussing on in this project in both formal and informal communication, consultation, collaboration and engagement with staff and students in teaching and learning pedagogies. Tālanoa in academic settings is not simply random chat.

As Manu'atu (2000a, 2000b), Otunuku (2011), and Vaiotele (2006) explain there are stages in deepening the tālanoa process and different types of tālanoa that can be used for different purposes and context. Some of these I discuss below. How Pacific people communicate and relate depends on their familiarity with each other. For instance, often when I meet Pacific students for the first time individually or in pairs, I use fakatālanoa where as the facilitator I encourage and initiate a conversation but always with a purpose in mind. In fakatālanoa I learn more about the student i.e. their name, ethnicity, their programme of study, their family, and anything else they wish to share with me. They also get to know me. In doing fakatālanoa, a connection is established between the student and myself which for many is an important part of va. Encouraging tālanoa, and often in Samoan or Tongan and/or English languages is not time wasted but well invested in assisting students. Establishing a relationship is not intrusive for most Pacific students. Often in an indirect way I find out more about the student's real question during the tālanoa. Sometimes the tālanoa will lead indirectly to what they need to know or do not know. Once we have passed the fakatālanoa stage we can then have a tālanoa about the student's topic of research.

Talatālanoa is another form of tālanoa where we can talk about selected topics/tālanoa'i or just talk (Fa'avae, Jones & Manu'atu, 2016). Talatālanoa happens next time we meet or bump into each other now that we have established a connection. Talatālanoa can happen informally at student events, when passing each other at university, or in public (at the bus stop, on the bus, at the shops), or when students seek further help from us in the library, at the <sup>4</sup>Fale Pasifika, or in workshops. Acknowledging students with a quick nod or just saying malo (Samoan quick informal hello) is acknowledging the va if tālanoa is not possible. Pōtalanoa is tālanoa between people who are familiar with each and can approach each other with ease next time they meet. For instance when students contact me for a follow-up consultation on resources, referencing, or search strategies. Tālanoa connects people together, builds and strengthens va reciprocal relationships, collaborations and partnerships. As Fa'avae et al (2016) noted the relationship and extent of trust is more intense between people engaged in pōtalanoa and talatālanoa.

Fokotu'u Tālanoa on the other hand, refers to tālanoa where issues of concern are discussed in a formal setting (Fa'avae et al. 2016; Otunuku, 2011; Manu'atu, 2000a, 2000b). In our

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<sup>4</sup> This is the Pacific cultural building and home for staff and students at Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland.



project, fokotu'u tālanoa may take place in formal meetings and settings, however having an established connection already with staff and students involved, is helpful in the shape and outcome of the tālanoa. For the oral and interactive approach of tālanoa provides “a culturally appropriate setting for the researcher [teacher] and those researched to talk about whatever arises. It allows conversation to flow freely without the intrusion of a formal structure and predetermined questions.” (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afai & Morton, 2006, p.40).

Tālanoa whatever stage or form involves cultural knowledge poto he tālanoa (wise and skilful in carrying out tālanoa), and competency or poto'ianga (Otunuku, 2011) and principles and values of fe'ofa'ofaki (Tongan) fealofani (Samoan) or caring, faka'apa'apa (Tongan) fa'aaloalo (Samoan) or respect, fetokoni'aki (Tongan) loto fesoasoani (Samoan) reciprocity. These are as important in tālanoa as much as they are in the operation of the va.

Va and tālanoa go hand in hand to generate educational solutions that are relevant, contextual, valid, and accessible for various families and communities. The opportunity to be part of the tālanoa on matters and solutions which have value and relevance for students, their families and communities are important.

### **Kakala as a metaphor for pedagogical process**

As we have shown, va and tālanoa are inseparable and are both essential in the integrity and ongoing sustainability of this partnership with staff and students. The principles and values that operate in va and tālanoa are the same that build and continue to sustain this project. Va and tālanoa are necessary precursors to using the Kakala framework in designing the research and pedagogical process cooperatively with staff to achieve commonly agreed goals for students. Pacific cultures have similar metaphors and proverbs for undertaking and achieving cooperative tasks.

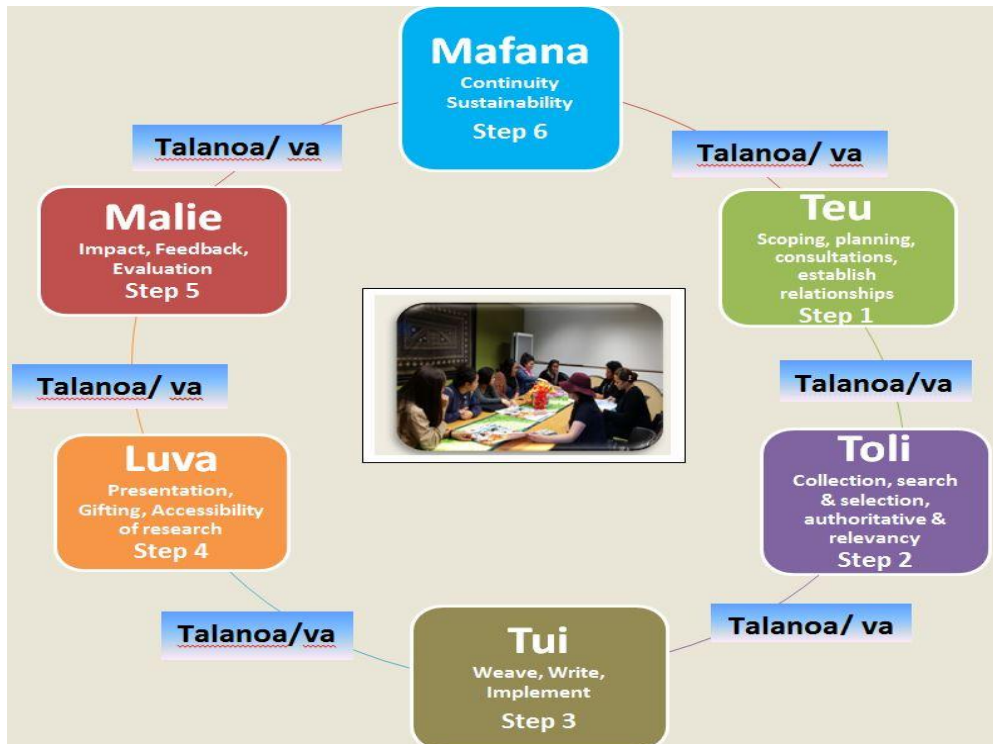
The Kakala Framework as a metaphor for the process of collaborative work was developed by a Tongan scholar, Helu-Thaman (1992) and is utilised in this project. There are six steps in the Kakala metaphor (see Table 1 below). Toli, Tui and Luva were developed by Helu-Thaman, with Malie and Mafana added by Manu'atu (2000a, 2000b), and Teu by Johansson-Fua and Taufē'ulungaki (2009, 2014). As a Tongan cultural concept Kakala has equivalents in other Pacific cultures, for instance ula in Samoa, lei in Hawaii, 'ei in Cook Islands, and salusalu in Fiji. Ula has been developed as a Samoan theoretical framework of engagement in early childhood education by Sauni (2011).

There are significant values and cultural relationships inherent in Kakala making, garland of fragrances (flowers, leaves, plants) in Tongan culture which is specially woven together by the giver(s) to gift to a <sup>5</sup>special individual. The processes and steps involved in research are likened to the processes and steps involved in the making of Kakala.

Kakala is the metaphor for the AIL research process and curriculum integration project design and implementation. The projects application of the framework discussed below and visually depicted in Table 1, integrates Tālanoa and Va which are integral and fundamental in every step of the project. Formal and informal tālanoa communications, meetings and consultations which assist build and strengthen close collaborative va relationships with all stakeholders.

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<sup>5</sup> The paternal aunts (fathers' sisters) and their children hold higher social status to their brothers and their children in Tongan culture. A kakala made by my children's paternal aunts for my eldest to wear on his university graduation ceremony was of huge cultural significance and symbolic of `ofa (love), faka'apa'apa (respect), toka'i (recognition), fiefia lahi (great happiness) for our collective achievement. For Tongans/Samoans and in many Pacific cultures the success of the individual is the success of the extended family.



**Figure 1 Kakala Framework**

- Teu is the project preparation and planning stage (Johansson-Fua, 2009, 2014) - what is the event we are making the Kakala for? Who is it for? What flowers/fragrances will be required for this occasion? What are the issues? What did we do? How? Why? For our AIL curriculum mapping and integration project, this includes consultations with department, relationship building and buy-in, scoping the issues and what needs to be done.
- Toli is the project selection stage. The gathering and sourcing of the fragrances for Kakala making (Helu-Thaman, 1992). This involves the researchers collecting and selecting literature and data, reviewing the data and preparation for analysis. For instance, literature review, collecting evaluations, and survey.
- Tui is the implementation stage. The making or weaving of Kakala (Helu-Thaman, 1992). The actual process of putting together the selected data, discussions of the results and presenting them in the form of a final report. For instance, collating the information, writing our research, survey analysis and report.
- Luva is the presentation stage or the gifting of the Kakala to the receiver (Helu-Thaman, 1992). This final process involves the presentation of the findings (report) to key stakeholders, staff and the participants in the research. This includes presenting at conferences and departmental meetings.
- Mālie is the feedback and evaluation stage. How is the Kakala received? Was it pleasing? This is the impact on receivers i.e. students, staff and colleagues. “Mālie... is experienced. It is a concept that is central to Tongan ways of thinking and doing, and is conceptualized as energy that moves and transforms the psyche, draws upon the passion and uplifts the heart and soul, and fulfils the senses” (Manu’atu, 2003, p.40).
- Māfana is the sustainability and continuity stage. Is this feeling of Mālie sustainable? If not, why not? And what needs to be done to reach this level of ongoing sustainability? “Māfana like mālie is a concept central to Tongan sensibilities that produces an inner sense of relationships and generate warmth and energy uplifting

their hearts and souls” (Manu’atu, 2003, p.40). Mālie and māfana go together, and as transformative processes have “implications for a transformative pedagogy to extend Tongan students learning” (Manu’atu, 2000a, p.77) but also relevant in Pacific students learning, teaching and research.

I often apply the framework to contextualize the steps in the Research Process instead of a western framework in research presentations and at writing retreats to Pacific postgraduate students. Students find the framework most relevant in conceptualising and conducting their research, and some have explored it as a research model. I am increasingly introducing the Kakala metaphor in Stage1 Pacific courses (majority are first year students) as a relevant strategy to engage them and tālanoa about understandings of AIL research or Inquiry process.

### **How have Pacific approaches aided engagement in AIL integration and blended learning?**

Ongoing tālanoa with teaching staff on what worked well and what did not are important in the continued development and improvements in the delivery of AIL workshops and activities. Using the Va, Tālanoa and Kakala framework has ensured programmes remain effective and relevant to student’s needs. Learning and teaching approaches and discourses will be mālie and mafana to students and teaching staff, and continue to be so.

A recent development is that AIL course specific Library workshops are now called ‘Assignment workshop tutorials’, and the AIL online site hosted on CANVAS (the student learning system) is now renamed ‘Assignment Research’ to advance greater student engagement in a Stage 1 course. The Assignment workshop tutorial is now an essential part of the essay research and has a mark allocation in this Stage 1 course. Furthermore, the Assignment workshop tutorial research requires utilisation of the Assignment Research site for submission of student work. These developments and the First Year Experience Targeted Learning Session are now clearly stipulated in the Essay Guide and are core parts of course learning outcomes and essay assessment. Essay research activities were part of course assessment in the past on an ad hoc basis. These developments are very significant steps towards a shift in the perception of AIL integration in learning and teaching pedagogies. Teaching staff have been central in these developments. Their advice on relevant terminology that students’ identity with as we have discussed is most effective. Pacific students largely appear to rely on workshops and tutorials that are curriculum and assignment specific and named. They also attend subject specific workshops offered to them in other discipline courses they are enrolled. It appears Pacific students’ voluntary participation at generic library workshops available to all students through an online booking system have traditionally been very low, so an additional question on student use of generic library courses will be included in future surveys. As noted by Schaub, Cadena, Bravender & Kierkus (2016), “By assessing what students do and do not know, librarians can be more purposeful in instruction and can more effectively integrate information literacy into the curriculum” (p.2). The shared understanding of concepts and terminologies, usage, meanings and contexts are important factors in AIL integration.

Although, there are a number of factors involved in the increase in student participation in Assignment workshop tutorials (library workshops), the project shows that indigenous Pacific approaches specifically Tālanoa and Va have contributed to this positive development. Using the fakatālanoa and talatālanoa approaches (Manu’atu, 2003) in the classroom, outside of the classroom, and on a one-to-one basis together with Pacific examples and concepts relevant to students experience shows the potential to contribute to greater student participation and

engagement. For Pacific students starting from what they know and are familiar with add to their successful navigation of tertiary life and lifelong skills development. Student attendance numbers in Assignment workshops tutorials (library subject specific workshops) have shown significant improvement especially Stage 1 courses with almost full participation. At times we had to bring in extra seats for students to share training room computers. Assignment workshop tutorials are built into the essay work and held during course tutorial times which emphasise their importance and encourage student attendance. Furthermore Assignment workshop tutorial participation is now part of the essay assessment with online work submission requirement.

Continuous evaluation and improvements to AIL integration through talanoa with teaching staff have contributed to the increased student attendance from 40% to 70% in the First Year Experience Targeted Learning Session (TLS) in the core Stage 1 course. The inclusion of the TLS session in the assignment assessment is another factor in this positive development. Assignment assessment is progressively being reviewed at Stage 1 to better reflect the range of research skills based on the Research Skills Development Framework (RSDF)<sup>6</sup>. The value of AIL skills, knowledge and application in the curriculum is more transparent in the review of the Stage 1 marking rubric.

Other improvements include more specific instructions regarding the number of reading requirements in the essay questions. Having a specified number of readings rather than a general one at Stage 1 is very helpful to students and to us in Assignment workshop tutorials. For instance the number of readings students can access from their set reading list; number of readings they need to search and locate themselves; and the type of resources they have to find i.e. primary and secondary. This clarification is clearly assisting students to understand assignment readings requirements; the differences between primary and secondary sources; the diverse perspectives and arguments; encourages engagement with different resources; fosters learning and helps build AIL skills and strategies.

### **Project engagement with academic staff**

The new processes are also addressing one of the biggest challenges in AIL integration - the active engagement of academic teaching staff. The ongoing support of academic and key services staff is critical throughout the project. Central to this is the active engagement of the Head of Department. It was for example at the suggestion of the HOD Pacific Studies that a paper survey would be more effective than an online survey in getting a significantly higher response rate. The success of the survey is attributed largely to Pacific teaching and professional staff active promotion and assistance in advertising, distribution and collection of the paper based questionnaires. Survey returns have been significantly higher.

As the Pasifika AIL librarian, Judy now attends Pacific Studies Department course and annual review planning meetings. This embedding as an honorary staff member in the Department allows her to interact in a range of significant ways that was not possible earlier when Library staff were often seen as “pushing their programmes into our courses”. Academic staff have encouraged her attendance at lectures in the beginning of the Semester, be introduced as part of the course team, and promote the Assignment Research site and Assignment workshop tutorials. Being seen by academics and students as part of the curriculum planning and not “just” in a “services support” role is significant in AIL

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<sup>6</sup> RSDF is the Research Development framework, developed by the University of Adelaide <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/rsd/>

integration. Consequently tutors attendance and participation during Assignment workshop tutorials is very useful for all parties as tutors can now confidently make links between the learning processes of inquiry and traditional academic curriculum content. Tutor presence at workshop tutorials to clarify/ tālanoa and answer student questions on the essay topic research requirements fosters a more interactive learning environment. This is another opportunity to engage them all with the Assignment Research site content, increasing student usage and referrals to site by tutors. Academic staff are increasingly taking ownership of AIL in teaching and learning, developing and integrating these into the curriculum. In spite of their busy schedules and high turnover of postgraduate student tutors academic staff are working as closely as they can with us to bring about changes in students perceptions of AIL through embedding them in course work and assessment. As we have shown, teaching staff knowledge and experience, insights, suggestions and advice are very valuable in current and future developments.

Regular communication via various channels in place with teaching staff have assisted in bringing about better understanding of AIL as integrated parts of critical thinking, learning and teaching pedagogies. Ongoing tālanoa and meetings provides opportunities to discuss how technology could be used to enhance teaching and learning within the Pacific context. Basic training to ensure staff feel confident to use, promote online course sites and associated online activities to students is needed, but more importantly is their central role in the continuous improvement to our collaborative work.

The next development is to present the findings from the survey to the Centre of Pacific Studies staff and tālanoa about what the implications are for us in our current and future work developments. Working through the findings will require time and effort from all parties and is an essential next step in the AIL integration and RSDF process relevant to Pacific Studies. We are confident such close attention to data from students will lead to significantly improved academic student outcomes. Tālanoa and va will continue to play crucial roles in all future developments.

As Associate Professor Damon Salesa, Head of Department says,

"It is remarkable to reflect on the collaborative work between library staff and Pacific Studies academic staff. I think the source of most of the success of this project has been due to these collaborations—these relationships. In my view, what we have managed to sustain is to address the concept of *teu le va*, which is lifeless without its being embodied in culture and practice. For this to happen requires not just a shared cultural constellation, and a shared purpose, but the capacity to initiate and sustain authentic, culturally appropriate, rich relationships between different peoples, that are energized by the kinds of lived cultural dimensions that often seem to be made empty by being described: *fa'aaloalo*, *alofa*, *onosa'i*, *talanoa*, *galuega*. [respect, compassion/love, patience/perseverance, communication, contribution]. Such success as we have experienced has come from this shared web of relationships, nurtured and enriched. This has allowed the construction of *ala*—pathways—between groups who were often working as islands, into the kinds of archipelagos and connections that better comprehend the indigenous Pacific which we emulate." (D. Salesa, personal communication, August 10, 2016).

What is apparent then from the success of Pacific methodologies and pedagogies is that teams in the AIL field need to be led by Pacific staff who have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities in both Pacific relationships and AIL Inquiry skills. It is not a neutral context.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we set out to report on the steps we have taken to develop greater understanding, endorsement and active partnership support of Pacific students and academic staff in AIL integration activities and workshops. Undoubtedly this approach has played a significant role in the success of the project.

Furthermore, we have sought to show how and why emerging indigenous Pacific approaches to research are valuable in engaging and build reciprocal partnerships with staff and students and integral to the positive outcomes of the project. Such indigenous knowledge studies can provide a counter-narrative to challenge existing dominant Western-centric deficit discourses. We have also drawn on and adapted colleagues ideas and exemplars. The results from this partnership in particular what has worked well have been shared with other colleagues and academics, and responses received have been most positive. This close developing collaboration with academic and key services staff also provides opportunities for further course developments and collective undertakings in other areas. The contribution and input of teaching staff is pivotal and necessary all the way.

The ongoing evaluation of the project and reflection from staff and students help identify and address areas for further improvement. These areas include the scaffolding of research skills and knowledge into higher levels, drawing upon and integrating students' existing knowledge and skills to achieve positive outcomes. This includes:

- Adapting the Research Development Framework (RSDF) to create course assessment rubrics relevant to, for and by Pacific Studies.
- Joint close examination of student survey results in more detail.
- Efforts to blend AIL and Inquiry process research approaches and pedagogies.
- Exploration and integration of indigenous pan Pacific and ethnic specific approaches in teaching, learning and research.
- The progressive inclusion of aspects of critical research perspectives into the emerging Indigenous Pacific research frameworks in order to critique Western non-indigenous power societies that have so often spread the hegemony that only one worldview and academic view exists of what constitutes valid knowledge.
- Contribution of this project towards the academic success value for Pacific students of bilingualism and biliteracy as the Māori Kotahitanga (Alton-Lee, 2015) project has shown for Māori students.

This is a case study where an integrated and collaborative teaching and learning approach that values culturally and linguistically responsive indigenous pedagogies and methodologies can be effectively employed in a blended learning tertiary environment to foster positive outcomes for students. The vā and tālanoa as Pacific indigenous methodologies are fundamental in the quality partnerships and ongoing collaborations with staff and students. They offer a potential and sustainable model for increased and effective student engagement and achievement in tertiary studies that is mālie and māfana.

Fa'afetai, Mālo āupito. Soifua, Tu'a o'fa atu.

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## Glossary:

‘Ei – Cooks Islands for garland of flowers  
Fa’aaloalo – Samoan for respect/respectful  
Faka’apa’apa – Tongan for respect/ respectful  
Fakatālanoa in Tongan means to encourage and initiate a conversation  
Fealofani - Samoan for caring, compassion  
Fe’ofa’ofaki –Tongan for caring, compassion  
Fetokoni’aki –Tongan for reciprocal help  
Fono – means Pacific meetings (Samoan, Tongan, Fijian)  
Fokotu’u Tālanoa in Tongan means to discuss issues of concern in a formal setting  
Kakala - is a Tongan metaphor for the research framework in education developed by Konai Helu-Thaman 1992 (toil, tui, luva), and modified by Taufe’ulungaki & Johansson-Fua 2009, 2014 (teu, toli, tui, luva) and Manu’atu 2000a, 2000b (teu, toil, tui, luva, malie & mafana). Kakala involves the different stages of: teu (planning and preparation), toli (gathering and selection), tui (construct or write, implement), luva (presentation), mālie (evaluation and feedback), and māfana (sustaining, continuity).  
Lei- Hawaiian garland of flowers  
Ma – Samoan and Tongan for being shy or shyness  
Pō`ako – Tongan for homework evening class  
Pō Tālanoa – Tongan to have a discussion between people who know each other  
Poto he tālanoa in Tongan wise and skilful in carrying out tālanoa  
Poto’ianga – in a Tongan culturally appropriate manner or cultural competency  
Salusalu – Fijian garland of flowers  
Tālanoa (Fijian, Tongan and Samoan) - open formal or informal shared dialogue  
Tālanoa’i – analytical discussion /evaluate a specific issue  
TālanoaMālie – a Tongan cultural pedagogy (peaceful social dialogue)  
Talatālanoa is another form of tālanoa – longer talks about selected topics  
Teu le vā (Samoan) or tauhi vā (Tongan) – nurturing reciprocal relationships.  
Ula- a Samoan research model similar to Kakala (garland of flowers)  
Va – spatial and relational relationships  
Va Fealoa’i in Samoan refers to spaces between relational arrangements  
Va Tapuia in Samoan refers to sacred spaces of relational arrangements  
Wa – relationships in Māori and Hawaiian languages  
Whānaunatanga in Māori means creating whānau or family type relationships