

Dreams, Aspirations and Challenges: Pasifika Early Childhood Education within Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

This article explores the vibrant and challenging history and significance of Pasifika early childhood education (ECE) within Aotearoa New Zealand. From humble beginnings to the need to address aspects related to quality education and care, coupled with the recognition of Pasifika cultures and languages, has seen the realization of specifically designed programs for Pacific by Pacific within teacher education. An examination into the development and implementation of such programs that have existed within a particular institutional location provides valuable insight into the nature and purpose of Pasifika ECE. Of equal importance are the ways in which such programs have responded to the call of Pacific peoples dreams and aspirations for their children and of government priorities. That is, to live within a country to which their cultural identities are recognized, embraced and celebrated. This identifiable factor becomes critical to ensure children of Pacific heritages and their families experience educational success at all levels. Foundational to such success comes with an understanding that being well grounded in the knowledge of who you are and where you come from is central to one's learning journey. Discussions from this article embarks on a voyage of potential, discovery, challenge and hope as it presents the commitment of those who despite institutional restructuring and infrastructure, continue to work and serve diligently within these programs. The article considers the role and place of Pasifika ECE within Aotearoa New Zealand; its dreams, aspirations and challenges along with its past, present, and future.

1. Introduction

In January of 2013, The First International Pasifika ECE Conference was held in Auckland, New Zealand and had attracted the attention of Pasifika scholars, academics, researchers, policy-makers, governmental and institutional agencies, teachers, parents and those interested in Pasifika education. They had come in numbers from around the country, the Pacific Islands, Australia with the farthest coming from Finland. They had responded to

the conference theme "A call from the deep: Reclaiming our future" which was a deliberate attempt on the organizing committee's part to address and encapsulate a desire to celebrate how far Pasifika ECE has come but equally an even greater desire to shape its future. We believed that such a conference would generate the kinds of synergies that was necessary when people who are like-minded share a vision for generations to come; they bring with them passion and power.

The conference provided an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the work of previous predecessors and to endorse the current accomplishments that have been established to date. What began then was an engagement of critical reflections, robust discussions and debates, the need to reassess the role and place of Pasifika ECE within Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond its shores. A platform had been created that provided an opportunity to listen and to share each other's stories. To dream without limits and be part of important discussions which contribute to creating a hopeful future for Pasifika children, their families and communities.

This article draws on the experiences of two academics and researchers [one being of Cook Islands, Tahitian and Kiribati heritage, and the other of Samoan descendant] who embark on a narrative journey into the developments of Pasifika ECE within Aotearoa New Zealand. A discussion of the history and significance of Pasifika ECE is provided. In addition, an examination of programs that have existed within a particular institutional teacher education setting is discussed which makes reference for the need to design and develop programs that specifically cater for Pacific people and those interested in working predominantly with Pasifika children and their families. The article highlights the successes and challenges of those programs and considers what the future holds. It is important to note, that the experiences shared in this article are perhaps not confined to Aotearoa New Zealand alone, but could be experienced else where minority groups are positioned [not by choice] and are viewed through the lens of vulnerability, risk and deficiency. We begin telling our story with placing Pasifika people within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand;

our migration story is one of importance that needs to be told and shared.

2. Pasifika people in Aotearoa New Zealand

The introduction of the term 'Pasifika' is rather new to international literature. For the purpose of this article Pasifika is used to describe people who are of the Pacific Islands but have now made Aotearoa New Zealand their home. Pasifika and Pacific are used interchangeably. Pasifika is a term that has been widely used by governmental agencies and often refers to the following ethnic groupings; Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, Tokelau and Tuvalu. Within the Pasifika Education Plan (PEP), an important document that outlines the educational aspirations and achievement goals pertaining to Pasifika people from early childhood through to tertiary education, it states that [1]:

“Pasifika is a collective term used to refer to people of Pacific heritage or ancestry who have migrated or been born in Aotearoa New Zealand. Pasifika include recent migrants or first, second and subsequent generations of New Zealandborn Pasifika men, women and children of single or mixed heritages. Pasifika people are not homogenous and Pasifika does not refer to a single ethnicity...Pasifika can have multiple world-views with diverse cultural identities and may be monolingual, bilingual or multilingual” (p. 3).

The migration of Pacific peoples is strongly linked to their colonial history. When transport routes were fashioned between colonizing country and island, this opened the way for travel and eventually migration. It was known that Tahitians and New Caledonians went to France, while American Samoans to America, with the Melanesians migrating to Australia. Pacific peoples who migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand came mainly from those islands that were nearest, and mostly from islands with a British colonial history. Fewer people migrated from islands colonized by France and America. As an island nation in the South Pacific, Aotearoa New Zealand has long had strong cultural, economic and political links with other Pacific Islands. Samoa, the Cook Islands and Niue were territories under New Zealand administration in the 20th century, and substantial waves of migration after the Second World War have led to a large Pacific population in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The 1950s saw the beginning of the migration from the Pacific Islands to the shores of Aotearoa New Zealand at a time when the industry and service sector was expanding. This led to pocket

concentrations of people coming with particular skills and education living together. A common practice among Pacific people was to host families from the islands until they were able to secure employment and housing, often not too far from each other. The 1960s saw close links being established with families within Aotearoa New Zealand, however, job opportunities and population pressure on some islands led to many Pacific peoples to migrate to Aotearoa New Zealand. During the 1970s the government clamped down on people overstaying their visas, particularly targeting Pacific Islanders. This was seen as a dark moment in Aotearoa New Zealand's history with the dawn raids, the separation of families that led to the displacement of many youthful Pasifika people.

Many Pasifika parents viewed Aotearoa New Zealand as their 'land of milk and honey' that would provide and fulfill their goals and dreams for their children. The necessary employment, education, medical treatment, accommodation and housing opportunities could be found within Aotearoa New Zealand that equated to increasing the quality of life chances for Pasifika people. The kinds of jobs afforded to our people involved work in factories for minimal wages and in some cases, terrible working conditions. Traditional socio-cultural familial obligations could be maintained through migration as the flow of remittances continued. Therefore, the migration process was two-fold, building the economy of both Aotearoa New Zealand and within the Pacific Islands. With the establishment and growth of first, second and third generations Samu [2] suggest “cultural and social inculcation of such an aspiration continues. Success in education equates to improved qualifications, which in turn enhances employment prospects” (p. 9). Improvements in income would stabilize and further enhance contributions to familial networks, both in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad.

Recent data demonstrates that Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand make up 6.9% of the total population [3]. In 2006 it was recorded that 265,975 people had identified themselves with a Pacific heritage, an increase of 15% from the 2001 census. The largest Pacific grouping being Samoan at 131,103 and second, the Cook Islands with 58,011 claiming a Pacific heritage. Of this Pacific population 67% live in Auckland with the main concentration within Manukau City in South Auckland. This is where the largest impact of increase will be felt with reference to schooling and therefore requires a sense of urgency to ensure the educational needs of Pasifika children are met across all three sectors. The median age of the Pacific population in 2006 was 21.1 years that was considerably lower than the New Zealand overall population at 35.9 years. At the time of the 2006 census, around half of the Pacific population could

speak the language associated with their ethnicity. Tuvaluans were most likely to speak their language with 71%, followed by Samoans at 63% and Tongans coming in at 61%. Unfortunately Cook Islands Maori was least likely to be spoken at 17% and has been identified as a language that is at risk of becoming extinct. With one of the highest natural increase rates and a youthful population, it has been projected that the school-aged population in 2051 will be one in five in the Auckland region alone [2].

2.1. Pasifika ECE: past, present and future

Not only is our migration story linked to colonial history, the education for Pasifika people living within Aotearoa New Zealand is also one that is strongly connected to colonial history [4]. Early contact with Pacific peoples was often through the means of missionaries. Missionary education in the Pacific was based on the need to convert the indigenous people to Christianity. Many Pacific people gave up their beliefs in their own gods and took upon themselves the new God, of Jehovah and Jesus Christ. The education of Pacific societies was concerned with indoctrinating valued beliefs and passing on the collective knowledge of the society to its members. The hierarchical nature of Polynesian societies of the Pacific is central to the consideration of education within these societies prior to contact with the Europeans. Valued knowledge was seen in one's ability of knowing one's genealogy. Such knowledge placed an emphasis of knowing and understanding one's place within society. All these factors were influential to how Pacific people living in Aotearoa New Zealand understood their place and standing [4]. Through the teachings of the bible, children were taught at a young age to 'fear God' not to question or challenge authority, to be obedient and listen to adults. These values along with their traditional values and customs are what they brought with them when they migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The history of Pasifika ECE originated in the 1970s when the first Cook Islands punanga reo (playgroup) was set up in the small town of Tokoroa. The St. Lukes Pacific Island Presbyterian Church would offer its church hall that would become the home of such a group. The responsibility of such establishments and continued existence of Pasifika playgroups, language nests, home-based and early childhood services were predominantly led by Pasifika women, who were usually the church ministers wives. These were women who were visionaries and it could be said that their thinking at the time was too advanced. They understood the importance of maintaining one's cultural heritage and the associations this would make to the learning and teaching of young Pasifika children. Pasifika

women were also involved in the developments, consultation process and the publication of a first of its kind, bicultural national early childhood curriculum, Te Whāriki [5].

Recognizing the potential that existed for children and the benefits of early learning experiences would catapult Pasifika ECE. Consideration of Pasifika ECE settings and what this would entail was largely based on Pasifika parents preference of an early childhood service that would be caring, secure and that incorporated aspects of discipline [as experienced and understood within the context of ethnic specific groupings], routines and rules that would take into account similar features of those of the home environment. As migrants to their new country, Pasifika parents believed that cultural values shaped the way children of the Pacific Islands would learn and such values needed to be endorsed. Again reinforcing the value of respecting parents, being obedient and listening to adults; these were values embedded in young children.

Over the following proceeding decades the sector had struggled to maintain community-based services through which Pasifika languages and cultural values can be fostered and conserved. Radical educational reforms in the 1980s had been influenced by international momentum that saw the emergence of neoliberal ideology gain favorable popularity and it was certainly making its mark. A renewed vision to how Pasifika ECE would survive in these changing climates saw a new set of challenges and called for another set of questions that needed to be asked and responded too. How do teachers who work predominantly with Pasifika children and their families gain a better understanding of the social, historical, ethical and political parameters that continue to influence the sector? What images do teachers hold of the Pasifika child and what does this mean for teacher practice? The need for critical reflection upon these questions required a kind of thinking that involved questioning our most basic assumptions and to consider how our 'taken-for-granted' beliefs about matters that concern us are being challenged. A critical thinker recognizes the need to examine history in order to explain the origins of everyday practices and problems, and consider whose interest were, and are served by such constructions and maintenance.

During that time attempts were being made to avoid the national curriculum downward effect from the compulsory sector that would once again threaten the overall sector to maintain its uniqueness. With new policy developments meant that once again Pasifika women had to make their presence known. They needed to be more than mere implementers of the curriculum and their involvement in the certificate and diploma training of Pasifika ECE teachers was a critical period. Their involvement in the development of both the draft and final versions

of Te Whāriki in the 1990s was a momentous celebration and a real sense of ownership towards Pasifika children's future. This curriculum framework became a bicultural document, a first of its kind and acknowledged the unique role of Maori – the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, and equally, made explicit reference to Pacific peoples heritages. Unfortunately some of the original ideas and work within the draft curriculum have been omitted within the final version. Reference to Pasifika children, families and communities along with culturally appropriate practices were important deletions from the final version, and what we now see has been limited to a couple of statements reduced to a few paragraphs. The reasons for such omissions have not yet been explained [6]. This was seen as yet another setback for Pasifika ECE.

The late 1990s also saw the need for research within the areas of licensing and the chartering of Pasifika ECE settings. Curriculum developments, teacher training, professional development and practices were also emerging themes and topics back then and are still relevant and current for continued debate and discussion. With education now becoming a commodity and with the notions of globalization taking affect, ideas associated with 'value for money' and 'return on investment' proved difficult for Pasifika ECE. Thus, this added to its woes in terms of access to quality and affordable education and care services. In addition, changing governments have positioned ECE within different priorities and have used the sector and issues affecting it to their own political gains.

With education being high on the agenda, political and economic landscaping within Aotearoa New Zealand has positioned the sector within a rather compromising situation. Educational achievements among Pasifika children and learners across all sectors continue to be an area of concern to both Pasifika families and communities and to the state. Now viewed as 'priority learners' the expectations within the compulsory sector and government aspirations towards increasing the literacy and numeracy attainments of all children with an emphasis on Pasifika children, has meant that Pasifika ECE is challenged with keeping up with the demands of parental aspirations and government outcomes. This has been no easy feat to accomplish. We have experienced the full fury of changing governments over the decades that has located Pasifika ECE with a bleak and grim future. Again, what was regarded as being of great importance for Pasifika children, their families and communities needed to be clearly articulated. With the impact of government funding cuts, reductions in qualification requirements from 100% to only needing 80% of the teaching staff to hold the minimum of a diploma of teaching, our most vulnerable members of society were once again in the firing line. Despite the

abundance of evidence concerning the benefits of children having some ECE experience prior to attending school, Pasifika children have the highest percentage rate of non-attendance. The notion of being 'ready for school' added tension between expectations within the sectors and parents. The private sector would gain profitably and charge ridiculous fees all the in name of 'user pays' and in some cases, parents were now demanding a particular set of skills and knowledge that undermined philosophical ideas concerning ECE. The provision of quality ECE and care had been severely compromised.

2.2. 'Personal narratives: Our story – our journey'

Manutai's story: My journey in ECE began with my involvement with my two older sons Daniel then aged 4 and AJ aged 3 in the capacity of a parent helper while at kindergarten. They were both very boisterous boys who enjoyed discovering, exploring and learning as much as they could within that given time. I can recall how happy they were and the wonderful opportunities for learning that appeared to occur effortlessly. The commitment from their teachers and their enthusiasm to be involved with my boys learning were genuine as they encouraged further learning opportunities.

My boys played a lot and it seemed at the time that that was all they did. I had not yet understood the value and role of play within the learning and teaching of young children. Play had been viewed as a viable way in which learning could occur for children and was understood to be children's natural way of learning [8]. My own childhood play memories where moments of laughter and enjoyment, that involved elements of risk and adventure, so of course, I wanted the same experiences for my sons. This fascination concerning play would also become an area of interest where research is concerned for me. Watching how teachers would relate to children in their care, the kinds of learning experiences they provide children made me consider seriously wanting to take up teaching within ECE. Excited about being involved within the sector, I had signed up to be a reliever as a teacher aide. More exposure to the kinds of learning that would be encouraged motivated me to go training. I went on to gain a qualification towards a Diploma of Pacific Islands Early Childhood Education, also known as the PIECCA diploma at the former Auckland College of Education, Epsom campus. This is one program that is covered in this article. The thirst for more knowledge grew and the need to apply what I had learned became even more critical. As an advocate for ECE and a promoter of children's right to play, I have never looked back since. I am fully dedicated to the sector.

Seiuli's story: I was born in Samoa. My father was a local church minister in his village of Tufulele and my mother was a registered nurse and midwife from Faleula. In the early 1950's I migrated with my parents and younger brother to reside in Aotearoa New Zealand, a place that was to become our 'new home'. We had left behind many aunts, uncles, and our grandparents who had been our babysitters, while my parents were at work. Arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand, my father found employment at the Westfield Freezing works where he worked many long hours to provide financial support for our family as well as our relatives who remained back in Samoa. My mother decided to become a full time housewife because we were adjusting to a cooler climate and she wanted to make sure we were well fed, clothed and protected from any illness. The other reason she was unable to work was because there were no longer family members that could care for us. My mother was very influential in our early upbringing. She would read the Bible everyday, and teach us how to pray in both Samoan and English. She believed that English was the language for a prosperous future whereas my father had instilled in us the values of "faasamoa" (Samoan culture) and encouraged us to recite verses from the Bible. The cultural values of showing respect, love and service towards our elders and siblings were very important practices within our family.

In the late 1950's my brother and I attended a nearby kindergarten. I remember playing with blocks, and puzzles on the floor, listening to stories; like the Three Little Pigs, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Some songs that I learnt in these childhood years were London bridge is falling down, Oranges and Lemons the bells of St Clements, Daffodils in the Meadows and sheep in the pastures with lyrics. Education back then, was specifically mono-cultural and monolingual. The language, culture and lived experiences from my family were not recognized, visible or utilized within this social context of learning and we never questioned or asked why?

My father woke up as early as 4am in the mornings to go to work. He worked hard for many long hours to provide our education because he believed that education was the key to a successful future. He would always return back home in the late afternoon with surprises in his lunch satchel that ranged from chocolate fish and lollipops to bubble gums of different colors and flavors. We always looked forward to him coming home because we never saw him much during the day.

During our meals, Dad would be telling us some funny stories and when we laughed at his mispronunciation of the English words, he would remind us that "this is the English that brought you all to New Zealand" and we would all keep silent because we understood the significance of his

statement. My affiliation with my dad and brother was very strong because both had a sense of humor and were good role models in our family. My research interest on males in early childhood education stems from some of my own early childhood experiences within my family.

Between the two of us, we have had 60 years of experience within both Pasifika and mainstream ECE and teacher education. We have both worked within the programs that will be discussed later in this article. The courses that we have taught are curriculum developments, performing arts, play and pedagogy, history and politics of education within Aotearoa New Zealand, social sciences education, Pasifika research and practices, diversity and Te Whāriki, spirituality, the professional teacher, research methodologies and mathematics within the early years. Together we have served almost 28 years within this particular institutional location. We have seen many changes with faulty organizations and structures, from the former Auckland College of Education (ACE) to the amalgamation with The University of Auckland. Our connections to this place have always been about the ways in which Pasifika ECE initiatives continue to develop, grow and strengthen, a rich history that we are proud to associate ourselves with and one that has had its fair share of challenges.

3. Qualifications and training in Pasifika ECE: Dreams, aspirations & challenges

Pasifika education has featured within the programs that are being offered to Pasifika and non-Pasifika people at the former ACE and the current Faculty of Education (FoE) for 3 decades. Historically, the physical location of this particular site has seen the realizations of Pasifika pioneers who envisioned a qualification written and developed by Pacific for Pacific. With the first appointment of one lecturer in 1987 in Pacific Education at ACE, saw the humble beginnings of great things to come. The early 1990s saw the introduction of a qualification towards a Diploma of Pacific Islands Early Childhood Education being awarded by the Pacific Islands Early Childhood Council of Aotearoa (PIECCA). Responding to Pasifika peoples concern about addressing the aspirations for language nests to become fully licensed and chartered services in order to access funding, a challenge was put forth to develop a program that would reflect and underpin such dreams while meeting the licensing points system. PIECCA would become responsible for the training and equipping of Pasifika people wanting to work within such services. A first of its kind, the program was delivered to a small group of committed Pasifika women. The PIECCA qualification fulfilled the

requirements of the time, where a person responsible needed a maximum of 80 licensing points for the supervision and teaching of young children. The PIECCA qualification was awarded 110 licensing points however teacher registration recognition was not gained. This meant that those who held the PIECCA qualification could not be registered teachers within Aotearoa New Zealand. This program provided a crucial stepping-stone to further studies within ECE. The PIECCA diploma was established in collaboration with ACE [8]. Leading the program was Afamasaga Telesia McDonald. By the end of the 1990s, the then government set the benchmark for all those working with young children to hold a minimum qualification of a diploma of teaching, the licensing points system was no longer valid. Hence, once again, Pasifika ECE was confronted with the challenge of developing a qualification to meet this demand. Over the years we have seen well over 150 Pasifika women and men attaining the PIECCA qualification and securing jobs both here in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.

In 1999 the Diploma of Teaching Pacific Islands Early Childhood Education (PIECE) program was developed again in partnership with ACE. It was the first Level 7 professional teaching qualification for Pasifika ECE. It had been accredited and approved and gained teacher registration and was delivered the following year. Administered through the Centre of PIECE, this was another major achievement. The first cohort consisted of 36 students that ranged from 30 – 60 years of age. The need for Pasifika languages and cultures to underpin program delivery was influential to the program's philosophy. By mid 2002 the program numbers increased to 131 students who were studying full and part-time. In 2005, 185 students were enrolled and numbers continued to increase. The opportunity to deliver off site through flexi delivery was offered to a cohort in a small rural area in Tokoroa and a pilot project was underway [10]. Meripa Toso was appointed as the co-ordinator to take care of this particular cohort. She had lived in Tokoroa for 3 months to ensure the program was and students were well supported. This cohort consisted of 35 students, predominantly Cook Islands. Both teaching and support staff would travel 3 and half hours to teach. Special resources were designed and developed by Pasifika staff that would support students learning. Unfortunately this was only for the first two years in a 4-year program. The funding was pulled from this initiative and was seen as a lack of commitment for Pasifika from the institution. Unique to the PIECE program was the kind of support offered to students. The Pasifika Academic Support Services (PASS) played a significant role in the retention of students to successfully complete the program. Assessments underpinned students first language, which for the majority of students was a Pasifika language and the development of the second

language for English proficiency on exist. In 2005, the PIECE program would take its last intake and would only deliver on a full-time basis. The last cohort for this program would complete in 2008 with more than 60 students graduating and the last cohort of part time students from the Epsom campus and Tokoroa. The PIECE program was led by Jessie Fuamutu with Afamasaga Telesia McDonald as the centre's director. This provided another avenue for Pasifika people to train within the area of ECE.

Fighting pay parity with other sectors had put ECE in the back-benches and playing catch up, this situation was intensified even more for Pasifika ECE. Although the benchmark was still the diploma of teaching, the need to develop a bachelor's degree within the sector was inevitable. This called for Pasifika academics that had worked previously within the aforementioned programs to turn their attention to developing the first ever degree level qualification. This was also an opportunity for many of our mainstream researchers to use such situations to their advantage and undertake projects that had viewed Pasifika children within a deficient lens. Many have had their careers advanced because of the nature of research that involved Pasifika people.

In 2007 the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) Pasifika Specialisation program, led by Vaitulu Pua, took in its first cohort, and again Pasifika academics at the faculty continued to lead the way for Pasifika ECE teacher education programs within Aotearoa New Zealand. The mission statement for this program is to ensure that young children, irrespective of their cultural background, socio-economic status, gender or religion, have access to quality ECE. This would be achieved through contribution by way of service, love and respect, and to be carried out in ways that Pacific peoples cultural identities and languages are upheld.

The philosophy that underpinned the program aimed to;

- Enhance Pasifika identities, cultures and languages
- Demonstrate commitment to providing quality educational outcomes for children and families
- Promote the beliefs, values and aspirations of Pasifika groups for children and families
- Support children to become successful citizens of a global community
- Acknowledge the duality of identities and tangata whenua

At the heart of the program are Pasifika languages and cultures that inform and shape the cultural identities of Pasifika young children. All programs have been faith-inspired in that our commonalities in believing that we have been 'called' for a divine purpose; to prepare and equip teachers, comes with a commitment and loyalty to serve Pasifika children, their families and communities,

regardless of differing denominations. We are compelled by love to give of ourselves the best. Spirituality was and still is an integral part of the program and an important aspect within Pasifika ECE services. The recent work by Toso [11] who articulates and foregrounds spirituality as a philosophy of practice from a Samoan perspective, is a constant reminder of how powerful and transformative this can be when teachers have a knowledge and understanding of its significance for social change. The need to further Pasifika educational research, especially within ECE was and is necessary to make Pasifika values, beliefs and traditional knowledge explicit. This has not always been easy and Pasifika people respond in different ways to reveal hidden tensions that require an approach to research with sensitivity and cultural knowledge.

Tuafuti [12] notes that the articulation and reliance of cultural metaphors and Pasifika research methodologies became equally important and offer alternatives to dominant western research and research paradigms. Her work with reference to theoretical perspectives of further deepening understandings of 'silence/silencing' and the ways in which Pasifika families and communities have been misunderstood through their actions of being silent is critical. The exploration of social, political and educational factors within Aotearoa New Zealand are examined and considers the ways in which these areas have contributed to the 'silencing' of Pasifika people. In addition to Tuafuti's work her focus on bilingual education and literacies has contributed to further understandings of the role and significance of the first language within the context of teaching and learning within ECE. She proposes that working effectively with Pasifika families and communities requires a model of 'empowerment' that is based on shared understanding of partnership and a vision for young children. She points out the need to recognize when coercive powers are in operation and its impact that marginalizes and threatens cohesion between all parties involved when undertaking research with Pasifika people. Tuafuti continues to advocate for the place of Pasifika children and their families first language.

The lack of male involvement within ECE continues to be a challenge in both mainstream and Pasifika. Research of Samoan males within ECE by Sauni [13] has offered cultural insight and reveals the rational behind why Samoan males appear to have transitioned within a female dominate profession with ease. She notes that historically, the nurturing and caring role of young children was usually undertaken and carried out by Samoan males within the aiga/family. This was regarded as the natural roles and duties for Samoan males who were also responsible for spiritual teachings and the passing of specific traditional knowledge to young

children. In her research Sauni dispels the negative images of males associated within ECE and offers an alternative view that positions males within the ideology of 'rites' based thinking. That is, the duty and obligation of males to be involved in the upbringing of children from a very young age. Her work continues to inform culturally responsive pedagogy that reaffirms positive images of males in ECE.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, play within early childhood education programs is highly valued and becomes the cornerstone to curriculum planning, design and implementation. Yet for many of the students entering Pasifika early childhood teacher education programs, come from backgrounds where play is not valued and is regarded as a 'waste of time'. Leapepe's work [6] explores the perception of Pasifika student teachers views of the term play and challenges Pasifika ECE teachers to re-examine their own understandings of play and consider the implications this may have for teacher practice. Her research reveals that cultural influences, parental attitudes towards play, childhood play experiences and initial understandings of play have been influential to the ways students/teachers think about play. The need to revisit ideas about play and how play is understood provides opportunities for critical reflection and where possible change. Her work contributes to the much needed research and literature of Pasifika theorizing of play-related ideas.

The recent work of Nawaqavanua [14] explores notions of professionalism and the teacher registration process that is required of all teachers. Her work provides valuable insight into how such expectations have been understood and expressed through everyday interactions with young children and their families, while upholding aspects of professionalism within diverse and dynamic ECE settings within mainstream. As a Pasifika mentor and senior teacher within mainstream ECE, her work takes into account the complexities that Pasifika teachers are confronted with, that is, the need to uphold professional obligations, meet cultural aspirations while maintain personal identities on varying levels. When funding cuts to professional development compromises professional practice and performance, such effects are noted and the quality of delivery questioned. Nawaqavanua explores the implications this has for Pasifika ECE.

The work of Pasifika academics at the FoE continues to contribute significantly to areas that are underrepresented within the literature and research of Pasifika ECE and within the sector as a whole. Such work has been well received both nationally and internationally that is ground breaking and informs teacher practice. What has been noted here are just some examples of what is happening at the FoE. Work within Pasifika communities has not been noted and will require another article within itself.

These women work tirelessly within their respective Pasifika communities and are viewed as leaders who are committed to the advancement of Pasifika educational achievement and outcomes. Their connections and dedication to such communities have been outstanding.

4. Challenges, issues and discussions

Over the last two decades, the body of Pasifika research, literature, knowledge and methodologies has entered new terrains. Gaining strength and recognition for its capacity to make visible valuable contributions to a discipline area that is relatively new, that is, Pasifika ECE. So what of the challenges that has confronted us as a people, as a program and a unit within the former ACE and current FoE? On the one hand, we have experienced infrastructural changes that we have had to become familiar with the notions of centralization, transitional changes with very little support, academic reviews where the shrinking of Pasifika staff have fallen victim to funding cuts, the dis-establishment of the School of Pasifika Education, an amalgamation with The University of Auckland, physical re-location, new organizational structures, staffing, ownership of courses sitting within different schools, to name a few. We have been exposed to symbolic violence, discrimination, institutional bullying and continue to fight for our very existence within such an institution, and yet, just like the phoenix, we continue to rise and our resilience to bounce back in the midst of confronting complexities is admirable.

On the other hand, we have had an immediate increase of available resources, library materials, facilities from both campuses [Epsom and city campus], ICT services, a matrix model of teaching across schools and working alongside mainstream colleagues, the mentoring of professors and associate professors, attendance to many exciting conferences that have advanced both professional and personal growth, closer dialogue with other academics among other things.

Issues from and within Pasifika ECE concern the ways in which the effectiveness of successive Pasifika Education Plans and funding mechanisms play out. There is a real need for a comprehensive overview of where Pasifika ECE is heading with reference to community and societal outcomes. Other issues are concerned with the perception of Pasifika languages, quality indicators and dimensions, quality teaching and learning along with sustainability of services. The need to increase the numbers of qualified and registered Pasifika ECE teachers. The incorporation of centre-based action research within Pasifika ECE services and those where there is a 30% or more of Pasifika presence. The formation of a coalition or Pasifika collective, that functions as an association. There needs to be some kind of a cross-

sector collaboration to identify from initial stages Pasifika ECE research priorities. Emerging Pasifika ECE teacher researchers need the opportunities to create occasions for presenting their work. With reference to the bachelor's degree, we need to think about a suite of courses that can be offered at Postgraduate level studies with a focus on Pasifika education, learners, families and communities. Leadership is a key component to a solution that looks promising.

To address the above which have been both issues and areas for further discussion is to critically think about the future. A concerted effort from all those who are willing to take Pasifika ECE into its next phase requires coming together. At the time of writing this article, the FoE was undertaking another academic review. Of the five Pasifika ECE staff that teaches on the B.Ed (Tchg) Pasifika Specialisation program, two senior academics/researchers have chosen voluntary severance. Our most experienced senior academic, researcher, and mentor, has not had her contract renewed. This is not only devastating to the program but to the faculty and university itself.

4.1. 'Our tribute'

We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our Pasifika pioneers who had tirelessly and with such conviction and dedication, have ensured that our Pasifika children, families and communities were justifiably served. The earlier works of these women have been appreciated and live on in the generations to come. We commemorate their spirit of love and passion. We thank you, those who have passed on but never forgotten; Teupoko Morgan, Eti Laufiso, Matarena George, and Melanite Manoa. To those who have retired, we thank you; Afamasaga Telesia (McDonald) Alapia, Iole Tagoilelagi, Taonefou Falesima, Fereni Ete, Tuitaga Faafua Tautolo, Mama Mii Teokotai, and Tepaeru Tereroa. Many of these women were instrumental in the developments of Te Whāriki, both the draft and its final version. Many of these women were integral to policy developments and were involved in the development of certificate and diploma training programs for Pasifika ECE.

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Vaovasamania Meripa Toso, and Ulu Nawaqavanua. Meitaki Autupaka – Fa’afetai lava.

5. Conclusion

Pasifika ECE has a past. A history that tells a story of the many who have made sacrifices and who have endured the challenges to create a platform from which others have been able to build from. Humble beginnings that began in home garages and church halls have led to the establishments of licensed and chartered Pasifika ECE services.

Pasifika ECE has a present. Currently forging its way through the terrains, it takes on different challenges and faces another kind of sacrifice. It competes with neoliberal ideas in a time where globalization continues to impact on the ways in which the child and education are viewed.

Pasifika ECE has a future. One that is well positioned and relentless in its ability to move, shape and influence the multiple identities of its learners. We continue to strive towards excellence in our work because we believe our Pasifika children deserve the best education they can receive. Pasifika ECE is one of hope and optimism.

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