

Sustainable development for whom? A view from Oceania

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Sustainable development, like climate change, has become the new rave globally, regionally, and nationally. At the University of the South Pacific (USP), where I work, it is in your face when you open its website: “Excellence and sustainability in higher education”. It is also assumed that most people in the world today know what the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are and most educators know about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Many people who talk about, teach, and do things related to ESD know that ESD is not straightforward or as easy as they would like or had expected. In this presentation, I problematize the notion of ESD by first providing a brief background of what ESD means to the international community by discussing the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD 2004-14). I then examine selected Pacific notions of ESD and their implications for formal education.

Keywords: ESD; DESD 2004-14; Pacific pedagogies; Pacific research

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development, like climate change, has become the new rave globally, regionally, and nationally. At the University of the South Pacific (USP), where I work, it is in your face when you open the USP website: “Excellence and sustainability in higher education”. It is also assumed that most people in the world today know about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and that most educators know about Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Many people who talk about, teaching and doing things related to ESD know that ESD is not as straightforward or as easy as they would like or had expected. In this presentation, I problematize the notions of ESD by first providing a brief background of what ESD means to the international community by discussing the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD-2004-14). I then examine selected Pacific notions of ESD and their implications for formal education. But before I do so, I share some basic assumptions underlying this presentation, and that are common features of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS):

- All things are inter-related and there is no single reality; and because there are multiple realities we need to find out about these.
- Knowledge and value systems and, hence, appropriate behaviour are time and context-specific.
- Indigenous and local knowledge (i.e., traditional knowledge) ensures rigour, validity and reliability in the discourse on sustainable development.

- Indigenous worldviews provide alternative epistemological places and spaces for negotiating ESD, especially for Indigenous people.

UN DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (DESD 2004-14)

My involvement in ESD began in 2005 when I was asked to join a group of people from the Asia Pacific region in Bangkok to draft an ESD Framework for the region. Later, I was invited to join another group (of “experts”) in Apia, Samoa, to draft a Pacific Framework for ESD. I was also a member of the UNESCO Global Monitoring Committee for the DESD and have attended a number of ESD-related symposiums and conferences. I have been teaching a postgraduate course on ESD at the USP since 2010 and have found many students grappling with what ESD concepts mean to them in the contexts of the communities and schools in which they work and/or live. So, we spend some time trying to unpack and understand what the international community means by SD and ESD, and what the students, as well as the people with whom they interact in various contexts, consider to be SD.

DESD 2004-14 came and went, and, like many international instruments and pronouncements about the Year of this or the Decade of that, not many people living in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PIC&T) knew about it, despite the fact that, as mentioned earlier, there was a Pacific Strategy for ESD. At this stage, I would like to quote from an earlier conference presentation on ESD:

It is important not to see ESD as another school subject but mainstreamed into all subjects. Conceptual frameworks for incorporating ESD into the school curriculum need to be developed and adopted by curriculum planners and teacher educators. Different perceptions of ESD need to be taken on board by curriculum personnel as well as teachers who need to appreciate that ESD involves both content and pedagogies . . . finally current international (and regional) programs also need to be reoriented to address ESD. (Thaman, 2010, p. 8–9).

A world conference to celebrate the end of DESD2004-14 was held in Nagoya, Japan, at the end of 2014 where most participants agreed on the four main outcomes of the Decade: i) capacity building and networking at the regional level; ii) adoption of a contextualized approach as a critical factor to success of ESD; iii) multi-institutional partnership approach linking universities, schools, civil society, and public sector; and, iv) importance of the presence of a national structure such as a National Committee for successful implementation of ESD.

The success stories from the Asia Pacific Region were mainly related to the Environment dimension of ESD, especially integrating climate change and environmental education into different levels of schooling, such as the Green Schools in Indonesia and Community Learning Centres in Vietnam. There were fewer initiatives related to the economic and social dimensions of ESD, although there were a few examples of attempts at green growth, youth initiatives to foster inter-ethnic understanding and peace, multicultural education, and some documentation of traditional knowledge.

As well as achievements, there were challenges in realizing the main goals and targets of ESD as identified by participants at the Congress. They included: i) the need for more political will, especially in strengthening relationships between development policies and education policies; ii) the need to more deeply institutionalize ESD into education

systems at all levels; iii) the need for more monitoring and evaluation research; iv) the need for more work to bridge gaps between schools and society; and, v) a need for more capacity building for teachers/educators.

Specific challenges relating to the Asia Pacific region may be worthy of repeating here. They include: i) the need to promote a comprehensive understanding and consensus around the nature of ESD; ii) developing a clear, generic definition of ESD; iii) conceptualizing the link among peace, ESD, and education for international understanding; iv) gaining a better balance among the various dimensions of ESD; v) developing evidence-based national policy frameworks for ESD; vi) integrating core concepts of ESD in the curriculum; and vii) systematic research and innovations in ESD (Sheffler, 2014). As we proceed from ESD to SDGs, there are two important tasks for educators to note: the first relates to improving the tools that we use for ESD monitoring and evaluation, and the second is mainstreaming ESD in SDG goals, especially: climate change (13), biodiversity and ecosystems (15); ocean and seas (14); poverty alleviation (1); nutrition (2); health and well-being (3); gender equality and empowerment (5); economic growth (8/9).

Another challenge faced by those working in ESD related to the difficulty of finding appropriate indicators for success in ESD. The usual ones were quantifiable indicators including percentages of such things as curriculum subjects with ESD content; teachers who could speak and teach in their learners' mother tongue; time dedicated to activities taught by the community; and government budget devoted to ESD. Another was the development of an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework, such as HOPE (ACCU, 2009).

RATIONALE FOR DISCUSSING PACIFIC PERCEPTIONS OF ESD

Some of the issues raised above provide a background for the need to understand the diversity of perspectives among Pacific Island communities about whom ESD was meant to focus on and on which of the 17 SDGs to focus right now. I use Pacific Islanders to refer to those whose ancestral homes happen to be in the region that UNESCO calls Oceania or Moana, the name that many indigenous Pacific people use to call their "place". The debate about the movie Moana notwithstanding, I must confess a preference for people of the Moana because of its invocation of the ocean in us, and what Hau'ofa (1993) referred to as a sea of islands, and people's interconnectedness in a physical as well as a metaphorical sense.

One of the positive aspects of DESD 2004-14, in my view, was a suggestion by UNESCO that the three pillars of Environment, Society, and Economy, should be underpinned by Culture, thus acknowledging culture and cultural diversity in how ESD is perceived. For my purposes, culture is defined as a way of life of a people which includes their knowledge and value systems, passed down through generations in context specific teaching and learning systems, using their languages. For most of us who still live in our island homes, culture is lived, not debated. It provides the contexts for what we do and who we are; what we know and believe in; how we choose to live our lives, and what preoccupies our thinking.

Thinking

*you say that you think
therefore you are
but thinking belongs
in the depths of the earth
we simply borrow
what we need to know*

*these islands the sky
the surrounding seas
the trees the birds
and all that are free
the misty rain
the surging river
pools by the blowholes
a hidden flower
have their own thinking*

(Thaman, 1999:15)

Pacific perspectives have been influenced by exposure to mainly Anglo-American and European cultures and their languages, mainly through formal education and, more recently, through the mass media. In our conversations about ESD, we are reminded of the contexts in which education and development in Pacific contexts take place: people and their cultures. So, for me, in order for development to be sustainable for Pasifiki people, it has to be culturally inclusive for all. I know this is a huge ask in a region where education and development have been totally dominated by foreign cultures, their languages, knowledge systems, communication networks, and research paradigms, for over a century now. Consequently, any suggestion to shift from business as usual, looks almost impossible. However, I believe it is worth a try.

CONCEPTUALIZING ESD

So what is problematic about ESD and what is the future of the SDGs in the Pacific? For many years, the development community viewed our region and people as underdeveloped, so we worked to “improve” our lot by educating ourselves in the ways of the West. The process of “improving” has resulted in varying dimensions of cultural transformations and re-orienting ourselves and our cultures to fit a predominantly Western, scientific, and industrial worldview. Examples of ensuring that this was done included the banning of different aspects of Indigenous religious practices that did not reflect Christian beliefs and values, as well as the introduction of schools and the requirement of teaching and learning in foreign languages. Formal education in the Pacific today, from ECE to university, is largely undemocratic as it does not consider the cultures of learners and teachers. Today, participation and success in formal education has become the best indicator of the colonization of the indigenous mind, which continues through our unquestioning pursuit of so-called universal truths, such as literacy, numeracy, democracy, and sustainable development as measured through various global instruments with their concomitant goals and targets, such as MDGs, EFA, DESD, and, of course now, SDGs. In this regard, I am reminded of Fanon and Nandy’s claim, quoted by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005, p. 28), that imperialism and colonialism brought complete

disorder to colonized peoples, disconnecting them from their histories, landscapes, languages, social relations, and their own way of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world.

As most people know, the global development agenda emphasizes education for all and the expansion of market-driven products with its concomitant emphasis on science and new ICTs—mostly framed and dominated by Western-derived ideas, concepts, and practices. Today, many of us are being asked by foreign donors (now euphemistically called “development partners”) as well as our own government officials, who are responsible for market-oriented development plans that largely mimic those of the development partners, to comply with their plans because this is what is required in order to obtain needed finance. These processes are evident in much of the implementation of many international instruments, including SDGs; processes that are mostly Western-imposed, materialistic and culturally ahistorical, with the only thing that is Pacific about it being the word “Pacific” in the project document. Consultants (including from the Pacific Islands), attend high level meetings in Paris and/or Geneva and decide on the process as well as the outputs of ESD. Consultants help governments to write proposals for development partners who are asked to fund the development projects. They help our governments implement the projects and they evaluate the projects in order to see whether the objectives of the projects have been achieved, with some often assuming technological superiority and, a few, cultural and personal superiority as well. When talking about ESD, I suggest that we need to assume that all cultures are important and equal but with different perspectives and worldviews and, in relation to Pacific cultures, that we recognize that they have highly evolved and integrated social systems and histories, some dating back thousands of years.

Today, I see the problems associated with framing ESD and SDGs as problematic not so much because they are often Western and one-sided or inappropriate, but because they are so pervasive. Despite attempts in the last two decades by Pacific scholars, such as those of the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (200-present), to theorize Pacific education as well as development, many continue to oversimplify our development needs and landscapes, resulting in further entrenching non-Pacific approaches and ideals, including the very indicators of sustainable development success. A good example relates to the methods that are used to assess development needs, such as the input-output model, which is largely mechanistic, materialistic, atheoretical, and assumes a linear notion of time that is past, present, and future. Yet, most Pacific Indigenous people know that Pacific Indigenous societies are multi-dimensional and flexible with equal emphases on the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions and in which the past is the present as well as the future (Mahina, 2015). Sadly, all too often, one culture’s sense of reality is put up as the reality against which all development in all cultures will be measured.

When my students, who come from different Pasifika communities, search, in their own languages, for an equivalent word or concept or approach in order to translate the three pillars of ESD, they often have difficulty. They are forced to indigenise the pillars using their own vernacular terms and, often, what they come up with is an indigenised version of the foreign terms. The opposite is also interesting in that a search for an English equivalence of indigenous concepts often falls short of the true meaning of a concept, such as, for example, using the word “land” to refer to the notion of *fonua/vanua/whenua*.

It is, therefore, important that we understand the need to be more careful and not pretend that ideas that originate in one culture have equivalence in all others when considering

the three ESD pillars or the SDGs for that matter. Most Pacific indigenous people do not have equivalent concepts of the three pillars because their worldviews are holistic and do not separate aspects of life into economic, environmental, or social. The words that are used to refer to these are often localized versions of the English words, such as the Tongan *sosaieti*, and *ekonomika*, simply because the holistic nature of their knowledge systems as reflected in their languages continue to struggle when trying to explain this particular conflict to non-indigenous colleagues who often say they understand the holistic nature of indigenous cultures but then proceed to treat culture as a variable in the ESD development agenda rather than its foundation.

The Asia Pacific Framework for ESD includes a call for researching people's ideas of SD before initiating ESD projects. Some of the research into Pacific traditional knowledge and its role in understanding ESD and change have found that, although ESD may be a new concept for many Pacific people, sustainable living and sustainable livelihoods are not.

In Fiji, for example, Nabobo-Baba (2006), Mataitonga (2010) and Naisilisili (2011) explain that SD is closely linked to the indigenous Fijian notion of *Vanua*, an all-embracing concept that fully describes and embraces people, their culture, cosmologies, epistemologies, and, most importantly, their languages. Other Pacific cultures have similar notions, such as *as fonua* (Tonga) and *whenua* (Maori). Within such framings, interpersonal as well as inter-group relationships (*vaa/wah*) are seen as central to the survival and continuity of a culture and impact people's behaviour and practices. In Kiribati, on the other hand, SD is life itself and involves understanding the past in order to sustain the present and conserve resources for the future. For other Pacific indigenous people, SD is always about relationships. Maeltoka (2010) reports that, for his people in Vanuatu, SD includes processes and protocols that ensure the protection and maintenance of important relationships. It is, therefore, clear from the information we have gathered so far that SD is about nurturing relationships among different aspects of a culture—people and other living and non-living things—for the purposes of cultural survival and continuity.

The separation of education from SD is inherent in the ESD literature. What we have found in many Pacific contexts is that learning and living are two sides of the same thing: one assumes the other. The embeddedness of learning in sustainable living is illustrated by the Tongan conception of sustainable livelihood. The Sustainable Livelihood and Education Research Project describes the Tongan notion of SD as *mo'ui fakapotopoto* (living in the way of a *poto* (wise) person) (Johansson-Fua, 2006). *Moui* is a way of living—*mo'ui* is life itself; *poto* is the basic concept of Tongan education—the end result of learning or, as Kavaliku describes it, the positive application of *'ilo* or knowledge (Kavaliku, 1968). *Poto* privileges learning, understanding, and behaving in a culturally appropriate manner. In other words, knowing what to do and doing it well (Thaman, 1988). Such learning is not confined to formal education but occurs in different epistemological sites within indigenous communities and reflects all aspects of a community's way of life, including their heritage arts (Koya, 2013). It is obvious, therefore, that the current discourse on ESD does not adequately capture many of these processes; that more research is urgently needed in order to obtain a better and fuller understanding of what SD means to Pacific island peoples and how educators may improve their approach for facilitating learning for sustainable development.

PACIFIC PEDAGOGIES

There is a dearth of literature about indigenous learning in Pasifika communities. Some of us have experiences of the type of methods that many indigenous students positively react to because we know ourselves how we learned best in a particular teaching/learning situation. The following are ways of learning that seem to benefit Pacific indigenous learners with whom I have interacted over the years. There are others, of course, but I list here some that I have tried as well as others that I have learned from colleagues' experiences and research:

- Learning through trial and feedback
- Learning from observation and imitation of those who have learnt
- Learning in groups such as peer group tutorials
- Learning in a holistic manner
- Learning from audio-visuals
- Learning by doing
- Learning that is contextualized and spontaneous
- Learning from teacher demonstration (rather than verbal instruction)
- Learning through real life situations and performance (rather than contrived situations)
- Learning that is focused on the mastery of context-specific skills rather than abstract, universal principles that can be applied in un-experienced situations
- Learning that is person-oriented rather than information oriented
- Learning from teachers who respect and can connect with students rather than those who have “qualifications”

More specifically, in Tonga, Johansson-Fua and her colleagues found that Tongans learn mainly through *sio* (observation), *ala* (practice/touch), *fanongo* (listening) and *ta* (demonstration), with the main outcomes of learning being *poto* (wisdom), and *mo'ui fakapotopoto* (sustainable living) (Johansson-Fua, 2006).

In Solomon Islands, the main learning strategies include: observation and imitation (Wasuka et.al., 1989); participation in adult activities; listening and remembering, and verbal instruction about important aspects of life, such as genealogies and important relationships, types of work, and cultural values (Ninnes, 1991).

It is obvious that when we talk about learning for sustainable living, we need to recognize the importance of understanding that both education and sustainability are notions that are embedded in indigenous people's cultures and reflected in their teaching methods as well as learning styles. It is, therefore, important for Pacific educators, curriculum developers, planners, and others who are interested in facilitating ESD goals, to accommodate indigenous concepts of sustainable development as well as indigenous pedagogies in their work because this will allow for empowerment of Indigenous people and ensures sustainability in education itself. The next section addresses the question of “how do we get information about Pacific indigenous concepts of education for sustainable development?” Through research is, of course, the answer, although not any old type of research but specifically Pacific Research. The balance of this presentation will briefly outline what I mean by Pacific Research.

PACIFIC RESEARCH

The RPEI movement in general and Pacific researchers in particular, have stipulatively defined Pacific Research (PR) as research that is informed by and embedded within Pacific Knowledge Systems (worldviews, languages, knowledges, practices, and beliefs). Pacific in this sense includes indigenous and local communities and their research needs and processes. PR, therefore, involves the active participation of Pacific people and communities and is relevant and responsive to their needs. The values that underpin PR include: respect; relationships; cultural competence; utility; active engagement; participation; reciprocity; collective as well as individual rights; protection; capacity building; and participation. Ethical behavior is important in PR and is culture-specific and expressed verbally as well as non-verbally, in the language of the culture, its important ceremonies, manners of dress and other protocols. PR has been described by some non-indigenous people as “culturalist”, assuming, I suppose, that Western research is culture-free (Wood, 2003).

In my view, PR is a more useful way of gauging Pacific people’s views of SD as illustrated in some of the projects mentioned above. Tuhiwai-Smith (Smith, 1999) argues that this type of approach to research is an important part of the de-colonization agenda—a way for Pacific researchers to “get free” from the dominance of non-Pacific research paradigms, that often produce data which is irrelevant and meaningless to Pacific islanders. Solomon Island scholar Gegeo (2002) says that PR is also an important way of addressing the epistemological colonization and sometimes silencing of Pacific peoples and their spaces while at the same time addressing the question of what is worth knowing? (Meyer, 1998; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Johansson-Fua (2006) suggests that PR also provides an authentic contribution to knowledge production, especially in relation to what SD means for Pacific people. For me, however, PR is fun and worthwhile in itself.

Associated with the PR approach are the many PR frameworks and methodologies that have been developed and used by research students over the past two decades to help frame, conduct, and report research findings. They include: *Kakala* (Thaman, 1992), *Kaupapa Maoroi* (Smith, 1993), *Fa’afaletui* (Tamasese et al., 1998), *Tivaevae* (Maua-Hodges, 2000), *Ta-Va* (Mahina, 2001), *Vanua* (Nabobo-Baba, 2006), *Fale* (Koyavaka’uta, 2007), *Fonofale* (Pulotu-Endemann, 2009), and *Iluvatu* (Naisilis, 2011),

The Kakala Research Framework, is a Tongan contribution to PR. Originally developed in the early 1990s, as a philosophy of teaching and learning, it is sourced from Tongan culture, in particular, Tongan valued contexts of thinking as well as ideas about learning, knowledge, and wisdom. In these contexts, language is important because it reveals what generally occupy people’s thinking; in other words, what they emphasize in terms of their everyday life. My research showed that valued contexts for Tongans include: spirituality, rank, and authority; specific contexts; inter-personal relations’ *’ofa* or compassion; and restraint behaviour (Thaman, 1988). A conceptual analysis of Tongan notions of education using Wittgenstein’s (1963) use theory revealed that *ako* or learning is a precondition for *’ilo* or knowledge and understanding. The beneficial use of *’ilo* is *poto*, the basic idea of Tongan education and the Tongan notion of the educated person. Although *poto* had been reconceptualized in modern times to include the product of formal education, its meaning continues to reflect utilitarian outcomes. Hence, the passing of examinations, considered by many to be the main purpose of school learning, is associated with the belief that success in school would mean moving further either to

the next level or to a job with the ultimate goal of being more useful or better able to meet one's obligations to family and community.

In Tonga, *kakala* is a generic term given to all fragrant plants and parts thereof, such as flowers, leaves, and bark, that have mythical origins. In the context of Tongan culture, *kakala* have been socialized and ranked just as people are ranked. When strung together or woven into garlands, the end products are themselves ranked. The different ways of making a *kakala* together with the patterns used have been standardized and have remained generally unchanged over many centuries. There exists a full and sophisticated vocabulary as well as an elaborate etiquette associated with different *kakala*, not only in Tonga but also in most Pacific cultures. Today, because of modernization, the materials needed for making a *kakala* have changed, from fragrant flowers to plastic ornaments, sweets, and even money. Perhaps this is the new sustainability?

The relevance of the *kakala* metaphor for research may best be understood with reference to the three main processes associated with it, namely *toli*, *tui*, and *luva*. *Toli* refers to the gathering or collection of the materials needed for making a *kakala*. They include mainly flowers, leaves, and stems. This process can be demanding as it requires knowledge of where to go for the best materials as well as knowledge of and skill in picking and storing the flowers in order to ensure that their fragrance and freshness are long-lasting. Several people may be involved in *toli* depending on the complexity of the exercise or the difficulty of obtaining the appropriate materials.

The second process, *tui* is the actual making of a *kakala* and is usually carried out by persons who are skilled and experienced in the making of different *kakala*. The type of occasion for which a *kakala* is to be presented or the person for whom a *kakala* is intended are important considerations in the nature and complexity of the *kakala* being made. For example, there are sacred or mythical flowers that are regarded as chiefly flowers or *kakala* 'eiki, such as *heilala* and *langakali* that are usually arranged on the top layers of a *kakala*, while the more common or lowly flowers, such as *frangipani* and other more recently introduced flowers, are placed underneath to provide support. Finally, the context as well as the prevailing season are also important because these would influence the type of *kakala* materials that are easily available for making the desired *kakala*.

The last process is *luva*, literally meaning to "give away" a *kakala* to someone else who may then pass it on to another person, since all *kakala* must be shared and not kept to oneself. In Polynesian traditions, in general and in Tongan traditions in particular, *kakala* has an added significance as a symbol of 'ofa (love) and *faka'apa'apa* (respect). These values must underlie all teaching and research acts if they are to be beneficial. Finally, symbolized in *kakala* is a combination of elements from the natural, social, and spiritual dimensions of culture, together with the celebration and recognition of a selection of the best of a culture the transmission of which must not be left to chance but entrusted to creative, skilled, and compassionate people. In 2005, after a critical analysis of the *Kakala* framework by two Tongan scholars, two additional dimensions were identified and added to the three steps: *teu* or preparation before the first stage, *tui*; and a final stage, *malie/mafana* as evaluation and assessment. These new dimensions were assumed within the original framework but it is now made more overt (Johansson-Fua, 2014).

APPLYING KAKALA TO SD RESEARCH IN TONGA

Kakala was used in the design and reporting of the Sustainable Livelihood and Education Project (SLEP) in Tonga in 2005/06. Tongan methods of data gathering were used, namely *nofo* (to stay) and *talanoa* (meaningful conversations in the Tongan language). The research participants were from 80 households selected from eight villages; five development groups; 20 individuals who had come out of hardships; 40 teachers; and 350 school students. The researchers were 40 teacher trainees from the national teachers' college and some curriculum staff from the Ministry of Education. As noted earlier, the main research related to what Tongans regard as SD, being *mo'ui fakapotopoto* (learning to live sustainably in the context of Tongan culture). The term itself reflects the inter-relationship between the notion of *poto* (wisdom) and *mo'ui* (life/living). The study also identified important knowledge, skills, and values needed to be taught/learnt in order for Tongan people to attain sustainable livelihoods (Johansson-Fua, 2006).

In her report of SLEP, Johansson-Fua (2006) suggests several lessons that can be learnt from SLEP. They include:

- Ease of conceptualization—people were familiar with *kakala*—the real thing as well as the metaphor.
- The research purpose was clear.
- The project required involvement of people as *participants* rather than subjects of research.
- The data gathered generally concurred with what is regarded as Tonga's existing knowledge system.
- The participants were transformed; the teacher trainees who were the main research assistants came to see research as something they could do and not confined to university graduates.
- The research products provided an authentic contribution to Global Knowledge (on ESD).
- There were multiple beneficiaries, for example., Ministry of Education personnel, curriculum planners; teacher educators; teacher trainees; and, of course, other researchers.

Despite the usefulness of PR, several challenges remain. Here are some that many of us continue to face:

- Lack of overt institutional support (continuing dependence on foreigners for intellectual and financial assistance).
- Epistemological silencing continues.
- Continued marginalization of indigenous knowledge creation, indigenous scholars, and researchers in the Academy.
- Constant need to justify, evaluate, and adapt representation of indigenous processes and methodologies to current issues/concerns.
- Shortage of mentors, teachers, and risk takers.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to argue for a different way in which to address issues of development in general and sustainable development in particular by better understanding how Pacific people, especially indigenous people, conceptualize, learn and research SD. Furthermore, I suggest that we may need to use more Pacific-centered research frameworks and methodologies if our findings are to be more useful and relevant to the communities for and in which we work. It is my hope that those who work in our island communities, where the majority of the populations are indigenous to those islands, would more seriously try and see SD from the perspectives of the people themselves rather than from those of the international community or those who fund SD projects. In shifting our gaze towards the people whose livelihoods we are interested in, rather than focusing on the requirements of our benefactors or disciplines, we may find that the information we are seeking is already there—within the cultures and the people themselves, whether they are related to ways of learning, or mitigating against climate change, or judging quality education. For some of us, such a shift may amount to taking risks in an age where strategic plans, KPIs, quality assurance and other types of global concerns dominate much of the discourse in the various institutions and organizations in which we work, often devoid of the voices and perceptions of the very people we are supposed to help or teach. I suggest that taking risks should be our core business, for now anyway, if we are serious about SD in islands, big or small.

Sunscreen (*Thaman, 1999*)

*Every day
Do something that scares you
He said
Take risks
But don't forget to wear your sunscreen*

*So I took my laptop
And deleted my past
Saving only the part
threatened to digest
the dreams that dared
to frighten a frail
and divided heart*

*and in my attempt
to re-create the moment
i found several scars
left by unknown people
i have loved in my mind
and wondered*

*what judgements
or inconvenience
i would cause if caught
trying to escape
from the fear
of getting burnt
basking in a slice of sun*

Malo 'aupito

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