

Contextualizing Tonga inclusive special education in a global inclusive education policy

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This article examines inclusive education in Tonga by seeking to explore Tongan cultural strengths through the four golden pillars—Fāa'i Kavei Koula—that underpin Tongan culture and values, and their potential influence on the development of an effective Tongan inclusive special education policy and practice. Conflicting models that inform how those with special educational needs have been perceived in Tonga are discussed. In addition, the article addresses how education for individuals with special needs has evolved globally from special education to inclusive education, and now to the newer concept of inclusive special education. This evolution is relevant for the way it has shaped policy in Tonga, illustrating the influence of global thinking on Tongan special needs educational provision.

Keywords: Inclusive education; Special education; Inclusive Special Education

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education (IE) in the Pacific Island nation of the Kingdom of Tonga is a new concept within the formal education system (Kaufusi, 2009). The first IE policy was developed in 2007 and, since then, Tonga has been taking small steps towards that inclusivity and understanding what IE calls for. However, as with the global situation (Tavola & Whippy, 2010), in developing countries such as Tonga, people with special needs¹ (SN) are disproportionately represented among those who are excluded from education (Armstrong et al., 2011; Kaufusi, 2009).

In recent visits to Tonga for data collection for my PhD research on the policy and practice of inclusive special education (ISE) in Tonga, I had the opportunity to visit some of the hard-working support facilities available for people with SN. My investigations suggested limited general provisions, limited specific resources, and the need for more trained teachers in IE. McDonald and Tufue-Dolgoy (2013) argue that barriers that hinder an effective implementation of IE are the lack of resources and inadequate teacher training. But what was also evident from my experience and through the literature is the strong Western influence on the education system in Tonga, including for SN provision, and the impact this has on how IE is perceived and implemented. As Armstrong et al. (2011) state, IE has been viewed as a post-colonial agenda in developing countries such as Pacific Island nations.

¹ Special needs is defined here as an individual who has been identified as needing special attention, and who may require alternative education approaches to meet their learning needs and allow them to develop their own capacity to learn (Kagan, 2021).

This conceptual paper reviews the existing literature regarding the development of IE internationally and in Tonga to demonstrate the current influence of Western frameworks on Tongan Government IE policy, and the lack of documented evidence as to what culturally appropriate and effective IE might be in Tonga. This article also provides initial reflections on the potential of culturally embedded local practices, such as the *'ulungaanga fakatonga*, which includes the four golden pillars—*Fāa'i Kavei Koula*—that underpin Tongan culture and values. These culturally embedded practices are explored to identify their potential influence on the development of effective Tongan ISE policy guidelines. I also draw on my own experiences in order to develop a potential conceptual framework for IE grounded in Tongan Indigenous knowledge/values as the basis for future research.

I begin by providing a review of the evolution of frameworks for the education of people with SN internationally to demonstrate how ideas and approaches have evolved over time. This is done in order to understand how the education of people with SN in Tonga came to be as it is, it is helpful to pay attention to the development of thought and practice about SN more globally; global developments have had an impact on the Tongan situation through mechanisms such as policy formulation, allocation of aid, and so on. The evolving discussion of SN in global discourse may have had a fracturing effect on SN provision in Tonga. Within this review, I also make particular reference to the evolution of IE within the developing island nations of the Pacific region.

I then turn to the specific case of Tonga, exploring the current status of IE and the relationship between local practices and the influence of international frameworks on the development of IE in Tonga. I then outline areas for future research.

EVOLUTION OF THE EDUCATION OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In exploring the evolution of approaches to the education of people with SN globally, an understanding of how people with SN have been perceived and its influence on their education is important. These next few sections look at the three main models of SN, the medical model, religious model, and social model, and how these models have shaped the way people with SN are perceived globally. This is followed by a discussion of the evolution of the types of education for people with SN from special education (SE) to IE, to the newer concept of ISE.

Throughout history, people with SN have been perceived mainly through medical and religious lenses. The medical model is concerned with the relationship between the person and their special need in which a person's SN is placed at the forefront and is perceived as the main cause of their inability to access services and participate fully in society (Kaplan, 2000). Therefore, the medical model is a deficit model that claims the "fault" lies within the individual with SN. The religious model is associated with superstition and curses (Leaupepe, 2015); it views SN as a form of punishment from God or an external force for past indiscretions or sin. In some cases, this has resulted in families feeling ashamed and hiding away their family member with a disability, keeping them out of school and excluding them from society (Kaitani & McMurray, 2006).

An alternative model with which to view people with SN is the social model (Jenson, 2018). Unlike the medical model, the social model places less focus on a person's special needs and looks at society and external factors as the primary source of barriers

preventing those with SN from fully participating in society, accessing work, and living independently.

Globally, there have been many years of advocacy for people with SN framed by the social model of SN. Many discussions have taken place regarding the rights of people with SN to education, from international organizations to parents and others who support and are concerned about the rights of people with SN (Dray, 2008; Price, 2009). However, although there has been advocacy and efforts to reach a state where people with SN can access quality education, there is still great difficulty in achieving this. This is due to barriers and obstacles such as ignorance, prejudice, and mistaken assumptions on the part of those without SN about what is needed to bring change into the system (Price, 2009; Williams 2013).

Special education

SE first evolved in the 19th Century, which was underpinned by the medical model. SE has historically referred to the delivery of education to people with SN separately from mainstream education, whether that be in separate schools or separate classes within mainstream school. The placement of students with SN in classes were based on their medical diagnosis (Jenson, 2018). In the 1900s, SE was defined based on physical, sensory, intellectual, and emotional difficulties (UNESCO, 1994). Over time, the concept was broadened to include all children who were unable to benefit from school (UNESCO, 1994). However, Farrell (2010) identified key critiques of SE, including: limitations in terms of the knowledge base of SE, the use of assessments such as the intelligence testing is problematic; there are negative effects with placing labels on children with SN; and there is a lack of empirical evidence to support its effectiveness.

Through SE, an individual's SN is perceived as tragic and undesirable, which consequently further excludes and oppresses them (Naraian & Schlessinger, 2017). Although SE gives access for people with SN to education, the programs that are offered take place in classrooms that are separated from other students. This is a form of isolation (Purdue, 2006). This notion is supported by Powell (2011) who states that segregation remains the overriding mode of SE support services, and that it has become synonymous with limitations and exclusion.

Inclusive education

The United Nations International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 laid the foundation for IE with its aim to bring about full participation of people with SN within their society (Hornby, 2014). Following this, the *Salamanca Statement* in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994) was a turning point in education for individuals with SN. The *Salamanca Statement* was informed by the principle of inclusion and called for the inclusion of all students with or without SN in mainstream schools. However, the question is: How effective and universal have these policies been in implementing their aims?

The development and shift from SE to IE was aimed at educating all students with SN via mainstream inclusive schooling. However, although the policy of IE supports full inclusion, Kauffman and Hallahan (2005) criticize IE as a misplaced ideology and that, in practice, students are sacrificed as they are placed into an education setting that may not be the right type of setting for them. This raises the issue of "main-dumping" (Hornby,

2014). “Main-dumping” is the process of placing students with SN in a learning setting without considering the quality of education provided and if the mainstream school is ready or willing to take a student with SN (Hornby, 2015; Lewis, 1995), and without considering whether it is the right learning environment for the student (Hornby, 2015). Therefore, although inclusion in mainstream education is necessary for inclusivity, it is not enough to ensure quality education for students with SN (Lewis, 1995). From personal experience, in the education of people with SN in Tonga, there is a strong presence of “main-dumping”. Many Tongans still believe that mainstream education is not a place for people with SN but rather all individuals with SN should be grouped into one learning space. These examples indicate the challenges of implementing a policy of IE in practice.

With these issues in mind, it is evident that, although there has, over time, been the development of an IE policy, there are still issues in the practice of IE and, especially, difficulties in meeting the needs of many students with SN (Hornby, 2012). It is clear that there is still confusion and uncertainty around the concept of IE in developed and developing countries alike (Hornby, 2012). The next section will discuss how these limitations of the IE framework have led to the development of ISE.

Inclusive special education

ISE differs from IE in the sense that it is not just rights-based but is also focused on what is right or most appropriate for the development of any individual with SN, therefore addressing the issue of IE’s main-dumping. ISE identifies the importance of considering not only the rights of the person with SN but also what is right for the person with SN; to consider whether the student is in a learning environment where they are receiving quality education that they are best able to learn there, and their needs are being met. Coinciding with this notion, Warnock (2010) states that each student’s learning needs are different and there are certain needs that are more effectively met in a mainstream classroom. However, others may require a SE setting, not only for those with severe SN but also for students whose SN prevent them from learning effectively in an environment of a large mainstream school (Hornby, 2014; Warnock, 2010).

This is where the notion of “inclusive special education” is valuable. ISE is a concept first used by Takala et al. (2009) in their study to describe the SE system in Finland. ISE in Finland is where 22% of students received part-time SE, while 8% were in full-time special classes (Takala et al., 2009). The concept of part-time SE is where 22% of students, depending on their level of ability, spend most of their time in mainstream and are in a SE class for a section of their day. Hornby’s (2014) work on ISE incorporates some key features of the ISE system in Finland from Takala et al.’s (2009) work. However, he proposes a new approach to the concept of ISE by focusing on providing education for all children with SN in both mainstream and special school classes. Hornby’s (2014) theory of ISE synthesizes the strengths of IE and SE to form a theory that is “right” and suitable for the learner with SN. ISE aims to provide the knowledge, skills, and attitudes people with SN need to have as much independence and success as possible after they leave school (Hornby, 2015).

As I will discuss in the remainder of this article, while the language of ISE is as new in Tonga as elsewhere, there are strong synergies with long-standing Tongan cultural practices, which presents a potentially powerful platform for the development of ISE in

Tonga. First, I will give a brief overview of the current status of IE policy and practice in the formal education system in Tonga.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE IN TONGA

The previous sections looked at IE policy and where it stands globally. This section explores how effective these global policies are when applied to non-Western countries, focusing specifically on Tonga as a developing country within the Pacific region. Education in Tonga, as in many of its Pacific neighbours, is culturally embedded in Indigenous knowledge. Traditionally, education was carried out through myths and legends, poetry, dance, and song, and rituals within their home or community (Thaman, 1995). The introduction of Western formal education created a shift to “accommodate the new European knowledge” (p. 726) as Thaman (1995) describes it. Traditional Tongan education is underpinned by Tongan cultural values such as “spiritual and supernatural; formal conformity; rank and authority; kinship and interpersonal relationships; *‘ofa* (compassion); and restrained behaviour” (Thaman, 1995, p. 726).

However, when it comes to IE in Tonga, there are challenges. According to Kaitani & McMurray (2006), individuals with SN were often seen through a religious lens and were perceived as a curse and a misfortune; abnormal, or a freak of nature and thus deemed unable to function in society and, as a result, were often forced into isolation (Dray, 2008; Williams, 2013). Within the Pacific and, most specifically, Tonga, SN or the commonly used term “disability” are concepts that are often associated with negative connotations such as stigma, discrimination, and isolation (Meredith, 2009). Being isolated meant that those with SN had very little to no involvement in their community, including formal education. Prior to the development of the IE policy in 2007, there was little to no provision made for the education of people with SN within the formal education system, and it was not until 2003 that the Tongan Government made an official policy to support the educational needs of individuals with SN (Tonga Ministry of Education [MoE], 2007).

According to Sharma et al. (2013), inclusion is largely considered a Western concept. While this is true, there are some issues in terms of its practice in developing, non-Western countries such as the island nations of the Pacific. The problem with the development of policies in the Pacific Island countries is that they are often “borrowed” (Tufue-Dolgoy, 2010). Borrowed policy is defined as the adoption of one country’s national policy and practice by another; the uncritical influence of ideas from elsewhere (Phillips & Ochs, 2003). Over the years, Pacific Island countries, including Tonga, have ratified various international human rights instruments such as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and global development frameworks such as the *Education for All* initiative and *Sustainable Development Goals*, which promote the need for individuals with SN to be educated within an IE approach.

IE is a complex term and can have various definitions (Millar & Morton, 2007) which often results in confusion as to its meaning in some countries. This is due to different understandings and conceptualizations of IE in various cultures (Tufue-Dolgoy, 2010). Meijer & Watkins (2016) note that the difficulty often occurs in the translation process of the term “inclusion” or “inclusive education” into another language at the policy stage, often because there is no direct translation. As a result, there is a minimization of the significance of IE, and a misinterpretation of it.

In Tonga, the *National IE Policy* (Tonga MoE, 2007) does not provide a locally contextualized definition for SN but rather draws on the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 2006) definition. Additionally, a degree of misconceptions and confusion of the terms SE and IE are evident in Tongan policy documents. For example, the concepts of IE and SE in the 2016 *Tonga Education IE Regulation* are used interchangeably despite them being defined as two separate concepts in the international literature. Interestingly, the *Tongan IE regulation* (Tonga MoE, 2016) defines IE as a “special education programme”, which appears to be a significant misconception of the term. The concept of inclusive is defined as “Inclusive education . . . for the purposes of these regulations refers to a special education programme” (Tonga MoE, 2016). Additionally, the Tongan IE policy does provide a definition of its interpretation of what IE is in a Tongan context, however, upon further analysis, this definition still heavily reflects a Western perspective of IE. Therefore, the understanding of SE and IE represented in the policy document in Tonga is blurred. Therefore, it would be beneficial for Tonga to develop a clear definition of IE that is not only suitable for Tongan culture and context but is also able to capture the essence of what IE is or could be for Tonga.

IE in Tonga remains an area of research that is greatly neglected, and little is known about how effective the policies are in practice, suggesting that further empirical research should be carried concerning their implementation and effectiveness.

BARRIERS TO IE IN TONGA

One of the barriers to IE in the Pacific is the lack of support and funding from the government. Some have criticized the government in Pacific countries for not doing enough to support IE, and for not making it a national priority (Tufue-Dolgoy, 2010). Puamau (2009) notes that the main source of support, drive, and advocacy for SN education in the Pacific is from non-government organizations, parents, and community groups rather than from the government. This is the case in Tonga. In Tonga, there are very few government-provided facilities and support systems available for people with SN, with the main source of support being from non-government organizations such as the Tonga Red Cross ‘Ofa Tui ‘Amanaki Centre, the Alonga Centre, and Mango Tree Centre. These organizations provide support such as primary level education, recreation, and promoting socialization. For example, the ‘Ofa Tui ‘Amanaki Centre is a national special needs centre that was established in 1976 by the late Majesty King Taufa‘āhau Tupou IV. Its mission is to provide a quality learning environment where children are nurtured to become good citizens who are healthy, happy, and responsible. These organizations rely mainly on funding from international donors, matched with a small contribution from the government (Kaitani & McMurray, 2006).

Another challenge for IE in Tonga is the lack of trained IE teachers and resources, a situation replicated across much of the Pacific (Tavola & Whippy, 2010). Regionally, there is a lack of trained teachers, IE strategies and policies, specialist equipment, and accessible school environment. Miles et al. (2014) argue that although there is a clear and coherent regional strategy for the education of students with SN, there is still a wide gap in terms of a coherent and sustainable plan of action for the development of IE systems. In Tonga, the 2018 *Tonga Disability Survey* questioned individuals with SN about what resources or support schools could provide to help them complete their education (Tonga Statistics Department, 2018). The majority of respondents stated that transportation

services were needed, as well as having a personal computer, extra personal assistance and, for those who were blind, an audio book for their notes.

The reasons for a lack of trained and well supported IE teachers in Tonga are likely to be complex. Studies have found that there is a disconnect between the interpretations of policy makers and educators and the practice of IE in the Pacific (Forlin et al., 2015). Similarly, Tufue-Dolgoy (2010) found that in Samoa, rather than creating inclusive environments, a policy of IE appeared to have created another type of exclusion where there was a contradiction between the beliefs of stakeholders of IE and their practice. Tufue-Dolgoy found that these stakeholders, particularly teachers, were inclusive in their mindset, however their practice in the classroom was exclusive and grounded in the medical model. Armstrong et al. (2021) suggest that a solution to the issue of the lack of trained IE teachers in the Pacific is through in-service and pre-service teacher education programmes with “strong elements of IE. These must be aligned to quality supervision and mentoring to ensure that the intervention is sustainable and positive teaching cultures are developed and maintained” (p. 3). The authors also noted the value of carrying out awareness programmes or workshops within the community to help prepare schools for the inclusion of students with SN. However, as mentioned earlier, Armstrong et al. (2021) also noted that there are challenges with the accessibility for students with physical needs in schools, as well as access to educational opportunities and resources.

An issue highlighted by Armstrong et al. (2021) is the strong influence of Western ideologies and culture and the conflict between colonial and traditional knowledge and concepts. They claim that the notion of “human rights” is a Western idea and can be problematic when imported into non-Western countries. Armstrong et al. (2021) argue that the notion of human rights implies a separation between self and others, which contradicts Pacific cultures’ emphasis on whole of life inter-relationship. As noted earlier, one of the challenges is the complexity of the term “inclusive education” and the need to revise, reinterpret the concept of IE, and the broader concepts of the rights of people with SN to fit within the context of the country it is being implemented in (Miles et al., 2014). In a Tongan context, Taumoefolau (2019) notes that there is no Tongan word for “rights” as in “to have rights”. Although the Tongan language has adopted the words *totonu* – rights, and *totonu ‘a e tangata*—the rights of humans, these are literal translations of English expressions that are embedded in the experiences of a new cosmopolitan elite distinct from traditional rural Tongan human rights, cultural rights or roles of Pacific peoples (Taumoefolau, 2019). Armstrong et al. (2021) emphasize that the Pacific is not a homogenous space, and its people are not a homogeneous group. The Pacific has many different countries with different cultures, languages, and experiences and, therefore, there cannot be one universal approach to educating and improving outcomes for Pacific learners. There needs to be a flexibility in terms of education programs, curriculum, policy, teacher practice, in order to cater to the range of SN. This again suggests the value of Tonga developing a local definition of IE.

DEVELOPING ISE IN A TONGAN CONTEXT

Current IE policy in Tonga is heavily influenced by Western perspectives and ideologies; but how can Tonga shift from a Westernised, borrowed IE policy, into an ISE system that is informed and perceived through a Tongan lens? What would an ISE policy in a Tongan context look like? In this section, I outline a possible framework for beginning to answer

these questions that positions Tongan cultural values as an underpinning for a Tongan ISE policy.

There are five components that play a valuable role in the way Tongan people interact as a society. These components are the *'ulungaanga fakatonga* (Tongan culture) and values; family; their *fatongia* (the social and hierarchical relationship and obligations people have to one another); their Christian faith; and education. The *'ulungaanga fakatonga* is underpinned by four core values that is known as the *Fāa 'i Kavei Koula* or the four golden pillars. This structure was first introduced by the Late Queen Salote Tupou III in 1964 (Fehoko, 2014). She emphasized that these four values underpin the reciprocal relationship between the nobility and the people of the *fonua* (land) (Tongan Working Group, 2012). The four core values are *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *loto tō* (humility), *tauhi vā* (maintaining good relations with others) and, *mamahi 'i me'a* (loyalty or fidelity).

The pillars that uphold Tongan values, culture, and society can be further explained. *'Ulungaanga fakatonga* encompasses value, beliefs, and practices that are regarded as elements of the Tongan culture and tradition (Alliance Community Initiatives Trust [ACIT], 2018;). Taumoefolau (2013) stated that *faka'apa'apa* (respect) is the core value of the hierarchical organization of the Tongan society because it underpins every action and behaviour. *Faka'apa'apa* is described as a social construct that all Tongans aspire and adhere to in various contexts (Taufe'ulungaki et al., 2007). *Faka'apa'apa* is expressed through one's actions and behaviour, including how they present themselves. Fehoko (2014) also states that *faka'apa'apa* involves a shared understanding of a relational social contract between peoples and communities.

Pacific people are deeply relational, and their identity is defined from the collective (Armstrong et al., 2021). For Tonga, Thaman (2008) notes that the underpinning value for Tongan social interaction is *vā*. *Tauhi vā* is described as one's ability to keep and maintain good relationships with others. Thaman (2008) highlights the importance of *vā* and that the maintenance of *vā* is not only relational but also contextual. Having the ability to *tauhi* the *vā* "requires knowledge of the social context and networks between people that maintain good relationships" (Armstrong et al., 2021, p. 8).

Looking at the concept of *vā* in a Tongan context, Armstrong et al. (2021) suggest that conversation around inclusivity should be framed from a relational perspective (centring connection to people) in accordance with the context (time and place/land). In order for an inclusive framework for educational development to be constructed, Armstrong et al. (2021) suggests that further research is needed. There is also a need to understand and engage with culture and experiences from a Pacific perspective, in this case, a Tongan context. Research to produce insights into how individuals with SN are perceived by the community, church, family, and parents, as well as what their aspirations are for these individuals with SN would have value. According to Armstrong et al. (2021) the experience and engagement of context is essential for providing evidence from schools, classrooms, and the community on how to indicate what future practice might be developed.

Throughout this paper the importance of developing a policy that is both flexible and culturally appropriate to the context has been evident. In Tonga, IE is the current system used for framing education for people with SN, but what would an ISE system and policy look like if contextualized for a Tongan context? In developing an ISE policy in Tonga that is culturally appropriate, I suggest that there would need to be an incorporation of the

Tongan culture through the values of *faka'apa'apa* and *tauhi vā*, used as a lens in the development of an ISE approach. As mentioned, the concept of *tauhi vā* is both relational and contextual and in the context of ISE in Tonga. The practice of *tauhi vā* and *faka'apa'apa* can be drawn on to guide relational practice among education stakeholders. This would be beneficial for shifting perception from the common religious and medical lenses to a social, inclusive lens. The practice of *tauhi vā* and *faka'apa'apa* would also develop and strengthen the *vā* between students with SN and those within the education system. To reiterate, Hornby (2012) suggested that policy makers in developing countries need to be clear on how they define IE. In the context of Tonga, as a developing country, using *faka'apa'apa* together with *tauhi vā* as a lens would allow policy makers to establish a definition of ISE that would reflect Tongan understandings.

THE PROMISE OF ISE FOR TONGA

In concluding this article, I would like to present some suggestions for a weaving together of Tongan cultural values and ISE philosophy as a basis for further exploration and research. I contend that the development and practice of a culturally appropriate ISE in a Tongan context has the potential to address the issue of “main-dumping” and provide a learning environment that will meet the learning needs of students with SN. Through a modified ISE suitable for a Tongan context, a combination of both a part-time SE and part-time mainstream education might be provided for students with SN. Additionally, the incorporation of Tongan values and culture with ISE will create an ISE policy that is culturally appropriate and suitable for Tongan individuals with SN.

To develop an outline of what the application of an ISE approach that is underpinned by the *Fāa'i Kavei Koula* would look like, we would have to weave together the philosophies of ISE and Tongan culture and values. *Faka'apa'apa*, *loto tō* and *tauhi vā* are essential values that need to be reflected in the practice of teachers within the classroom, as well as by other stakeholders within the IE system. Applying *faka'apa'apa*, *loto tō* in ISE would mean, rather than being policy driven, educators and Ministry officials would need to listen and respect the voices of people with SN and their families. This would be reflected in listening to their voices through an inclusive social model lens, where their SN is not so much in the forefront, but rather placing more focus on the dignity of the individual with SN, and listening with respect, love, and humility. ISE through *faka'apa'apa* and *loto tō* would also mean applying people with SN and their families' voices in ISE policy and in how ISE is practiced.

Studies have highlighted collaboration and partnership as a key policy concept (Sharma et al., 2017; Williams, 2013). In ISE, this involves the collaboration and partnership among stakeholders within the education system: Ministry officials, policy makers and educators. It also involves the need for collaboration between education stakeholders and the individual with SN and their families. *Faka'apa'apa*, *loto tō* and *tauhi vā* go hand in hand because in order to *tauhi* the *vā* (maintain good relationships), they would need to have *faka'apa'apa* and *loto tō* (respect and humility).

My previous Master's research (Koloto, 2017) highlighted the importance of creating an environment that is accepting and inclusive, and the positive impact that has on Tongan families with a member with SN. Such an environment enables a positive and trusting relationship not only between the educators and the families, but also between the educators and their students with SN (Koloto, 2017). Concurring with this, parents expect

a learning environment that is supportive, and where teachers are skilful at developing and maintaining good relationships with them (Mauigoa-Tekene et al., 2013). This is where the values of *faka'apa'apa* and *loto tō* come in; Tongan teachers need to be knowledgeable and skilled in practicing these values and how they apply it, to *tauhi* the *vā*, as well as how they perceive and interact with their students with SN.

Mamahi'i me'a is the value of having loyalty or fidelity towards something. For an ISE policy and system to work effectively in Tonga, Ministry officials, policy makers and educators would need to have fidelity towards people with SN in their schools; and be passionate towards the area of ISE. Foregrounding this value would enable educators and Ministry officials to see the potential of ISE and the need for people with SN in Tonga to have good, quality education through ISE. In addition to these four core values, an underlying value that ties them together is *'ofa* (love). *'Ofa* is the source from which the *Fāa'i Kavei Koula* stems. Without *'ofa* there would be no *faka'apa'apa*, *tauhi vā*, *loto tō* and *mamahi'i me'a*.

CONCLUSION

This article has reviewed literature on the development of education for individuals with SN internationally and in Tonga to illustrate the influence of global thinking on IE in Tonga. This article has sought to serve Tongan people with SN and their families. It has attempted to do that by reviewing the cultural strengths of Tongan people. These strengths are the four golden values—*Fāa'i Kavei Koula*, which deserve more focus because they already underpin much of life in the Kingdom and may help us identify and better use of the resources that are available. A key value of the Tongan cultural perception is to clarify the unbalanced mindset of Tongans and confusion that is due to the ongoing development of international relationships and the influence of changing policy and definitional matters. With a clearer understanding of Tongan cultural strengths and values, a more culturally appropriate version of ISE can be developed.

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