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Special Issue Editorial: The Festival of OCIES 2020

Rebecca Spratt
Australian Catholic University, Australia,
rebecca.spratt@myacu.edu.au

Aizuddin Anuar
University of Oxford, United Kingdom,
aizuddin.mohamedanuar@education.ox.ac.uk

Joel Windle
University of South Australia, Australia and Fluminese Federal University, Brazil,
joel.windle@unisa.edu.au

Alexandra McCormick
The University of Sydney, Australia,
alexandra.mccormick@sydney.edu.au

We acknowledge the indigenous peoples and custodians of the lands on which we are each located. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

CELEBRATING AND CULTIVATING COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION

As has been often said, 2020 was a year marked by the 'unprecedented' events and experiences brought about by the global Covid-19 pandemic, which continues to mark our public and private lives in various ways. While the pandemic has had a 'global' reach, 'local' experiences have been very different, perhaps no more so than in the relational space of Oceania from where we, and the authors in this Special Issue, write. For the Oceania Comparative and International Education Society (OCIES) - the official sponsor of this journal - 2020 presented new challenges to sustaining connections across our regional society, but also new opportunities. For the first time in the Society's 37 year history, we were unable to hold our usual annual conference face to face. Instead, we held an online conference entitled the *Festival of OCIES*. As with other initiatives undertaken by OCIES during these 'unprecedented' times (see, for example, Sanga, Reynolds, Ormond & Southon, 2021), we sought to embrace the new opportunities offered by being unable to travel and gather together physically, while also responding to the challenges of the year with a call for celebration. Organised by a small geographically dispersed team of volunteers, the Festival was deliberately created as a space to recognise, celebrate and affirm the rich diversity of our OCIES community. We take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Rhonda Di Biase, Maggie Flavell, and Carmel Mesiti for their time and energy in convening the conference, as well as the wider group of OCIES members who contributed their time and support in planning the event and facilitating sessions, including our New and Emerging Researcher Fono team, David Fa'avae, Sonia Fonua, Tepora Afamasaga-Wright and Ben Levy. Particular efforts were made to craft

the Festival as an inclusive and supportive online space, with participation free to all, dedicated sessions for New and Emerging Researchers, the use of Pacific indigenous collaborative discussion formats such as *talanoa* and *tok stori,* a journal workshop for reviewers, and social sessions.

This special issue of the *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives* (IEJ:CP) is an outcome of the Festival. It continues the spirit of collaboration, reciprocity, mentorship and generosity that flows through the Festival, and which underpins IEJ:CP and our OCIES community more broadly. Our editorial team involved two 'first-timers' to the journal editing process and emerging researchers, Rebecca and Aizuddin, assisted and mentored through the process by Alex as IEJ:CP Senior Editor and Joel as a member of the IEJ:CP Editorial Board. This collaborative mentorship arrangement reflects the active efforts of the IEJ:CP Editorial team to nurture the next generation of Comparative and International Education (CIE) scholars, as well as a commitment to building community through scholarship. As Aizuddin reflects on below, it also formed part of the Partnering Engagement Program established by IEJ:CP in 2020 in which he and Joel participated. This commitment to actively creating opportunities for emerging researchers was also enacted through the submissions and review process. Two of the six contributions were from emerging researchers and particular efforts were made to ensure the review process was constructive and affirming. Furthermore, two of the reviewers were first timers, assisted by the Special Issue editorial team and/or senior colleagues in undertaking the review process. These are times in which many of us within academia are experiencing heightened pressures to be more productive, more competitive and more 'impactful' in environments of less care, less community, and ultimately less meaning. We believe this makes even more important, and valued, the opportunities being created by IEJ:CP, and OCIES more broadly, to engage in collaborative processes of care, generosity and reciprocity as exemplified in the Festival and this Special Issue.

REFLECTIONS ON THE IEJ:CP PARTNERING ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Aizuddin Anuar

As part of the mentoring initiative for this journal, the Partnering Engagement Program, I had the opportunity to work closely with one of the Editorial Board Members, Dr. Joel Windle. As a PhD student, I was interested to gain experience co-editing a special issue in order to learn more about the nuts and bolts of this process. The opportunity to be involved in editing this issue was a great learning experience. This process began with selecting reviewers for the article that Joel and I co-edited. We had to familiarise ourselves with the substantive content of the article in order to identify potential reviewers. I learned that the "fit" of the reviewers in terms of expertise, and their willingness and capacity to engage thoroughly and thoughtfully with the author's work is so crucial. Familiarity with the topic, a wide academic network and a certain degree of chance and goodwill is involved in this stage. When the stars align, excellent reviews are not only fruitful for the author to advance their work, but also a learning opportunity for the editor who also reads the article. Behind the scenes, I encountered an exemplary review that was remarkably thorough—reflecting deep knowledge of the topic at hand—and kindly encouraging. There was a shared commitment here to realising the potential in the article and in the author. To me, this reflected the academic ideal of collegiality and a dedication to nurturing emerging scholars.

As an emerging scholar submitting articles to academic journals, the experience of co-editing an article in this issue—of being on the other side—opens my eyes to the meticulous, painstaking tasks that are required in the production process. Being involved as editors and reviewers takes a significant amount of (free) time in midst of other pressing (and paid) responsibilities. Quite plainly: it takes a lot of time; it takes a lot of hands; it takes a lot of patience. I am grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Joel, Dr. Alexandra McCormick and Rebecca Spratt, the reviewers and also the article author, Dr. Bonita Marie Cabiles. I have learned tremendously from our encounters. Having gone through this experience, I am certainly better able to appreciate that a lot of work (behind the scenes) happens in moments that an author may perceive as frustrating lulls and delays in the academic publishing process. Such work is undertaken carefully and rigorously. At times it may be thankless work amidst the increasingly frenetic pace of academia. But the end product, such as this Special Issue, is a *special* celebration for all involved when it is finally out in the world.

SUMMARY OF SPECIAL ISSUE CONTRIBUTIONS

The five articles and the creative content piece in this Special Issue draw on presentations given during the 2020 Festival of OCIES online conference. In our first article in this Special Issue, Fikuree, Shiyama, Muna, Naseer and Mohamed focus on a small island developing state (SIDS) context in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on their field research carried out with school principals, teachers, students, and parents in the Maldives, they engage with the challenges to providing education in this Indian Ocean nation, and the disproportionately negative consequences of lockdowns for students' learning. The authors consider how learners and schools coped with rapid changes to online schooling, underscoring achievements, but also how the pandemic has contributed to widening disparities between schools in urban and rural contexts. Fikuree and colleagues call for SIDS governments to prepare contingency plans for emergencies, whereby education can be managed in socially just and equitable ways.

In the second article, Cabiles expands the possibilities of pedagogy of discomfort by considering how teachers' moment-to-moment classroom encounters with students in a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) setting may shed light on the affective dimensions of their habitus. Utilising three episodes of teachers' discomfort in a superdiverse primary school, she demonstrates how such discomforts diminish the embrace of CALD encounters as moments for learning. Thus by encouraging the productive use of discomfort as a pedagogical resource both in the classroom and in teacher education, Cabiles gestures to the possibility of one's habitus being transformed through the confrontation—and embrace—of such affect.

Koloto's contribution critiques the often superficial and problematic ways in which Western inclusive education policy frameworks have been exported. She offers a useful way out of this dilemma in the context of Tonga by identifying local cultural values that could be used to reframe and give greater meaning through forms of inclusive education that are based on existing notions of solidarity, respect and dignity. The work of re-signifying inclusive special education is an important move that Koloto shows can make policies more culturally appropriate and engage communities for whom current approaches have limited purchase.

Continuing a concern for problematising the ubiquity of Western concepts, Sanga, Johansson-Fua, Reynolds, Fa'avae, Robyns and Jim's contribution offers a re-storying of the academic practice of literature review. Drawing on their vibrant *tok stori* session on leadership held during the Festival, the authors demonstrate the value of considering "oral literature" alongside written forms within a review process. Weaving together written and oral literature, the authors accomplish an insightful analysis of both the process of literature review and understandings of education leadership across the Pacific region.

Remaining in the Pacific, Dorovolomo and Rafiq share insights from their qualitative comparison of two collaborative programs – 'Read like a Demon' and 'Read like a Champion' - that engaged sports role models in the promotion of literacy in Melbourne, Australia and Suva, Fiji. In the outcomes of their study, they identify four key areas relating to literacy development among school children in the programs studied: creativity and innovation; contextualised, situated practice; society-based partnerships; and the involvement of role models.

Our Creative Arts contribution to this issue is a film from Hawai'i entitled He Waʻa He Moku He Moku He Waʻa. Co-produced in partnership with the Polynesian Voyaging Society, The Nature Conservancy and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and World Heritage Site, the film provides an engaging exploration of traditional wa'a (canoe) values and how these can be applied to our contemporary lives. In his commentary, Co-Producer Limitaco, discusses the pedagogical power of the film and shares examples of its use within school and University level activities.

Together the contributions to this Special Issue are indicative of the diversity of scholarship of the OCIES community. They also share a concern for the role of education in fostering caring, inclusive, collaborative, and sustainable worlds. We hope you enjoy reading this Special Issue as much as we enjoyed, and learnt from, the collaborative process of bringing it together.

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Challenges to education during the COVID-19 pandemic: A SIDS perspective with special reference to the situation in the Maldives

Waseema Fikuree
The Maldives National University, Maldives: *waseema.fikuree@mnu.edu.mv*

Aminath Shiyama
The Maldives National University, Maldives: *aminath.shiyama@mnu.edu.mv*

Aminath Muna
Education in Small States Research Group, University of Bristol, UK: *munasattar@gmail.com*

Badhoora Naseer
The University of Auckland, NZ: *bnas279@aucklanduni.ac.nz*

Zahra Mohamed
The University of Waikato, NZ: *zahra.mohamed9907@gmail.com*

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in 2019 in China, countries worldwide have been grappling with the numerous challenges required of them to protect their citizens and respond to the consequences of multiple lockdowns on the global economy and their education systems. The devastating socio-economic impact is apparent worldwide, but Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been identified as some of the most vulnerable contexts. In this paper, we build on the international literature and discourse on SIDS, giving special consideration to the context of the Maldives. We highlight the challenges to providing education in this Indian Ocean nation and the disproportionately negative impact of lockdown conditions on students' learning. In the light of original field research carried out with school principals, teachers, students, and parents, we identify and discuss how learners and schools coped with a rapid change to online schooling. In doing so, we highlight what has been achieved and how the pandemic has contributed to the widening disparity between urban and rural schools. Our findings point to the importance of SIDS governments having contingency plans in place to manage education in socially just and equitable ways during emergencies.

Keywords: Maldives; education; remote learning; social justice in education; COVID-19; small island developing states

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Research on small states and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) often highlights the developmental and educational challenges they face. Such studies have been led and supported by the Commonwealth, whose membership comprises 32 small states out of its total constituency of 54 member states. Since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the UN has recognised 58 SIDS and territories worldwide and identified them as a distinct group (UN, 1992). SIDS are especially vulnerable to global economic and environmental disasters due to their smallness, remoteness, and limitations of land area, populations, and resources. These features have attracted much official development aid for SIDS; however, external agencies often ignore the distinctive nature of the developmental challenges faced in such contexts (Baldacchino & Bray, 2001; Crossley, 2010). When internationally inspired initiatives do not translate well to the local context, there is a tendency for real needs to be marginalized and for existing national disparities to widen. As such, it is essential to pay attention to the “idiosyncrasies associated with smallness” (Baldacchino, 2012, p. 16) and to the need for greater contextual sensitivity (Crossley & Sprague, 2012; Crossley & Louisy, 2019) in progressing development within these countries.

In this paper, we build on the literature and discourse on small states, especially the SIDS, giving special consideration to the context of the Maldives. We particularly explore how the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded and the associated challenges to the education sector in the Maldives. We identify and discuss how the learners and schools coped with the change to online learning, highlighting the widening disparity between urban and rural schools in the country. This paper also explores possible future directions for the education system in the Maldives, advocating for the importance of considering contextual sensitivities in determining educational priorities, especially in planning for emergencies for SIDS such as the Maldives. Such consideration is critical for a socially just and equitable approach to education.

Small island developing states

The SIDS were recognised as a unique group and one with distinctive environmental and development challenges at the Earth Summit of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. There are different definitions of small states and SIDS in the literature. These definitions focus on various aspects, such as smallness in population size, geographical remoteness and dispersion, increased fragility and vulnerability to economic and exogenous shocks such as natural disasters and climate change (Atchoaréna et al., 2008; Asian Development Bank, 2015). SIDS are diverse in nature, being found in three main regions of the world: the Caribbean; the Pacific; and the Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea. Nevertheless, they face common developmental challenges that require special support from the global and international community (Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, 2011). As such, many SIDS are economically dependent on foreign capital, mainly through tourism, foreign aid, and commodity exports. All economies experience external and internal shocks, but their impact is felt much more in lower-income SIDS (Asian Development Bank, 2015). That is not to say that SIDS have failed to demonstrate their strengths and resilience in the face of their unique developmental challenges and collectively raised their voices at a global level. For example, the Prime Minister of Barbados, Honourable

Mia Amor Mottley, has pointed to SIDS as the most sensitive to dysfunction in the international order (Ewing-Chow, 2020).

In researching the context of the Maldives, Di Biase (2016) points out that there are opportunities created through the smallness of SIDS that tends to unite the citizens through a "particularistic culture" where strong social bonds and relationships play a significant role in day-to-day life (Didi, 2015; Soobratty, 2016). However, for most SIDS, advances in technology have not fully resolved the problem of distance from major markets, which isolates their economies from potential trading partners. Remoteness is also a disadvantage in relation to domestic connectivity due to high transport costs and limited access to international and domestic markets (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

Small island states and the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented disruption to the global economy. Most small states depend heavily on tourism and remittances. Any economic shock is magnified in small states because of their narrow domestic markets, which rely heavily on international trade for growth (UNCTAD, 2020). Similarly, these countries face a higher debt burden than most developing countries (World Bank, 2021a). Real GDP in many small states was forecasted to contract as a result of the pandemic by double digits compared to an overall 5.2% worldwide, with countries reliant on tourism predicted to suffer the most profound declines (World Bank, 2021a). Economic contraction comes with high social costs, particularly in job losses. For example, the estimated GDP loss ranged from 4% in Trinidad and Tobago, 20.3% in Barbados, 26% in the Bahamas (Kallo et al., 2020), to 28% in the Maldives (World Bank, 2021a). In the Maldives, approximately 22,000 local payroll employees of resorts were affected directly due to COVID-19 resort closures (*The Edition*, 2020).

In order to manage these economic losses, the necessity to plan for an uncertain future is apparent in the context of COVID-19. The reality is that if the lockdown measures had not been taken, the consequences of the pandemic could have been more devastating for many SIDS than the economic losses they suffered given their limited health infrastructure and resources. Thus, most small states have, arguably, proven their resilience by imposing strict isolation strategies and offering quarantine facilities, followed by cancellation of flights and closure of borders to their tourism industries. Further, the measures that many small states have taken demonstrate significant contextual sensitivity in their response to the pandemic. For example, the Caribbean pooled its resources as a collaborative regional response and implemented a series of measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their social and economic sectors (Morgan, 2020). However, in the absence of such a regional small state collaboration, the Maldives had acted alone in its response to the pandemic, following the playbook of other developed neighbours and political allies. While reporting fewer cases of their own, almost all SIDS took similar precautionary measures in closing down all schools following the onset of the pandemic.

Most countries shifted "overnight" to various forms of distance or remote learning mechanisms to ensure continuity of learning during the first lockdown. Remote learning occurs when students and teachers are not physically present in a traditional classroom environment. In such cases, teachers adopt online or e-learning where various forms of internet-based learning environments and digital technologies are used to conduct asynchronous or synchronous lessons. Unlike remote learning, distance learning does not require students to attend any synchronous lessons but, rather, uses asynchronous

mechanisms and/or reliance on content delivered by broadcasted lessons on TV or printed materials delivered in the mail. Not all countries had the infrastructure for remote learning methods of online schooling, especially in remote locations. For example, in a study about access to remote learning among Nigerian students during the pandemic, Azubuike et al. (2021) found that disadvantaged populations had limited access to electricity and technology infrastructure. Some SIDS, including the Maldives, used broadcasting media of state television and radio and remote learning methods of online schooling via the learning management system provided by Google Workspace as a means to continue schooling during the pandemic.

However, this magnitude of change in schooling modalities was unexpected and has brought disruption in education systems across the globe (OECD, 2020). Most SIDS had to develop contingency plans to attend to the situation (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021). These countries also adopted various approaches to remote learning and achieved various outcomes, as demonstrated by recently published studies. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, where the population is characterized by multi-ethnic and multicultural class stratifications, and where equity and quality of education have been a constant challenge, the shift to online teaching and learning increased disparities (Kalloo, et al., 2020). Kalloo, et al (2020) stated that approximately 20% of the total school population between 3 and 18 years old did not have the necessary hardware or social support to access online education. According to Peimani and Kamalipour (2021), the rapid changes to online education also affected teachers because the digitization of school pedagogy left many with limited professional support. Along similar lines, a study by Dayal and Tiko (2020) on SIDS in the Pacific revealed that while many teachers were flexible and open to adjusting their teaching materials to online learning, they were emotionally distraught with concerns about their students and their own personal and professional well-being. These examples demonstrate that the impact of the pandemic on the education system in most SIDS has been devastating.

However, there is some hope that help will be provided through actions such as those taken by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres in May 2020, in which he called on governments and donors to prioritize education for all children, including the most vulnerable. As a result of his call, a Global Education Coalition was established to support governments to strengthen distance and remote learning and facilitate the reopening of schools (UNESCO, 2020). In such attempts to re-establish education systems and strategies across the world, the focus has to be on building socially just communities (UNESCO, 2021).

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on social justice and education in SIDS

The COVID-19 pandemic is deepening the inequities in education systems worldwide, magnifying issues of social justice in communities and exposing the severity of their impact on students' learning (Hernández et al., 2021). Social justice here refers to "participation and representation of all people and especially those who belong to more vulnerable groups" (Hernández et al., 2021, p. 3). As Fraser (2008) identifies, the institutional and systemic barriers that affect social justice are: redistribution, recognition and participation. According to Tikly and Barrett (2011), such a conceptualization of social justice provides a way of thinking about the quality of

education rooted in individual freedoms and the role of education for fostering capabilities that move beyond simplistic human capital and rights approaches.

As already noted above, the lockdown conditions and school closures exacerbate already-existing disparities worldwide (Stiglitz, 2020). Inequities include access to resources and the availability of learning opportunities and infrastructure. According to UNESCO (2021), due to the pandemic, more than 1.6 billion children and youth were not able to attend school for months, and many were not even back in school once lockdown was lifted. Such disruptions in schooling mostly impacted children from low-income countries such as SIDS.

In particular, the pandemic has been a painful experience for SIDS, such as the Maldives, because it has magnified the digital divide across the dispersed and marginalized communities (Shareef et al., 2010). The OECD defines the digital divide as "the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the internet for a wide variety of activities" (OECD, 2008, p. 139). Pandemic-related changes in schooling modality have increased this digital divide, as the need for ICT-related resources became more prominent than before. Limited access to ICT resources and skills, and the capacity of parents to assume the role of teachers at short notice further disadvantaged the already vulnerable communities (López et al., 2021). These conditions created further issues of social injustice in relation to education across many countries.

COVID-19 and the impact on the Maldives education system

The Republic of the Maldives is a SID nation located off the southern tip of India. The Maldives is a geographically dispersed clusters of 26 atolls comprising 1,192 islands, of which 187 are inhabited, and 115 are tourist resorts. The country's population of 491,589 residents is unevenly distributed, with approximately one-third of the population residing in the capital, Malé (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The Maldives was classified as a low-and-middle-income category in 2011 and, in 2021, moved to an upper-middle-income country (Asian Development Bank, 2015; World Bank, 2021b). Less than 2% of the Maldives population live below US$1.25 per day, which is a similar number to the poverty level found in Jamaica and the Seychelles. Nevertheless, the challenge to ensure that the fruits of economic development are spread to all income groups, especially Maldivians living on the outer atolls, continues. The government continues to seek solutions to address the inequalities between Malé and other atolls. One such initiative was the implementation of a targeted policy called *Population and Development Consolidation* to address the disparity in access to infrastructure, social services and employment opportunities. However, the success of such efforts depends heavily on the policies and capacity of government and on the sustainability of the country's economic performance.

In the Maldives, the majority of schools are public, with community and private schools being in the minority (Di Biase, 2019). Enrolments at schools vary from 50 students to more than 2,000 students, with most high enrolment schools located in Malé (Ministry of Education, 2019). Allocation of government resources to schools depends mainly on

student enrolment numbers. Some funds, though limited in nature, are raised by the community (Fikuree, 2020).

Over 91,000 students in the Maldives were affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 because schools across the country were closed for three months (Ministry of Education, 2020). To ensure continued learning, the government decided to conduct classes via televised lessons (*Telikilass*) and Google Classroom (UNICEF, 2021). Schools gradually opened from July 2020, adopting a blended approach to teaching and learning in which students attended school for four hours for in-person learning while continuing their online classes, though primary schools in Malé continued online classes until the end of 2020 (UNICEF, 2021). Table 1 shows the timeline of these events.

Table 1: Timeline of events in the Maldives during the first wave of Covid-19

Month	Events
February 2020	07/02 First confirmed positive case of Covid-19 in the country
March 2020	12/03 Declared State of Public Health Emergency in the country (SPHE) 14/03 Activities of universities, colleges and other academic institutions suspended 15/03 Telikilass for secondary grades (9 to 12) initiated 16/03 Ministry of Education (MoE) in collaboration with the Maldives Police Service launched a handbook for parents on cyber security 17/03 A nationwide shutdown on all activities except essential services. 21/03 Mandatory quarantine for 14 days for all passengers entering the country. 24/03 AS Level examinations scheduled for May/June postponed to Oct/Nov. 27/03 The Bank of Maldives introduced a student loan moratorium for 6 months from March 2020
April 2020	01/04 School-based training to use Google Workspace for teaching initiated 2000 teachers gained Google Certification with financial support from the UNICEF 02/04 MoE teamed up with Cambridge University Press to facilitate access to e-books 07/04 'Fila' portal established to access MoE digital content 15/04 Telikilasses paused The first case of community transmission confirmed in the capital Malé 21/04 MoE's Department of Inclusive Education issued guidelines to support SEN students' learning 29/04 MoE announced the postponement of local-school-exit examinations, Cambridge GCE and IGCSE O Level examinations
May 2020	20/05 Maldives Education Response Plan (ERP) formulated
June 2020	15/06 Telikilass for all grades resumed Schooling via Google Classroom and Google Meet started
July – December 2020	School curriculum adapted to cater to the ongoing changes in learning modalities Face-to-face classes resumed on 1st July for grades 9 and10 Face-to-face classes for other grades started gradually As cases resurged, in-person classes changed to online classes Telikilass continued during this time

The shift in school modality increased usage of mobile telephones and access to the internet and social media platforms. The fortuitous distribution of Android tablets to more than 80% of the students at public schools in 2018 potentially enabled the continuation of schooling during the pandemic (Sosale et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the distribution was not combined with sufficient teacher support around the pedagogic praxis for use of the Android tablets. As a result, the potential for learning using such devices had not been explored by the time COVID-19 affected the country.

Consequently, the transition to online teaching was difficult for teachers. With support from UNICEF, teachers were provided with training in the use of Google Workspace for online teaching, with Google Classroom being the online platform recommended for remote learning by the Ministry of Education (MoE). The training was provided to 42.5% of primary and secondary teachers in government schools from July to November 2020, resulting in teachers gaining Google Certified Educator status (UNICEF, 2021). This training supported the continuation of learning for over 54,218 students. As part of the government's immediate action to tackle the ongoing crisis, an Education Response Plan (ERP) was also formulated early in March 2020, identifying the impact on education arising from the pandemic. In addition to controlling the spread of the virus, the ERP focused on enabling the continuation of schooling and developing a response plan to mitigate learning loss and identifying ways to support the most vulnerable and least accessible populations. The response plan aimed at determining the impact on all students, including those with Special Education Needs (SEN), teachers (local and expatriate) and the education system at large (Ministry of Education, 2020). As with other SIDS, the Maldives has always relied on assistance and support from regional, subregional, and international donors. As such, the ERP also assisted in applying for donor aid to overcome short-term and long-term learning loss caused by the twin shocks of school closure and economic recession due to COVID-19, which could have severe long-term costs to the education and development of the Maldives (Ministry of Education, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This article comprises four sub-studies, each examining one of the stakeholder perspectives regarding the change to the online medium of schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The stakeholders who participated in the four studies were principals, teachers, students, and parents in the Maldivian schools. Cross-sectional surveys were conducted for secondary school teachers, Key Stage 3-5 students, and parents of Key Stage 1-2 using Google Forms to collect data. The study involving the principals of island schools was a qualitative study that used an open-ended questionnaire and follow-up interviews. All three surveys included closed and open-ended questions, and the participants were from across the country. All the teachers (secondary grades), parents (primary grades), and students (secondary and higher-secondary grades) were invited to complete the respective survey form. From those invited, 702 teachers, 7,568 students, and 2,905 parents completed the survey, which is a response rate of 19.2%, 38%, and 11.3% respectively. The study included seven principals, who were purposefully selected from a diverse range of geographical and population size schools and regions in the Maldives. The selected schools had enrolment numbers ranging from 200 to 1,500. All the studies focused on the challenges

in online learning faced by the stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 2 summarises the four studies.

The data from the four studies were analysed simultaneously, generating quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2012). While quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS 24), qualitative data were analysed using NVivo and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Merging the qualitative and quantitative data enhanced the mapping of the overarching themes.

Table 2: Snapshot of the design of the four studies

Study participant and sample size (percentage response from each population category)	Instrument	Data analysis method and tool used
Students (38%)	Google survey	Statistical analysis using SPSS and thematic analysis using NVivo
Teachers (19.2%)	Google survey	Statistical analysis using SPSS
Parents (11.3%)	Google survey	Statistical analysis using EXCEL pivot tables
Principals (from seven schools across the Maldives)	An open-ended questionnaire with follow-up interviews	Thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2013)

FINDINGS

In this findings section, we discuss the challenges different stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, and principals) in the Maldives faced with the sudden shift to remote and online learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Preparedness

Results from the parent survey showed that most parents believed there was an overall lack of preparation for the online medium of schooling. Of the parents, 61% believed that the schools were not prepared, 53.8% thought that the government was not prepared, and 58.8% of parents believed that they were themselves unprepared. Further, 60.9% of the parents noted that it took them a week to a month to prepare themselves and their children for online schooling. However, an alarming 6.1% of parents said that even six months into the change to online schooling, their children were still unable to join online classes due to various issues, such as limited internet connectivity or non-availability of devices.

The analysis of teachers' level of preparedness from the teachers' survey showed that there were disparities in the amount of training teachers at different Key Stages received for online teaching. For example, percentages of teachers who received some form of

preparatory professional development for online teaching were as follows: Key Stage 3 (grades 7 and 8), 81.1%; Key Stage 4 (grades 9 and 10), 76.8%; and Key Stage 5 (grades 11 and 12), 54.2%. Interestingly, 80% of teachers reported that online training was made mandatory for them by the school and MoE.

Learning and resources

An inability to access the internet was one of the barriers to online teaching and learning. The survey data reveals that 11% of students could not participate in online lessons because they did not have access to the internet. Another barrier to online learning was that 6.9% of students did not have their own devices, such as tablets, and 17.8% of students had difficulty using the device. Access to devices and the internet varied across the regions. Table 3 shows the disparity of available resources in the regions. The data was further explored for significant difference in the availability of these resources. A chi-square test revealed significant differences in the availability of these resources in the different regions, with the capital city, Malé, having more access to both internet and devices than the other regions.

Table 3: Student access to internet and devices by region from student data

Region	Access to internet		Access to device (either own or MoE provided)	
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Malé	4.8%	95.2%	4%	96%
North	19.8%	80.2%	7.8%	92.2%
Central	13.0%	87.0%	8.2%	91.8%
South	14.5%	85.5%	7.3%	92.7%

Further, the principals study showed limited learner engagement in online classes, which led to decreased motivation for learning. The parent survey revealed that 67.5% of the parents received the 5GB of data provided by the MoE for their children. However, over half of the parents noted that the data was not enough, or the internet speed was too slow for online schooling; 50.46% of parents in the survey said their children used the tablets provided by the MoE and 15.49% of students used mobile phones to access online education. Only 33% of parents reported that they were able to provide their children with a private space in their house. Further, 57.8% of parents thought the amount of schoolwork given was just about right, 54.8% expressed the view that their children were submitting all of their schoolwork. The biggest challenge reported was slow internet connectivity, which affected the availability of resources for online teaching.

Of the teachers surveyed, 27.4% reported they had limited study space in their homes, 75.1% of the teachers used their own devices, and the remainder used borrowed devices (23.1% borrowed from schools; 1.8% borrowed from elsewhere). Further, 38.7% of the teachers reported that online teaching accrued an additional financial cost.

Figure 1 is a word cloud generator illustrating the frequency with which the concern was expressed. For instance, out of 6,720 students who responded to the question on

difficulties they faced during online classes, 34% raised internet connectivity, and 11% mentioned slow wi-fi, among other challenges.

Figure 1: Word cloud-generated graphic showing issues encountered by students during online classes

Technology and teacher training

Concerning the usefulness of the training that teachers received to support their online teaching, 54.4% of the teachers believed that the training they received was informative and 55.9% of the teachers reported that the training sessions were easy to understand. Nearly all the surveyed teachers agreed that these training sessions were relevant in a practical sense for their online teaching preparation. However, 6.4% of teachers reported that the training was too technical and confusing, and 51.2% reported that they had less than a week to prepare for online teaching. Conversely, teachers' agency in their learning was visible in the survey analysis because most teachers reported that they taught themselves how to teach online, and their high level of familiarity together with the online platform's user-friendliness enabled such learning.

Coping

Issues of mental well-being and stress are inevitable during a prolonged pandemic such as the COVID-19 pandemic. From the parent survey, 50.1% reported that they struggled to cope with the changes and support their children's online classes. A similar number of parents (52.1%) felt overwhelmed (stressed and confused) attempting to balance their work and personal life while also raising their children. Sixty-two percent of parents worried that their children's emotional and behavioural problems had increased. The parents' concerns seemed valid as most of the students also reported that they had experienced mixed emotions when online learning began, including being confused and stressed.

DISCUSSION

The findings from these studies highlight several challenges that the Maldivian school education system is facing due to the changes in schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges are discussed in the next section.

Widening of existing disparities

An alarming theme common across all the sub-studies is the evidence of disparities in preparedness for online schooling between regions. Some schools and regions, such as those in the capital city, Malé, were better prepared because of their existing resources. Existing disadvantages experienced by the outer islands were further exacerbated when the government required all schools to close schools, even on islands without any reported cases, because of uncertainties associated with the pandemic. In effect, in its decision-making, the government failed to recognise contextual disparities among groups, a necessity especially on education-related matters (Crossley, 2010). Contextual sensitivities would have paid attention to local-island circumstances, enabling recognition and participation in decision making – both being critical components of social justice (Fraser, 2008).

The disparity in the availability of resources between the capital Malé and the outer islands is an existing challenge to the provision of quality education across the country (Asian Development Bank, 2015; Fikuree, 2020). The disparities were also evident in all four studies, with all participants noting that the unequal distribution of school resources among islands was a major challenge. In particular, the principal study revealed that some schools did not have basic facilities, such as a library, access to wi-fi, or a computer room. This lack of availability of basic facilities may have hindered students' learning in these marginalized schools and potentially widened already-existing inequities and disparities in the education system. According to Goede (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and magnified systemic vulnerabilities in many countries worldwide. Thus, to move towards a socially just approach in a post-pandemic world, it is imperative to consider the redistribution of educational resources for remote learning.

Expanding the digital divide

The four studies highlight that the digital divide between the capital city, Malé, and other atolls, as identified by Shareef et al. (2010), has also negatively impacted online schooling. It is evident from these studies that the availability of resources, such as internet facilities and digital devices, is unbalanced and asymmetrical, despite measures taken by the government to mitigate the situation. It was not feasible for the students to put on their video or take synchronised classes on some remote islands because of poor internet connections. Further, for both teachers and students, the limited availability of digital devices, together with limited ICT competency, compounded the negative impact of the online schooling experience. Similar findings have been reported by Kalloo et al. (2020), who found that when there are limited resources to support teaching and learning, the quality of education becomes compromised. The digital divide also poses challenges for parents, who are required to facilitate their children's online learning without training or support. Thus, in order to reduce the digital divide, the availability and accessibility of sound technology infrastructure in all schools, irrespective of their

size or geographical location becomes critical. Such a mechanism for redistributing resources paves the way for recognition and equitable participation in education (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

Adequacy of technology-based teacher education

The immediate response to the shift to online teaching was supported by the training of teachers in Google Workspace, which most teachers found useful and user-friendly. This aligns with the findings of Kakoulli-Constantinou (2018). Their acknowledgment of Google Workspace training as informative and relevant for online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic implies that the decision to use Google Workspace as the main platform for schooling was the most appropriate solution for the situation. This may be because teachers had already had some brief online training in Google Workspace in 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2020).

However, some teachers highlighted that the training was too technical and confusing, and thus negatively affected their preparedness for online teaching. Psteimani and Kamalipour (2021) reported similar findings from the Welsh experience where teachers' level of preparedness was limited, making them uncertain about how to implement online classes. Such findings suggest that one-off training may be insufficient and challenging, especially for teachers who are not tech-savvy. Hence, in addition to Google Workspace training, the teachers in the current study had to teach themselves and seek help from their more competent colleagues. This finding is consistent with that of Parsons et al. (2019), who stated that technology-based professional development needs to be continued over time to be effective. It also indicates the need for incorporating pedagogies for digital technologies in the provision of teacher professional learning and development. Hernández et al. (2021) argue that such pedagogically focused professional development can pave the way towards social change and equity.

The majority of participants in the teacher survey pointed out the lack of time available for online teaching preparation. Even though technology integration in school education started in the Maldives in 2017, professional development provided for the teachers nationwide was limited, making the pandemic-related online teaching a new experience for many. Despite the challenges to online schooling under lockdown measures and in the face of a looming pandemic, teachers in the Maldives were hopeful and optimistic about the new schooling model. Such positivity is also evident in that teachers sought professional support through their informal networks and through family support to develop their online teaching skills and resources. Such informal networks were facilitated by small, tight-knit communities that are common in and between the Maldivian islands (Di Biase, 2016; Didi, 2002). Further, as Di Biase (2016; 2019) points out, problems posed by geographical dispersion in the Maldives islands are often overcome through the heavy usage of mobile phones. This particularistic culture (Didi, 2002), where social bonds and family connections and networks play a critical role in various aspects of community life, is a unique feature in SIDS. The spread of positive attitudes among the citizens during the unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 can be attributed to this feature.

Limited focus on mental well-being

The significant changes in everyday life brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic led many people to report they experienced elevated levels of anxiety, depression and stress (Kelman et al., 2021). Parents who were forced to become teachers “overnight” were likely to be far more mentally stressed by the stay-at-home order, especially if also living in small, crowded spaces, such as those that exist in the capital city, Malé. Further, concerns felt by parents around their children’s learning and social development seemed to exacerbate their stress amidst the uncertainties associated with the global pandemic. Teachers also reported high levels of stress and concerns regarding their own well-being as well as that of their students. Similar sentiments concerning personal and professional life during the COVID-19 lockdown were expressed by early childhood teachers in some Pacific SIDS (Dayal & Tika, 2020).

For SIDS, environmental uncertainties and climate change affect health and well-being and act as a multiplier for stress affecting the health and livelihood of its people (Pan American Health Organisation, 2018). Also, in most SIDS, social stigmatization of mental ill-health is prevalent, and inadequate health systems limit support for mental health diagnoses and treatment (Kelman et al., 2021). Given the circumstances in SIDS, the increase in mental well-being issues due to the pandemic, if not attended to in the post-pandemic recovery approaches, could magnify social inequities in these communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study showed that the Maldives, like many other SIDS, face many challenges to future education due to factors highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of these challenges stem from the existing inequities in its systems, attributed to being a small state and which, due to the pandemic, have become more prominent than ever. The challenges include the availability of infrastructure and resources, training teachers, providing support for online learning and addressing the mental well-being of all stakeholders. The recommendations provided in this study may be helpful for other similar contexts seeking to work towards socially just and equitable provisions of education.

The most important recommendation is that schools provide blended (online and face-to-face) learning opportunities to ensure that teachers and students are prepared for unprecedented situations that do not allow students to physically attend schools. These measures are more significant for SIDS, such as the Maldives, because increasing student participation by minimizing existing disparities would open opportunities for redistributing teaching and learning resources. Thus, such mechanisms of social justice in any contingency plan for schooling are critical. Such planning will help to minimize learning loss and improve student retention because marginalized and vulnerable students could then learn online if they cannot attend school. Blended forms of schooling can also help to overcome geographical barriers that challenge the provision of quality education for many SIDS. Given the vulnerable situation SIDS are in, blended learning needs to be the norm in the post-pandemic era to ensure that schools are in an advantageous position to move to remote learning quickly and smoothly if need be. Further, stemming from the success of the use of *Telikilass* demonstrated through this study, it is imperative that such alternative mechanisms of schooling are

explored as a way to minimize existing disparities that limit students' participation in schooling.

We also recommend that the government ensure the availability and accessibility of sound technology infrastructure in all schools, irrespective of their size or geographical location. This includes establishing a feasible and sustainable mechanism for distributing technology devices for all teachers and students and equal and affordable internet access for all students for continuing online teaching and learning. The MoE needs to formulate an ICT policy to facilitate the schools' technology integration initiatives.

Finally, we suggest that teacher education institutions in the Maldives ensure that all teachers who complete initial teacher education programs have the technological and pedagogical knowledge to conduct effective lessons using digital technologies. Further, schools need to provide in-service teachers with ongoing professional learning and development opportunities focused on digital technologies in online teaching and learning. Schools also need to establish ways to explore and address the mental health and well-being of teachers, students and parents.

Pivotal to all these recommendations is the need for human solidarity and for establishing better communication mechanisms among all stakeholders. We need to harmonize all our efforts to provide education for future generations and use evidence-based planning in local and global policymaking while at the same time bringing principles of social justice to the centre of global conversations (Habib, 2021).

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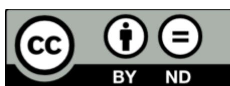

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Towards a pedagogy of discomfort in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms

Bonita Marie Cabiles
Melbourne University, Australia: *bonita.cabiles@unimelb.edu.au*

This article explores initial thinking about a pedagogy of discomfort for teaching in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity. To foster inclusive and socially just cultures of participation, contemporary classrooms need to attend to the subtle ways that taken-for-granted teaching practices marginalise diverse cultural and linguistic knowledge. I draw from three critical episodes of teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) classroom contexts to examine how educators' feelings of discomforts shape their responses to students' histories, cultural experiences and linguistic knowledge. Engaging with Bourdieu's notion of habitus, I illuminate how these emotions are historically and socially shaped. In bringing habitus into conversation with a pedagogy of discomfort, I further reveal how the affective, specifically feelings of discomfort, can contribute to a transformative habitus. Such understandings about affect and teaching practice suggest the need to consider a pedagogy of discomfort for teaching in CALD contexts. To do so, entails acknowledging the challenges and ethical considerations involved in mobilising such a pedagogy in classroom teaching and teacher education.

Keywords: cultural and linguistic diversity; pedagogy of discomfort; teachers' dispositions; habitus

INTRODUCTION

> If I were to rewrite the chapter, I would emphasize in more detail how and when an educator's own discomforts inhibit educational exchange with students, prevent the educator from taking risks, and eclipse the educator's very capacity to see, for example, his or her own attachments to particular outcomes. The cultural and social norms and myths that represent teachers as rational, neutral conveyors of information is so far off the mark, yet are as persistent as is the myth of neutral curricula. (Boler in Leibowitz, 2011, para. 6)

Recent literature highlights the potential of a pedagogy of discomfort as a key teaching and learning approach to promoting equity and social justice in the context of multi/intercultural education (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017). This introduction opens with a quote from a blog post entitled *Boler and Zembylas on a "Pedagogy of discomfort"* posted in 2011 (see Leibowitz, 2011). The blog, *Hopeful Pedagogies @ SU (Stellenbosch University)* afforded a candid opportunity for Boler and Zembylas to expand on their conceptualisation of a *pedagogy of discomfort* (see also Boler & Zembylas, 2003). Boler's (in Leibowitz, 2011) reflections, as quoted above, provide my entry point to engaging with a pedagogy of discomfort. This article is developed from

my presentation at the 2020 virtual conference organised by the Oceania Comparative and International Education Society (OCIES). Ongoing reflections on empirical data from my recent doctoral thesis led me to focus on the teachers' feelings of discomfort as they encounter their students' diverse experiences, knowledge, cultures and languages. Particularly, I speak about interactions which, quoting Boler (in Leibowitz, 2011), result in educators "inhibit[ing] education exchange with students, prevent[ing] the educator from taking risks, and eclips[ing] the educator's very capacity to see . . . his or her own attachments to particular outcomes" (para. 6). As such, I envision discomfort as emerging from encounters with the unfamiliar, the non-normative, or the "Other" in teaching and learning experiences.

In asserting the relevance of a pedagogy of discomfort in teaching practice, my contribution is framed by one Australian school setting characterised by an intensely diverse student cohort, culturally and linguistically. This feature is well-captured through the notions of "superdiversity" (Vertovec, 2007) or "hyperdiversity" (Noble, 2013). This context-specific inquiry emphasises the relevance of considering a pedagogy of discomfort in CALD educational contexts.

In the discussion that follows, I first offer an elaboration of the conceptual frameworks that I employ in this paper. These are Bourdieu's notion of habitus and the concept of pedagogy of discomfort. Following this, I provide an overview of the case study discussed in my doctoral thesis from which I draw critical moments or episodes. I then present the three critical moments to illuminate teachers' experiences of discomfort. The discussion that follows aims to build a case for a pedagogy of discomfort guided by the analysis of the empirical data. I conclude by highlighting my contributions to theorising a pedagogy of discomfort and its relationship to affective encounters and the "transformative" habitus.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Although research shows that teachers' practices can demonstrate racial biases and marginalisation of culturally and linguistically diverse knowledge and skills (see, e.g., Baak, 2019; de Plevitz, 2007; Hogarth, 2018; Rudolph, 2013), how teachers' dispositions are implicated in these practices remains ambiguous. With this as my starting point, I engage with Bourdieu's concept of habitus to demonstrate how the affective can orient teaching practices. I then bring this into conversation with the concept of pedagogy of discomfort.

Emotions and the habitus

The concept of habitus offers a generative lens for unpacking how the affective impacts on teachers' practices. Bourdieu (1990) defines habitus as:

> [S]ystems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can only be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (p. 53)

Habitus orients the ways teachers respond to the unfamiliar and the unpredictable. Mills (2008) refers to the habitus as the "unconscious habits or actions devoid of thinking that

conditions and orients practices by providing individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of their daily lives" (p. 80). Thus, the habitus operates at a subconscious level producing taken-for-granted or un(der)examined actions and practices. For teachers, the way their habitus operates is significant. This is because encounters with students are spontaneous and unpredictable, requiring teachers to "think on their feet". In the classroom, teachers occupy a position of power, legitimating the acceptable ways of being and knowing. Thus, how teachers interact with students sets the "rules of the game" (Bourdieu & Lamaison, 1986) or, more specifically, how students should participate in the classroom.

Bourdieu's habitus has been mobilised and conceptualised by various post-Bourdieusian scholars in different ways. Dianne Reay, in particular, offered a thoughtful and excellent elucidation and extension of the notion of habitus. As Reay (2004) discussed, habitus is both stable and evolving, as well as collective and diverse. One of the more promising illuminations of the habitus is an exploration of the affective aspects that shape individual dispositions. In Reay's (2015) exploration of this affective dimension, she drew on empirical data to demonstrate how emotions emanating from particular social spaces, or fields, become constituted into habitus. As an example, Reay explained:

> [T]he learning that comes through inhabiting pathologized spaces within the field often results in a predilection for shame, fear, anxiety or even righteous indignation, while the internalisation of social inequalities in the privileged can result in dispositions of superiority, entitlement, disdain but also a predilection for guilt, ambivalence, and discomfort. (p 12)

The quote above elucidates how emotions are sedimented in constituting the habitus. While the discussion mainly applies to the habitus's feature that is stable and durable, it can also be mobilised to the changing and transformative characterisation of habitus. Here, I refer to the discourse portraying the habitus as agentic, ever evolving, and capable of improvisation. Mills (2008), for instance, wrote about the notion of *transformative* habitus in the context of marginalised students' agency. The focus on the context of disadvantage enabled Mills to argue, echoing Reay (2004), that while there is choice in habitus, the choices can be constrained and limited. Such discourse illustrates that individuals' actions, although oriented by the habitus, is also limited or facilitated by the field or social context in which it operates.

Reflecting on the transformative potential of habitus (i.e., the ability of the habitus to change and evolve), what is left largely unexplained in the literature highlighted above is how the affective dimension can impact on the habitus' propensity for change. My own deliberations have led me to suggest that if emotions constitute the durable aspect of habitus, emotions must also play a role in the generative or transformative potential of the habitus. Afterall, Bourdieu (2000) wrote:

> [W]e are disposed because we are exposed. It is because the body is (to unequal degrees) exposed and endangered in the world, faced with the risk of emotion, lesion, suffering, sometimes death, and therefore obliged to take the world seriously (and nothing is more serious than emotion, which touches the depth of our organic being) that it is able to acquire dispositions that are themselves an openness to the world, that is, to the very structures of the world of which they are the incorporated form. (pp. 140–141)

The quote above captures how emotions open possibilities for the acquisition of dispositions. Bourdieu, as quoted, gestures towards conditions of possibility that may allow for change in dispositions through the workings of emotions. A pedagogy of discomfort can set such conditions for the habitus to change or transform.

The habitus transformed through a pedagogy of discomfort

Emotions stand at the centre of theorising a pedagogy of discomfort as gleaned from the works of Megan Boler and Michelinos Zembylas (see, e.g., Boler, 1999; Zembylas, 2018; Zembylas & Boler, 2003). Boler (1999), for instance, emphasised that a pedagogy of discomfort is a critical inquiry but that in engaging in critical inquiry, "a central focus is to recognize how emotions define how and what one chooses to see, and conversely, not to see" (p. 176). However, a pedagogy of discomfort is also a call to action stressing the need to act upon one's critical inquiry. Here Boler (1999) specifically noted the impact of emotional selectivity or the "increased sensitiveness and responsiveness . . . or an impaired capacity to attend to or think about certain things" (Garrison 1997 as quoted in Boler, 1999, p. 180). Emotional selectivity, as Boler (1999) defined, is learned and shaped by social, cultural and political agendas that can be transmitted through education. In a more recent literature, drawing from the initial works of Boler and Zembylas, Zembylas and Papamichael (2017) defined emotions as the central driving force behind a pedagogy of discomfort:

> Pedagogy of discomfort, then, has as its aim to uncover and question the deeply embedded emotional dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines and unconscious complicity with hegemony. (p. 3)

Mobilising a pedagogy of discomfort has been explored in the context of both student learning and teacher education. The emphasis for both students and educators is to consider teaching and learning experiences that "move outside of their comfort zones" (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012, p. 41). The potential for a pedagogy of discomfort has been examined in engaging with topics considered as "controversial", such as social injustices (see Porto & Zembylas, 2020; Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012) and patriotism in the aftermath of terrorism (see Zembylas & Boler, 2002). Substantive research has also examined the possibilities for a pedagogy of discomfort for those engaged in the teaching profession. For instance, Nolan and Molla (2018), writing about educators' professional development in Australia, offered a framework for a pedagogy of discomfort. Their framework attended to the educators' professional experiences, their dispositions and moments of "disjuncture . . . or the disharmony . . . or a mismatch between habitus and expectations of the field of practice" (p. 724). Nolan and Molla (2018) demonstrated how their theorisation of a pedagogy of discomfort could open possibilities to transform teacher dispositions which can then orient and guide teaching and learning practices.

Indeed, disjuncture between teachers' habitus and what takes place in the field of practice, such as a classroom, frequently occurs in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity. Engaging with discomforts is necessary to teach in inter/multicultural schooling contexts (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017). In coping with increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in schools, mobilising teachers' discomforts is found productive for challenging discrimination, oppression and racism. Zembylas (2010), in particular, advanced the notion of an ethic of discomfort, "one that emphasizes the proactive and transformative potential of discomfort" (p. 707). Yet, much of the exploration about

teachers' discomforts do not indicate the critical and spontaneous moments emerging from teaching students of CALD backgrounds. My contribution to this discourse, then, is to identify the ways that students' diverse cultures and languages elicit moments of disjuncture for teachers' dispositions. It is here that I begin to entertain the potential of a pedagogy of discomfort in CALD schooling contexts.

In what follows, I examine how different themes and topics of cultural and linguistic significance elicit teachers' discomforts. (Re)Engaging with the narratives and episodes from my doctoral thesis, I attend to the tensions arising between intention and practice by highlighting dispositions of teachers that led them to close down, silence, or ignore topics considered as inappropriate for classroom discussion. As explained in the next section, the superdiverse classroom context of my research offered fertile grounds to illuminate the potential for a pedagogy of discomfort in CALD classroom contexts.

THE CASE: A "SUPERDIVERSE" AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY CLASSROOM

To (re)assert ongoing consideration of a pedagogy of discomfort, I draw from episodes and narratives captured in my unpublished doctoral thesis (see Cabiles, 2020). In the thesis, these episodes were analysed to understand what it means for students to participate in a CALD schooling context. Re-purposing such data and some textual materials to explore the concept of a pedagogy of discomfort attests to the generative character of empirical research. Following Moskovitz's (2020) discussion of the "practice of text recycling", repetition of materials is often part of the process of contributing new knowledge to an established field or discipline (p. 370). Moskovitz refers to this as "developmental recycling" defined as "the reuse of materials from one's own unpublished document" (p. 375).

The empirical case was a composite primary 5/6 classroom (referred to as "Class 5/6k") in a school located in one of the most ethnically diverse suburbs of Melbourne, Australia. At the time of fieldwork, 82% of the school's student population had a linguistic background other than English. The cohort of 23 students in the class represented approximately 15 cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds. The 11 student participants who volunteered and consented to be part of the project came from the following cultural backgrounds: Arabic, Fijian, Russian, Malaysian, Samoan, Iranian, Afghani, Indian, Pakistani and Albanian. Their linguistic backgrounds corresponded to these cultural backgrounds and, in addition, included Punjabi, Urdu, Farsi and Hazaragi.

The cultural and linguistic diversity characteristic of the student cohort, however, was not reflected among the teachers who were mostly of Anglo-Australian cultural backgrounds. Out of the seven educators involved in Class 5/6k, only two came from diverse backgrounds, specifically, Greek and Dutch; the rest of the teachers came from English-only speaking backgrounds. This situation is common in societies where English is the dominant and privileged language (see, e.g, Burridge et al., 2009; Chodkiewicz & Burridge, 2014). Studies emphasise this disparity as a cause for concern because without adequate teacher education in CALD contexts, teachers often lack the competence and confidence to attend to cultural and linguistic diversity in the classrooms (McKenzie et al., 2014).

As foreshadowed in the title, this article builds a case for a pedagogy of discomfort for teaching in CALD classroom contexts. It does not offer a (re)conceptualisation of such

pedagogy. Rather, it seeks to assert and affirm why entertaining a pedagogy of discomfort is critical for teaching in multicultural settings. To do this, I draw from three episodes during my fieldwork reflective of the different ways that educators' feelings of discomforts resulted in practices that constrained the possibilities for critical and profound engagements with the diverse cultural and linguistic knowledge.

Feelings of discomfort towards religious beliefs

> Excerpt 1: Classroom teacher, Ms Wright, on Roya's references to God.
>
> Class teacher, Ms Wright, writes a question on the whiteboard: "Is the Earth a boy or a girl?" One of the students had asked this question, which, from where I was sitting, had been inaudible.
>
> Most of the students start to raise their hands to respond to the question. One of the students, Roya, had raised her hand. Roya states that the Earth is a girl because girls are brave and responsible. Ms Wright responds with, "I like that idea". About twenty minutes later, Roya again raises her hand and states that in her culture, when someone good dies, and it's summer, it will rain. Ms Wright then asks, "Who determines what's good?" Roya replies, "God". Ms Wright then remarks, "Not everyone believes in God, but I will let you talk about that, Roya".

The episode described above took place during an observed literacy class when the class teacher, Ms Wright, was delivering a lesson on writing a persuasive essay. After the whole class discussion, as students were accomplishing their individual tasks, Ms Wright was eager to have a chat about the episode highlighting the increased participation among the students. According to Ms Wright, this activity—and specifically the question raised by a student—afforded students the opportunity to draw from their beliefs and values. Ms Wright further explained during a follow-on informal interview about the activity:

> They were drawing from their beliefs [and] their family values on what they think. And you sort of know when it comes to boy-girl, earth, spirituality, that they're gonna come up with that sort of stuff, but I don't think it would lead down the God path, but I sorta, yeah it did.

The quote indicates Ms Wright's discomfort about her encounter with Roya's response during the class discussion became apparent. On the one hand, Ms Wright's statement seemingly permitting Roya to talk about God may be construed as Ms Wright's open disposition towards Roya's religious belief. On the other hand, a closer examination of the quote reveals Ms Wright's discomfort at pursuing Roya's thoughts and ideas about the topic. It may also be construed, from the informal interview, that Ms Wright's statement: "Not everyone believes in God, but I will let you talk about that" was a way of subtly closing down the conversation as an unwelcome development in the discussion.

Such discomfort evident from Ms Wright can be seen a consequence of the disparate culturally lived experiences between Ms Wright and Roya. Roya was born in Pakistan, and her parents are originally from Afghanistan. The family moved to Australia when Roya was eight. Roya, like a significant population in the school, follows the Muslim tradition. Apart from English, Roya speaks four other languages, including Farsi, Urdu, Hindi, and Hazaragi. Ms Wright, on the other hand, is of Anglo-Saxon background and only speaks English. She has been working in the school for nine years in different

roles. In our initial interview, Ms Wright expressed her commitment to teach in the CALD schooling context. However, in spontaneous encounters with the "Other" (or the embodiments of difference that depart from the dominant cultures), Ms Wright's reaction indicates that not all cultural beliefs and knowledge are welcome in her classroom.

Through Bourdieu's notion of habitus, Ms Wright's ambivalent reaction is illuminated as an unthinking or subconscious disposition. The habitus as orienting dispositions and actions is understood as a product of the individual's accumulated historical, social, and cultural experiences (Bourdieu, 1990; see also Jenkins, 1992; Mills 2008). As explained earlier, emotions or affective dimensions may constitute the habitus. Ms Wright's discomforts vis-à-vis Roya's ease at engaging with religious beliefs elucidate two different types of habitus formed through very different social and cultural trajectories. As such, the topic of religious beliefs elicited different forms of affect between the teacher and the student.

Although Ms Wright has taught and has been exposed to culturally diverse contexts for nearly a decade, her reaction continues to elicit discomfort towards experiences beyond her autobiography. Specifically, this episode shows how topics related to religious beliefs may be closed down rather than engaged with for generative discussions in the classroom. It is also highly probable that the constantly changing demographic of the community within which the school is located means that teachers in the school will continue to encounter ever-changing features of cultural diversity, including faith-based or religious diversity. However, the example narrated here foresees students' knowledge related to religion becoming potentially marginalised in mainstream classroom discourses. Constituting such disposition are teachers' feelings of discomfort towards religious beliefs.

Feelings of discomfort towards perceived traumatic experiences

> Excerpt 2: EAL specialists, Ms Kosta and Ms Thomas, on refugee experiences
>
> English-as-additional language (EAL) teachers, Ms Thomas and Ms Kosta introduced the film, "Ali and the Long Journey to Australia", which highlights the story of a refugee family migrating to Australia. At the end of the film, Ms Kosta discusses the film asking students if they have similar experiences. Ms Kosta calls Mateen, who had his hand raised. Mateen narrates his family's story traveling from Iran to Australia. He talks about the boat capsizing and the family being in the water for a few hours before being rescued and arriving at what he refers to as a "jail". Mateen further talked about finding "scary looking lizards" and the family's advantaged position owing to his father's ability to converse in English.

The episode above is from an EAL class captured during the school's observance of "Refugee Week". Mateen, one of the student participants, had previously shared this experience with me in an interview. Mateen had been described by many of his teachers as shy, quiet and unconfident. The teachers attributed these characteristics to perceived trauma arising mainly from the experience described above. Ms Thomas, for instance, one of the EAL teachers highlighted this when talking about Mateen's seeming lack of confidence. The teacher noted that, unlike his older sister, Mateen had not initiated discussions about his family's experiences of traveling to Australia. Ms Thomas further shared:

> That's trauma, and they've also come from a war-torn country. So, they've not only got that trauma. They've also got the trauma of war.

The quote above illustrates a deficit positioning of students and their lived experiences. Ms Thomas operates from an assumption that Mateen's seemingly passive participation in class is solely based on a lack of confidence and shyness, a result of traumatic experiences. Richard R Valencia (1997; 2010) refers to such positioning of students as "deficit perspectives" where "problems" of schooling are located solely on individuals (i.e., akin to a case of "blaming the victim") without engaging with the conditions of schooling that may facilitate or encourage what are deemed as "problematic" behaviours. As in the episode narrated above, instead of examining how teaching-and-learning practices constrained and facilitated the participation of students like Mateen, Ms Thomas attributed the problem to Mateen's personality and historical background. However, when presented with a topic that connected with Mateen's refugee experiences, Mateen was found highly participative in class. This affirmed extant research demonstrating the tendency for teachers to position students experiencing challenging circumstances in deficit light (e.g., Dutro & Bien, 2014). Consequently, teachers rarely position the students as empowered, having conquered challenges, and possessing knowledge emerging from their struggles. Zipin's (2009) study, for instance, discussing how "dark funds of knowledge" are mobilised in the classroom reveals that teachers' feelings of discomfort oriented teachers to avoid stories that reflected difficult or negative topics, such as violence and drug abuse, despite students' initiating the topic for discussion.

Employing the notion of habitus, Ms Thomas's assumptions about "trauma" and "students-at-risk" are structured by long-standing perceptions about individuals of refugee backgrounds. Habitus, as explained by Bourdieu (1990), are lasting systems of dispositions that are structured through a process of socialisation throughout an individual's history. Reay (2004) further explained that the habitus "regularly excludes certain practices, those that are unfamiliar to the cultural groupings to which the individual belongs" (p. 433). In this case, Mateen is an Iranian refugee who arrived in Australia with his family when he was seven and, since then, has been in transition from Christmas Island to Darwin to Adelaide, and then, to Melbourne. He speaks Farsi and English. Ms Thomas, on the other hand, is of Anglo-Saxon background and only speaks English. She has worked extensively with refugee students as an EAL teacher and is committed to assisting refugee students in their transition to Australian society. Ms Thomas' incomplete appreciation of Mateen's experiences reveals a habitus that remains distinct from that of Mateen. This is illuminated in their divergent emotional responses to perceived traumatic experiences. Ms Thomas appears to intuitively perceive Mateen's experience as a cause for discomfort—one that inhibits classroom participation. However, this historical episode in Mateen's past is one that he seems to live and narrate with ease as he did with me, an outsider to the school, during an interview and to his peers when an opportunity presented itself.

I want to emphasise, at this point, that I am not assuming that Mateen does not experience negative emotions out of his history and background. Rather, I want to demonstrate the incomplete or fractional judgement that Ms Thomas has about Mateen's experience. Ms Thomas has, as is often the case of how refugees are normally presented (see, e.g., Baak, 2019), only considered the unfavourable consequences of Mateen's experiences without presenting Mateen's strengths and capabilities. As such,

instead of building on Mateen's experiences and strengths, which was achieved incidentally during Refugee Week, Mateen had been simply labelled as unconfident and shy, an unfair deficit positioning of the student. Evidently, the assumed discomfort associated with traumatic experiences had led to a constrained engagement with the refugee experiences in the classroom.

Feelings of discomfort towards students' home languages

My final exploration of how discomforts shape teachers' pedagogical practices in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity emerges from teachers' discourses about students' home languages. During fieldwork, I became aware of an assumed English-only policy in the classroom as expressed during interviews with students. The school leaders affirmed that there was no official English-only policy in school and was surprised to learn about such practice. In interviewing teachers, their responses to encouraging this rule can be classified under two beliefs. The first relates to teachers' beliefs that students' home languages can interfere with English language acquisition. The second relates to teachers' discomforts, somehow stemming from a lack of trust, towards students' use of their home languages. I focus my discussion on the second reason expressed by the teachers.

During interviews, teachers' discomforts were communicated as they explained why an English-only policy was implemented in the classroom. As expressed by a couple of teachers:

> I don't know what you're discussing and people here with you don't know what you're talking about. And I said sometimes, you know what, you could be talking about us, and we wouldn't know. "Oh, but Miss, we're not". And I said, "I know you're probably not, but when you speak a different language, how do we know what you're saying? You could be being very rude or very nice. I don't know". I said, "I think out of respect for the other children and the adults, you don't speak your language. I would prefer you spoke English". I said, "When you go outside, recess and lunch, you can speak your language with your friends". I'm not worried about that, but in the classroom, I would like English because that is the one common language that binds us all." . . . I mean, I don't know what they're doing. No doubt they're just discussing something light-hearted, but I think it's just out of respect. (Ms Meyer, teacher aide, Dutch, Dutch/English)

> If they're sitting there talking in their own language, I'd never stop it. Unless if I thought though that they were using their own language for bad, like something bad. You can tell by their body language. You can tell by their faces, especially if they're like trying to (whispering gesture). If they're just openly talking, and they'll tell. They feel safe enough. They feel safe enough to say, "Hey, they're swearing in their language". The kids will tell. (Ms Wright, class teacher, Australian, English)

The educators' responses above illustrated teachers' discomforts towards students' use of their home languages. The teachers expressed concern that students use their home languages to speak unfavourably about peers or their teachers. This imposition of an English-only rule, despite the absence of an official policy, may be seen as a form of teacher surveillance of discussions taking place among students. The justification for an English-only policy implemented by the two educators appear to illustrate teachers' under-developed trust when encountering the "Other"—the "Other" meaning different linguistic skills and discursive abilities. Aligned with how habitus, as a thinking tool,

has been mobilised in the previous sections, teachers' dispositions towards home language, as revealed here, displays an uncomfortable response to the unfamiliar. Both teachers, Ms Wright and Ms Meyer, are of Anglo-Saxon background and both speak English, although Ms Meyer also speaks Dutch. Despite having worked in the school for 10 years, both continue to have limited and limiting engagements with students' linguistic resources. Their reactions of discomfort towards students' home languages revealed the durable system of disposition characteristic of the habitus.

In recent years, many concepts such as *translanguaging* (García & Lin, 2014; García & Wei, 2017) and linguistic funds of knowledge (e.g., Coleman, 2015) established the significant role of the use of students' first or home languages in learning and acquisition of a second language. Furthermore, literature has highlighted the ways that students' home languages are significant to the development of students' identity and building a sense of community (e.g., Cummins, 2017). However, teachers' discomforts, as discussed here, continue to constrain the possibilities for mobilising students' home languages as resources in the classroom.

THE PEDAGOGIC POSSIBILITIES OF DISCOMFORT FOR TEACHING IN CALD CLASSROOM CONTEXTS

Teaching in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity involves feelings of discomfort. The three above case studies highlighting teachers' encounters with students' cultural and linguistic knowledge reveal that discomfort powerfully shapes pedagogical practices in the classroom. As evident in the three critical episodes, teachers' discomforts consciously and sometimes unconsciously effectively closed down rather than opened up generative interactions and productive learning about diverse cultural and linguistic experiences. More specifically, discomforts towards religious beliefs, home languages, and perceived traumatic experiences led to the marginalisation of such forms of knowledge. Zipin (2009) refers to this as "boundary-policing", where teachers determine what are permitted within the walls of the classroom while rejecting those that incite feelings of discomfort.

Engaging with Bourdieu's notion of habitus, teachers' discomforts towards cultures and languages are illuminated as products of long-lasting systems of dispositions that orient actions. By highlighting discomforts as feelings articulated in teachers' responses in the three narratives, the affective dimension of the habitus is revealed. As explained by Reay (2015) (and as discussed earlier in the section, "Emotions and the habitus"), the affective dimension of the habitus is situated in the historical, social and cultural experiences of individuals. The disparate emotional responses between teachers and students to diverse cultural and linguistic resources illuminate how the affective, as constituting the habitus, is crafted by diverse historical, social, and cultural trajectories of the students and their teachers. Among the three episodes, this was more pronounced in the case of Mateen, a student of refugee background. While the EAL teacher assumed that Mateen was suffering from trauma, Mateen was observed comfortably speaking about his and his family's dangerous journey to Australia. Entertaining a pedagogy of discomfort in this scenario means teachers need to confront and engage with students' experiences they perceive as "traumatic" or difficult.

Feelings of discomfort, however, can be productively harnessed through pedagogic encounters. Drawing from the studies of Zipin (2009) and Dutro and Bien (2014), I

argue that topics related to religion and those perceived as traumatic can potentially generate productive classroom participation for students of CALD backgrounds. While others may argue that doing so might emulate or encourage unproductive habits, such as violence and drug-abuse, I offer a counter-narrative that is perhaps counter-intuitive; that is, diversifying the kinds of knowledge that are privileged as resources in the classroom can provide inclusive and equitable opportunities for the participation of students with diverse experiences and backgrounds. A good example here would be the narrative highlighted in the first critical case where a student of Muslim background, Roya, volunteered to open a discussion around faith-based knowledge. A pedagogy of discomfort entails pursuing other faith-based knowledge and young students' perspectives about this, including those that may disagree.

In a similar vein, the privileging and inclusion of students' home languages as a teaching-and-learning resource can harness an inclusive culture of participation while mobilising the pedagogic affordances of home languages. The *multilingual turn* has challenged the privileging of the English language in educational spaces (see Turner & Cross, 2016). Furthermore, concepts such as *translanguaging* (García & Lin, 2014; García & Wei, 2017) and *linguistic funds of knowledge* (e.g., Coleman, 2015) emphasise the role and value of students' home languages in students' successful participation in schooling. However, as evident in the third episode discussed earlier (i.e., *Feelings of discomfort towards students' home languages*), teachers were not utilising and perhaps less aware of such pedagogic innovations and possibilities. Thus, there is potential in teachers challenging their initial discomforts to create and imagine more inclusive spaces where diverse linguistic knowledge is attended to and validated as legitimate sources for knowledge creation.

A "pedagogy of discomfort" for teaching in the CALD context can deepen the experiences of students from diverse backgrounds. As discussed in existing literature, a pedagogy of discomfort affords spaces to unpack issues of power, injustice and oppression. Zembylas and Boler (2002), for instance, wrote about mobilising a pedagogy of discomfort in media literacy in higher education institutions. Their discussion of a pedagogy of discomfort emphasised the systematic "analysis of the emotional investments [students] experience in relationship to particular symbols" (para. 20). They argued that a pedagogy of discomfort moves beyond critical pedagogy by centring on the affect or emotions as a way for students to analyse "unquestioned values learned through popular history and the emotions associated with these values" (para. 23). In other higher education disciplines in Australia, a pedagogy of discomfort has been considered to unpack discourses in relation to First Nations cultures and knowledges (see, e.g., Mills & Creedy, 2019). Building on this classroom dimension of a pedagogy of discomfort, I argue for its applicability in critically engaging with the experiences of students in relation to religion, linguistic diversity, and refugee experiences, among others. In societies, such as Australia, that are becoming increasingly and intensely diverse, a pedagogy of discomfort has the potential for generative discourses. However, as Zembylas (2015) emphasised, a pedagogy of discomfort requires thoughtful and serious ethical discussions. As such, while I advocate for a pedagogy of discomfort, how it can be practiced in classrooms requires robust research and continuous intellectual deliberations in different societies and contexts.

To entertain a pedagogy of discomfort in teaching CALD classroom contexts, one must also consider a pedagogy of discomfort in teacher education. Zembylas and Papamichael (2017) argued for pedagogically combining discomfort and empathy in “anti-racist and multicultural teacher education” (p. 1). Their study highlighted that, in practice, the dual implementation of pedagogies of discomfort and empathy offers possibilities for “safe spaces” for student-teachers’ participation. Extending the arguments of Zembylas and Papamichael, I propose a pedagogy of discomfort that encourages teachers to examine their emotional attachments in relation to cultures and languages that are different from their own. As empirical data from my research revealed there is a need to examine the taken-for-granted schooling practices and historical bases of education and allow teachers to understand how their autobiographies are shaped by these influences. Teachers, as suggested in the episodes, were coming from a place of concern and positive intentions for their students. Thus, a pedagogy of discomfort also needs to attend to entrenched assumptions about what is “good” education in the context of cultural and linguistic diversity.

A pedagogy of discomfort offers a transformative potential for teachers to move out of their comfort zones. Such propensity for change in dispositions is captured through the notion of a “transformative habitus”. My reading of affect as constituting habitus, however, has often focused on the durable and deterministic characteristic of the habitus. However, as I bring the conceptual tool of habitus in conversation with a pedagogy of discomfort in my discussion, I am compelled to theorise about how affect constitutes the generative or transformative habitus. Working with Bourdieu’s explication of the habitus quoted in an earlier section (i.e., *Emotions and the habitus*), one can surmise that individuals’ emotions have the propensity to incorporate new dispositions into the habitus. To reiterate, Bourdieu (2000) reminded us that our experiences of emotions enable us to “acquire dispositions that are themselves an openness to the world, that is, to the very structures of the world of which they are the incorporated form.” (pp. 140-141).

I end this paper by offering a conceptual contribution of the habitus in relation to its transformative dimension. That is, the affective dimension can constitute the transformative habitus. I offer here my initial thinking about the habitus and the affect in the hope that it will inspire further deliberations about the role of educators in creating equitable and socially just educational spaces and practices

CONCLUSION

An analysis of three episodes revealing teachers’ discomforts in the context of CALD classroom demonstrates that emotions shape teaching practices. Engaging with Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, the affective is revealed as constraining and regulating what teachers include and exclude as valuable sources of knowledge, culturally and linguistically. Thus, a pedagogy of discomfort is considered for teaching and teacher education in CALD contexts. Data from empirical research illuminates that, in the Australian classroom context, teachers’ discomfort may arise from encounters with refugee experiences, religious beliefs and diverse home languages. Productive engagements with these cultural and linguistic knowledge and traditions require teachers to confront their own discomforts. By drawing from the data, I illuminated ways to enhance teaching and learning through a pedagogy of discomfort. A pedagogy of discomfort however, while asserted in this paper, requires thoughtful and critical

deliberation of ethical considerations without assuming how "safe spaces" can look like as signalled by Zembylas and Papamichael (2017).

A consideration of a pedagogy of discomfort for teaching in CALD contexts reveals how emotions constitute the habitus. On the one hand, teachers' dispositions reveal that the affective dimension is durable and formed through the social and historical contexts of the individual. On the other hand, the affective can also offer the propensity for change and transformation of the habitus. As I have demonstrated in earlier sections, feelings of discomfort can orient the habitus towards actions that, to use Boler's (in Leibowitz, 2011) words in the Introduction of this paper, "inhibit educational exchange with students, prevent the educator from taking risks, and eclipse the educator's very capacity to see, for example, his or her own attachments to particular outcomes" (para. 6). Yet these discomforts can also be harnessed as starting points for generative and productive dialogues.

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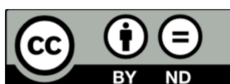

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Contextualizing Tonga inclusive special education in a global inclusive education policy

Mele'ana Lahaina Koloto
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand: *meleana.koloto@vuw.ac.nz*

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 needs[1] (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 *ʻulungaanga fakatong*a, which includes the four golden pillars—*Fāaʻi 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-relationality. 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 ʻa 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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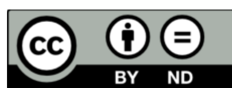

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"Getting beneath the skin": A *tok stori* approach to reviewing the literature of leadership in Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Marshall Islands

Kabini Sanga
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand: *kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz*

Seu'ula Johansson-Fua
Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific, Tonga:
seuula.johanssonfua@usp.ac.fj

Martyn Reynolds
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand: *martyn.reynolds@vuw.ac.nz*

David Fa'avae
University of Waikato, New Zealand: *david.faavae@waikato.ac.nz*

Richard Robyns
Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific, Tonga:
richard.robyns@usp.ac.fj

Danny Jim
Principal, Marshall Islands: *djim@pss.edu.mh*

A literature review is generally a compendium of written material on a topic presented as research background. It functions to describe what is known in academic circles and to justify research questions that step beyond the known. A more nuanced approach involves getting "beneath the skin" of the literature itself; considering the fabric of the literature; what worldviews are evident, the questions that started inquiry, and the usefulness to communities of the knowledge gained. In this article, we discuss the place of the literature review by going beyond a compendium approach. We offer summaries of literature from the Pacific Island Countries of Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Marshall Islands as background to a research effort on leadership indigenous to the Pacific region, before getting beneath the skin of our reading. We augment our approach by imagining a conference tok stori *discussion of Pacific leadership literature as a form of literature itself. This acts to re-value real-time discursive exploration and erodes the boundaries between the written and oral. Our aim is to investigate a more open and inclusive research space that honours Pacific-origin processes so that our research contribution can be increasingly permeated by Pacific values, wisdom and perspectives.*

Keywords: Orality; tok stori; Pacific education; leadership

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this article is the concept of academic literature; how we think about what it is, how it came to be, and how it might be treated. The term literature generally refers to written outputs of research. Most articles provide a compendium of research literature organized as a single body or in tranches that address aspects of a context to justify current research. This article seeks to nuance the value of assembling literature, using a current research initiative on school leadership in the Pacific as a case study. We aim to get some way "beneath the skin" of these corpora. We understand the skin of leadership literature to be what it has to say about leadership. Residing beneath this are matters such as assumptions about worldviews, the value of asking certain questions in certain ways, and ideas about the usefulness of inquiry.

Further, we question the boundaries of literature itself through the concept of oral literature. In scholarly circles, literature is generally understood as the written output of researchers elevated to that status by single- or double-blind peer review and other publisher-executed forms of quality control (Snodgrass, 2006). Unpublished or unreviewed material is called grey literature (Conn et al., 2003), and is often the output of organizations whose main function is not academic publishing (Hopewell et al., 2005). Grey literature might be included in a literature review. However, when oral literature is discussed, it is generally for aesthetic anthropological interest (see, e.g., Finnegan, 2012) or as a methodological matter in relation to an orality (or oral form) such as *talanoa* (Vaioleti, 2011), *tok stori* (Sanga et al., 2018) or *yarning* (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010). The significance of orality for communities whose intellectual traditions remain orally based, and for whom written communication and research has a short history, suggests that it is appropriate to consider orally held and transmitted wisdom as literature. To be literate in an area is to be knowledgeable and need not be limited to the written word (Toumu'a, 2014).

Indigenous oral knowledge is sometimes represented in research as a subject matter. Examples include ethics (Sanga, 2015), knowledge guardianship (Sanga & Reynolds, 2020) and traditional environmental knowledge (Pollard et al., 2015). Sometimes, the discussion weaves an iterative pattern of participants' oral contributions and written literature. However, seldom are oral contributions imagined as literature or valued in literature reviews in similar ways to written research. We tentatively explore the benefits of intersecting these forms.

One possible reason for the division maintained between written and oral literature is the concept of objectivity as present in review and publishing processes. Perhaps oral literature appears too individual, too positionally framed, too partial an understanding, or merely opinion. However, when we "get under the skin" of written leadership literature, positionality is highlighted in the approach of researchers, the partialness of research, and limitations on what can be claimed. Consequently, confining oral literature to supplementary roles appears somewhat arbitrary. This is especially true when pursuing literature that engages with societies steeped in oral intellectual traditions where written forms have short histories.

Oral traditions are often linked to performativity. The performance of oral knowledge is the way in which the body makes sense of abstract meaning. For example, Tongan *maau* (poetry) is performed through song and dance. Including, in a literature review, oral knowledge/stories, in this case stories of leadership, means taking account of

understandings that not only reside in the mind but also in the *loto* (soul/spirit). This is felt knowledge; the body makes sense of the knowing through performance. Paradoxically, because of the nature of academic communication and the expected outputs of research, we are writing about oral traditions. However, as a step towards balancing the traditions of the academy and those of our research partners, we weave together oral contributions about leadership literature from a digital conference *tok stori* session and matters from the subsurface of the literature presented in that session. The oral and written contributions add mutual insight. This article tentatively suggests the kinds of learning that can come from this kind of weaving.

We begin by providing a brief research background, including a general discussion of the value of reviewing literature. Summaries of three bodies of written literature from three Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are then presented, and ideas about leadership are drawn from these. Next, a discussion is staged that pays attention to some of the matters that lie "beneath the skin" of the three bodies of literature. We intersect oral contributions drawn from a *tok stori* session under the auspices of the Oceania International and Comparative Education Society (OCIES) at the "Festival of OCIES 2020 Virtual Conference" with the written literature on which the session was based. By way of conclusion, we consider the value of this woven approach to reviewing literature in the context of our research and signal possible benefits for researchers in other contexts from praxis that honours the traditions of research partners whose lives are lived beyond the academy.

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is a valuable aspect of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). However, not all reviews are the same; context shapes intent, focus and structure. For example, there are reflexive approaches to literature review, such as grounded theory (Thornberg & Dunne, 2019) and emerging post-foundational approaches (e.g., Mizzi, 2013). There are also emergent efforts to recognize broader forms of academic literature. These include Creative Arts and Community Voices pieces in this journal (McCormick, 2020). Building on the expanding conceptualization of both literature and review, we present three overlapping aspects of reviews salient to this discussion drawn from Haverkamp and Young (2007); that is, the review as foundation, as an account of perspective, and as an exploration of paradigm. These aspects deal with the related questions of what, how and why knowledge has been constructed in literature.

First, the literature review as foundation. Haverkamp and Young (2007) say "there is a consensus that existing literature is important in establishing the scientific context and purpose of a study, its rationale, and anticipated contribution" (p. 285). In other words, research that takes account of extant literature can find justification from the sum of what is (and what is not) known about a topic of interest so that literature provides a foundation for new research.

Second, Haverkamp and Young (2007) note the way literature portrays the perspective(s) researchers have taken to a field. This aspect pays attention to how things became known. A literature review can take account of the "voice(s)" represented in research, the dynamics of a field that researchers have (and have not) attended to, the constructs they used in theorization, and so on.

A third important aspect of a literature review is its paradigmatic portrayal of a field (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). Attention to paradigm shines light on the stance researchers adopt. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) discuss a paradigm as a set of related assumptions, a philosophical orientation, or a set of beliefs about the nature of knowledge. These renditions point to ontology; researchers embed their research approach in assumptions, beliefs, and philosophies, which are all elements of worldview. The ontology in which the research makes sense can be their own or the ontologies of research participants. Since literature sits on an ontological platform, it can be mined for paradigmatic information.

In this article, we attend first to the content of the school leadership literature of three PICs as a foundation for our research. We then examine the perspectives and paradigms that sit beneath the skin of the literature, a move enriched by honouring the potential of oracies in Pacific ontologies.

School leadership literature

We are involved in research that seeks to learn from and offer benefit to school leaders. Our main question is: How is leadership understood in different Pacific cultural contexts operationalized in the context of school leadership? This research, coordinated by the Development Leadership Program (www.dlprog.org) for DFAT, and involving staff from the Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific (USP) and Victoria University of Wellington/Te Herenga Waka, aims to increase knowledge, support contextualization in future donor-aid initiatives, and enhance curriculum developments in a regional school leadership qualification, the Graduate Certificate in School Leadership (GCSL) (Sanga, Maebuta et al., 2020).

Leadership has been understood in multiple ways: behaviour, influence over others, individual traits, interaction patterns, perception of others regarding legitimacy of influence, role relations, and the occupation of an administrative position (Yukl, 1994). As a working definition, we follow Yukl: leadership "involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person [or group] over other people [or groups] to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization" (Yukl, 1994, p. 3). This definition emphasizes "influence" and "relationships" as key social processes in leadership. This is appropriate because of the centrality of relationships (Anae, 2019; Vaai & Casamira, 2017; Vaai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017) and influence through relationships (Sanga & Walker, 2012) in many Pacific cultures. Our foci include what has been called Indigenous leadership (Khalifa et al., 2019); locally framed leadership as understood and practiced by the peoples of the PICs with whom we are engaged. We are also interested in how introduced forms of leadership are translated, negotiated and operationalized on the ground through relationships, and the interplay between co-existing leadership models.

Our approach to leadership takes the "direction of naming" (Sanga & Reynolds, 2017, p. 198) from the point of view of leadership practitioners in schools and communities. This recognizes the value of their wisdom, capabilities, experiences and reflections to themselves, their communities and to wider groups involved in leadership and education. Thus, in order to begin to sift what is known and to sharpen our research conversations, members of the research team produced elements of the literature review summarized here. As individuals, we adopted our own approaches.

The Solomon Islands corpus was assembled through a combination of Google Scholar searches (using terms such as "Solomon Islands leadership", "Solomon Islands education", followed by terms derived from the results of initial searches such as "Big Man" and "matrilineal leadership Solomons"), following the bibliographic genealogy of recent writings in the area, and consultation with Solomon Island experts and practitioners in the field. The Marshall Islands (RMI) corpus was assembled by a grounded approach through *bwebwenato* (relationally mediated conversations) with school and community leaders and their lived experiences of leadership and service. The few published sources were woven together with *Kajin Majōl* (Marshallese) ideas and ideals of leadership knowledge and practices as reflected and articulated by the school and community leaders. The Tongan body of literature originated in a compilation of PhD theses written by Tongans to mark the USP's 50th Anniversary. The collection is in the USP Tonga Campus Library in a special section commissioned by His Majesty Tupou VI, as *Kuku Kaunaka*. To prepare a brief for His Majesty, the abstracts from the 100+ theses were compiled into a book. This led to the revelation that there were only two PhD theses based on Tongan conceptualizations of educational leadership as practiced in Tonga: Paongo (1999) and Johansson-Fua (2003). Consequently, for this research, the Tongan corpus was compiled by expanding the education-based literature search using data base searches such as Google Scholar to include relevant leadership literature from other disciplines, including history, sociology, and political science.

No claim is made that the review is exhaustive. Instead, we highlight differences in the bodies of literature found to date, the result of the various search processes employed, level of prior knowledge and funding, research and publishing agendas.

Solomon Islands

There are multiple domains in Solomon Islands thinking, a consequence of a history that involves established clan systems of governance, the influence of Christian missionaries, and colonialism more generally. Sanga and Reynolds (2019) and Sanga (2008, 2009) discuss three domains with matching "masters". These are culture (or *kastom*), church, and formalized institutions. It is in this complex territory that Solomon Islands leadership studies are located.

There are also multiple models of leadership in Solomon Islands. Rowland (2016) outlines the Big Man (or Big Woman, (Pollard, 2006)) whose title and dignity rests on strength, cultural knowledge, wealth, and its distribution (Kabutaulaka, 1998); Chief (see also Ruqebatu, 2008), a tribal or clan leader who holds a life-long position related to land ownership and may be involved in resolving disputes; and *Lida*, sometimes developed through programs by groups such as churches, civil society, and formal sector organizations, including for female leaders. In a multi-domain context, gender plays out in various ways (Sanga, 2008) and tensions between leadership models can exist. School leadership is in the institutional domain (Sanga, 2009) but seeks to serve *kastom* defined and organized communities in a multi-ethnic context. Ruqebatu (2008) suggests that against the background of *kastom* leadership, school leadership may be a site of tension because "leadership within the school context is new and though there are similarities [with traditional forms] it is conceptually different" (p. 3).

Literature about educational leadership in Solomon Islands can be usefully divided into two bodies. The first pays attention to how effective school leadership can be understood. Examples include Sanga and Maneipuri (2002), Misite'e (2008), and Ruqebatu (2008). Each provides a multi-component model of effectiveness in school leadership. In addition, Rodie (2011) advocates for school leadership in a cooperative and communal form embedded in "villages of learning" (p. 209). This metaphor references shared, community focused leadership.

The second body of Solomon Islands leadership literature deals with education leadership development. Sanga, Maebuta, et al. (2020) draw on a range of research (e.g., Lingam, 2011; Lingam & Lingam, 2014; Malasa, 2007; Rouikera, 2013; Sisiolo, 2010) to note that training has generally taken place in Honiara, the capital; has been offered to small cohorts; and is sometimes outsourced to institutions from outside Solomon Islands. Sanga and Houma (2004) state leadership models used in training do not adequately describe the role of the Solomon Island principal. Rouikera (2013) decries the limitations of imported leadership models; Sanga and Taylor (2001) question the hierarchical relationships that often underpin aid-funded leadership training and point to mutual learning as a productive framing for this kind of activity.

A body of literature is also developing on Solomons-designed and delivered programs including the GCSL (Sanga, Reynolds, Houma, et al., 2020; Sanga et al., 2018), embracing work that specifically unpacks contextualization in Solomon Islands leadership training (Sanga, Maebuta, et al., 2020) and that sits well with regional re-thinking education initiatives (Sanga, 2003).

The under-representation and under-appreciation of women in Solomon Islands school leadership for various reasons including patrilineal structures in education despite wider matrilineal social structures in some areas, is a theme in the literature (Akao, 2008; Edwards et al., 2016; Houma, 2011; Maezama, 2015; Sisiolo & Giles, 2011).The multifaceted ways gender plays out in leadership illustrate the complexity of the relationship between leadership models and cultural understandings (Sanga, 2008).

There is also grey literature pertinent to educational leadership in Solomon Islands. Ruqebatu (2008) calls for a fully developed official educational leadership model and the *Solomon Islands Teaching Service Handbook* (MEHRD, 2011) pays attention to three characteristics of school leaders: professional attributes, professional knowledge, and interpersonal and pedagogic practices. However, the literature suggests that this leadership model is not always borne out in practice (Akao, 2008; Aruhu, 2010; Memua, 2011).

Marshall Islands

When compared to the Solomon Islands, the readily available literature of school leadership of the RMI is thin. Consequently, we revert to literature that pays attention to Marshall Islands leadership more generally. Relationships between the general leadership literature and school leadership literature are then offered.

Leadership is a valued practice in the RMI (Jim et al., 2021). Many authors position Marshallese concepts of leadership by tracing storied connections between people, the cosmos, sea, and land, significant events, and supernatural powers and beings (Carucci, 1989; Dobbin & Hezel, 2011; Dvorak, 2016; McArthur, 2004; Rudiak-Gould, 2011).

Stories are the basis of Marshallese leadership structures (Dobbin & Hezel, 2011; McArthur, 2004) and establish the origin of power (Dobbin & Hezel, 2011), who it is bestowed upon (McArthur, 2004), how power and leadership are structured and legitimized (Peterson, 2009), and how leadership is characterized (Carucci, 1989; Rudiak-Gould, 2011). Dobbin and Hezel (2011) identify the source of leadership power by reference to the sky god and island creator, Lowa. Several authors (Dobbin & Hezel, 2011; Hage, 1998; Jetnil-Kijiner, 2014; Walsh, 2003) present the story of Liwatounmour as cosmological evidence of the origins of leadership. Other relevant stories include that of Letao (Carucci, 1989). Leadership stories contribute to identities of "we" and "they" which help Marshallese make sense of who they are and what they experience (Carucci, 1989).

Leadership and followership are holistically linked in RMI conceptualizations. According to Petersen (2009), leadership legitimacy is based on connections to those who first settled an atoll or established a community. Authority is given by the extended family or clan (Palafox et al., 2011; Petersen, 2006, 2009) through land rights (Kupferman, 2011; Palafox et al., 2011; Taafaki & Fowler, 2019) and involves specialized and protected types of knowledge and expertize (Palafox et al., 2011; Stone, 2001). Patterns of reciprocity are established through land, family, and history so that leadership and sustainability are integrated.

The cosmologically rooted relationship between gender and leadership is interwoven in complex ways (Hage, 2000; Kupferman, 2011). Traditionally, leadership and power have been derived through matrilineal kinship that has its origins in the Loktanur narrative (Ahlgren, 2016; Dobbin & Hezel, 2011; McArthur, 2004; Vinson, 2017). Loktanur, a mythical mother figure from the sky, asked each of her sons if she could accompany them on a canoe race; all but her youngest son, Jebro, refused. Loktanur gifted Jebro a sail which he used to win the race and be awarded the *iroij* title (Ahlgren, 2016). The stories of Liwatounmour and Loktanur bestow the prerogative of the female line in chiefly succession (Dobbin & Hezel, 2011; McArthur 2004). The power of the narratives is manifest because current chiefly lines and leadership rights and roles are traced through the female side (Dobbin & Hezel, 2011; Hage, 2000; Hezel, 2001; McArthur, 2004; Petersen, 2009; Pollock, 1974; Spennemann, 2006).

In addition to gaining legitimacy through matrilineal links, Marshallese leaders were traditionally expected to have leadership qualities displayed by key characters of origin stories (Ahlgren, 2016; Petersen, 2009; Rudiak-Gould 2011). For instance, Loktnur and Jebro's story reveals that successful leaders are expected to reflect generosity and obedience towards elders (Ahlgren, 2016), diligence, persistence, resilience, humility, and respect towards the needs of their matrilineage through the effective management of resources (McArthur, 2004; Petersen, 2009). Petersen (2009) identifies the ability to prevent strife coupled with the ability to be gentle and caring as key leadership qualities valued by the Marshallese. The matrilineal logic of Marshallese kinship and its links to the land promote the life-giving qualities of nurturing and love; a leader must be able to strongly defend the kinship extension of the mother and her life-giving power.

Jim et al (2021) bring cosmological, experiential, and school leadership together through the *Kanne Lobal* canoe-based framework. This has been applied to the leadership and educational aspirations of elementary school leaders in the RMI. School principal and

community leader, Danny Jim, depicts intergenerational leadership practice through his experiences via the metaphor of the canoe:

> My grandfather's stories about people's roles within the canoe reminded me that everyone within the family has a responsibility to each other. Our women, mothers, and daughters too have a significant responsibility in the journey, in fact, they hold us, care for us, and give strength to their husbands, brothers, and sons. The wise man or elder sits in the middle of the canoe, directing the young man who helps to steer. (Jim et al., 2021, p. 11)

As a traditional Marshallese approach linked to navigation, *Kanne Lobal* provides a worldview that honours the voices and lived experiences of Marshallese people. *Kanne Lobal* provides the possibility of unpacking and empowering the education experiences of Marshallese (Jim et al., 2021).

As with Solomon Islands, the RMI leadership literature points to discord between local and introduced models of leadership. The advent of capitalist structures is shifting leadership and power relationships to reflect Western patriarchal power relationships (Dvorak, 2016). Jim et al (2021) share their frustrations concerning how the education system in the RMI is driven in this way: accreditation acts as a vehicle to shape leadership in competitive directions. They describe school leaders' interactions on Majuro as lacking intimacy; most school leaders do not value working together. Consequently, the cultural practices of the past are no longer as valued they were (Jim et al., 2021). The RMI grey literature document *Teacher Standards and Licensing System* (Ministry of Education, 2013) contains the expectation that teachers will maintain *Kajin Majōl* culture and values. School leaders are expected to collaborate with traditional and community leaders, families and community members, and mobilize community resources. However, direct reference to *Majōl* leadership models is absent.

Tonga

As with the RMI, the accessible written school leadership literature of Tonga is thin. Although there has been interest in Tongan leadership from historical, sociological, and political perspectives, little research on Tongan educational leadership other than works by Johansson-Fua (2001, 2003, 2007); Johansson-Fua et al. (2011); Paongo (1999) and Vete (1989) has been developed. Consequently, we focus on Tongan conceptualization of leadership in order to support the review of Tongan educational leadership literature that follows. This framing is relevant because Tongan school leaders operate within Tongan society.

In contemporary Tonga, people personify leadership by virtue of their social position. The monarch is the highest ranked chief (*hau*); the nobles of the realm are hereditary leaders or royal appointees. Within the *kainga* (clan/tribe), leadership is invested in the *'ulumotu'a* (head of a clan) and to some extent the *mehekitanga* (father's sister). Leadership is maintained through negotiations of power relations and the cultural recognition of leaders by followers (Helu-Thaman, 1988), symbolically exhibited through such values as *'ofa* (love), *mateaki* (loyalty) and *faka'apa'apa* (respect) (Latukefu, 1974; Wood-Ellem, 1999).

Rank underpins the dynamics of Tongan leadership. Gender and age are two major identifiers for establishing rank (Aoyagi, 1966; Bott, 1981; Helu-Thaman, 1988; Herda, 1987; Wood-Ellem, 1987). Rank is always defined within family or *kainga* but is highly

dependent on context. For example, a person's rank can change according to the presence of maternal or paternal relations. However, in their position as a sister and *mehekitanga*, women are always ranked higher than their brothers and their brothers' children. Conversely, as mother or wife, women are of lower rank than their husbands.

The concept of power informs Tongan understandings of rank and leadership. Power or *mafai*, the capacity to lead (Bott, 1981 p. 10) is not synonymous with "authority", translated by Churchwood (1955) as *pule*. A person of *pule* (authority) does not always necessarily hold *mafai* (power). For example, the *mehekitanga* apparently lacks *pule* (Helu-Thaman, 1988; Herda, 1987). Within traditional leadership, *mafai* can be divided into *mana* (mystical powers) associated with *mehekitanga*, and secular power (not necessarily associated with men) (Herda, 1987; Rogers, 1977).

The influence of over a century of contact with Western civilization has led to a compromize or composite culture (Helu-Thaman, 1988). Wood-Ellem (1987) presents a model of traditional leadership responding to a modern context in the form of Queen Salote and Tungi's leadership during their reign. Their relationship was both based on and set precedent. She writes: "there was only one model of female-male partnership for Salote and Tungi to follow: the traditional dual leadership of a male chief and his 'eldest sister'" (p. 219). Through this model, traditional leadership appears a joint effort; the *'ulumotu'a* oversees all responsibilities associated with the land and all secular affairs; the *mehekitanga* oversee all responsibilities associated with *koloa fakatonga* and all that is sacred in Tongan rituals.

The middle class, firmly established by the end of the 20th century, is characterized by several "modern" features and limited by several "traditional" features of Tongan culture. Civil leadership and social distance are eroding traditional leadership, particularly of the nobility (James, 1997; *Matangi Tonga Magazine*, 1992). Although nobles continue to hold on to their ascribed status, church ministers, educators, businesspeople, farmers, and town officers are among new leaders who rely on status gained through education, commerce, and industry. They are legitimized by a model of leadership that relies more on authority and ability to lead. However, their assumed authority is tentative and ambiguous, fraught with social contradictions, and tempered by the tension surrounding commoners who "get above their station" (*fie 'eiki*).

Studies conducted of Tongan school principals strongly suggest that for commoner leaders in education, leadership relies heavily on an ability to relate to people. Whereas the power (*mafai*) of the noble is within his title (*'eiki*), the power base of the commoner leader is within his/her relationships with stakeholders. Principals recognize the importance of relationships in exerting social influence over teachers, students, and stakeholders (Johansson-Fua, 2003), and know that fostering close working relationships with teachers helps them gain their respect and support (Johansson-Fua, 2003). Principles know that "authority" might be based on their position but their "power" to influence the lives and activities of people in their schools depends primarily on their ability to maintain appropriate relationships with their stakeholders.

Johansson-Fua (2003) also revealed that principals are aware of their personal and professional values and the ways these affect their leadership practices. A strong link exists between espoused values and the nature of relationships that principals cultivate in their schools and communities. Knowing and understanding one's culture, customs, and

traditions, as well as those of the people you work with and for, is a necessity. Leadership is not only just an issue of the workplace but of living; leadership is not just a skill – it is an integral part of one's life. Leadership in the context of the social milieu is how a person is assessed in the Tongan context (Kavaliku, 2007).

Summary

There are varied foci in the three bodies of literature we have assembled to support our research. The Solomon Islands corpus is tightly focused on school leadership with subdued reference to Melanesian models of leadership. What was reported directly about school leadership in the RMI section is slight. The support of a wider Marshallese literature base is, therefore, helpful to draw implications for the research. Similar comments can be made about the Tongan written literature base. However, all three bodies contain references to mismatches between leadership framings at the interface of educational leadership and community leadership as schools seek to serve communities. These and similar qualitative facets focused a fruitful exploration beneath the skin of the literature at a *tok stori* session at the Festival of OCIES 2020 Virtual Conference the US.

TOK STORI METHODOLOGY

Kovach (2010) presents an informative discussion of how Indigenous conversational modes or oralities support research. She states that conversation is "congruent with an Indigenous paradigm" (p. 124) in which storytelling is recognized as a dialogical means of assisting others, and conversation is a way of gathering information.

Tok stori is an orality Indigenous to Melanesia (Kabutaulaka, 2015). It involves the creation of a safe space in which story telling takes place (Davidson, 2012; Sanga, Johannson-Fua et al., 2020). This is achieved because the dialogic process of speaking and listening creates the kinds of relational closeness (Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019) that implies deep interpersonal commitment. *Tok stori* is at home in a dialogic relational ontology (Sanga & Reynolds, 2019). As a methodology, it has been helpful in a wide range of research contexts such as evaluation (Paulsen & Spratt, 2020), leadership (Sanga, 2017), social research (Davidson, 2012), and professional learning (Sanga, Maebuta, et al., 2020). *Tok stori* as method sits within and overlaps with *tok stori* methodology.

The method of this particular *tok stori* was developed to respond to the effects of COVID 19 on travel and academic interaction. As a way of facilitating connection under restrictive conditions, OCIES hosted an online conference in which the research team offered *tok stori* as a model of engagement. Thus, this account contributes to the scholarship of virtual *tok stori* (Sanga et al., 2021) and that of relationality in virtual spaces more generally (Enari & Matapo, 2020; Koya- Vaka'uta, 2017a; Koya-Vaka'uta, 2017b; Sanga & Reynolds, 2020). The *tok stori* also offers an opportunity to examine what can be learned by intersecting aspects of written literature with *tok stori* contributions imagined with the status of oral literature.

During the OCIES virtual *tok stori*, one research team member acted as chair and three members presented short accounts of the bodies of literature from Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands and Tonga. However, much of the two-hour session was offered to the 30+ participants of many ethnicities and locations to contribute their own expertize, reflections, and stories. The session was opened with *mihi* (greetings) that acknowledged

both the place of hosting, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the wider Oceanic space of discussion. The *tok stori*, entitled 'Getting beneath the skin" provided ethically cleared data in an oral form for the following section. Imagining the salience of orality as oral literature is appropriate for research with communities whose intellectual traditions are orally based and for whom written communication and research has a short history. This idea is also congruent for research that seeks to learn from the way leadership in formal education, which is a centre of written communication, interacts with the local traditional form that are generally exercized through oralities.

GETTING BENEATH THE SKIN

In this section, oral contributions from the OCIES virtual conference *tok stori* session are woven with aspects of written literature. In an enterprise such as this, there are inevitable compromizes. In oral as much as in written literature, the status of knowledge creators affects credibility; expertize is informed by position. However, for ethical and practical purposes, here we generally treat the *tok stori* data as a jointly constructed narrative, indicating categorial aspects of position such as gender and ethnicity only when they appear to us immediately salient to the argument. This approach balances the woven nature of *tok stori* with an understanding of positionality as relational (Crossa, 2012; Fasavalu & Reynolds, 2019); relational positionality acknowledges categorical aspects of identity (Carling et al., 2014) since these have relational roots. In a *tok stori*, a pertinent positional approach is not to consider "who am I", but "who are we". In this case, "we" are various members of OCIES and other friends present at the session.

Further, the thematic structure we use enhances critique at the intersections of written and oral expression. We acknowledge that this is at the expense of interrupting the flow of *tok stori*, present despite the virtual nature of the dialogic space in which more "chairing" was required than might otherwise have been needed. We pay attention to three themes generated by the *tok stori* as examples of the way oral literature can contribute to a literature review by getting beneath the skin of written scholarship: temporality, scale, and direction of naming.

Temporality

Temporality draws attention to literature being not only of its time but acting within time. Here, we demonstrate how the intersection of oral contributions from the *tok stori* with the written corpus is of value to our research through the concept of immediacy.

Immediacy points to the relevance of ideas from literature to current leadership thinking. A contribution to the *tok stori* focused on a tale of a slow *vaka* (canoe) voyage between RMI atolls. Three aspects of leadership emerged from this. First, leadership evidenced by the mutual learning of the crew during the voyage: "You can see the leaders on *vaka,* sharing knowledge and opportunity around navigation, reading the forecasts, working their way through the currents, sun and so forth". This offers immediacy to the Marshallese leadership model, *Kanne Lobal* (Jim et al., 2021), metaphorically constructed as it is around the everyday Marshallese activities of steering and sailing. Second, when a young crew member was asked the contemporary question "Who are you?", the *tok stori* speaker described his cosmological reply – the story of Loktnur and

Jebro (Ahlgren, 2016). His answer illustrates the vitality of traditional understandings contributing to current aspects of identity as it informs leadership.

In addition, the *tok stori* speaker explained that, upon arrival, the young crew member made a solo visit to the atoll's traditional chief. The story depicted the young man saying: "I've been telling the chief where we have come from, what you've been doing, who you are. And at the end of that, the chief has given you permission to carry out your work." The *tok stori* speaker wove this story with ideas from Carucci (1989):

> People who consider themselves to be "we" all share the similar story of where they originated in the atoll chain and . . . the cosmos. Being in the group "they" . . . means that you have originated from a different place, and you are . . . moving towards these people . . . [He] was paving the way and giving us permission to start walking towards the [atoll's] people to discuss things such as educational leadership.

Oral contributions of this kind are delivered in the here-and-now. They provide a tool to get beneath the skin of a body of literature written over a long period by drawing attention to its immediacy. The oral material "reviews" the written literature by suggesting the contemporary relevance of daily activities theorized within its pages. For example, the written cosmological framing is made immediate by the oral account of its everyday ontological utility. In turn, the written literature suggests the generalizable potential of the speaker's experiential anecdotes as accurate depictions of how Marshallese think about leadership. The intersection of the oral and written literatures suggests that there is value to our research in investigating the reproduction and relevance of long-held ideas of the origins, authority, and practice of leadership in present times.

Scale

Scale is another subcutaneous aspect of literature. Paying attention to scale in leadership research is a matter of interrogating leadership by observing where day to day leaderful acts are observed and described. In research that seeks to examine the interfaces between institutionally framed leadership and leadership in communities, the concept of scale has the potential to point to areas of leadership poorly depicted or absent in previous research. In this example, we show how oral storied literature can combine with written literature to point to the utility of a creating focus on leadership exercized on a small scale

Small-scale leadership in PICs is often a matter of village life. A *tok stori* contributor described the way dinghies arriving with cargo from the urban centre of Honiara are observed by Solomon Islands village women. They learn "who is carrying what when it comes to the shore . . . information [that]. . . will be shared at the river" at dishwash time, for instance. In this context, leadership is about "the daily survival of their families" achieved by women who are leaders of "skill and ability . . . in their homes . . . [and] families". The story depicts leadership exercized through reciprocal means. The leaders need:

> [T]o know and to weave the connections at the community level, to be able in the evening, to get some kumara (sweet potato) and take it to the lady who received some sugar during the day – she will receive the kumara and then give in exchange a packet of tea or a packet of sugar.

Such small-scale acts of leadership centred on reciprocation sit in the *kastom* domain (Sanga, 2009; Sanga & Reynolds, 2019) as longstanding elements of village life.

However, it is hard to see where they fall in the tripartite leadership models proposed in much written leadership literature of Melanesia. Nonetheless, these acts are leadership within Yukl's (1994) definition since intentional influence is exercized through relationships.

A second example of small-scale leadership was present in the *tok stori* through an account drawn from the Leaders and Education Authorities Project (LEAP) (Sanga et al., 2018), a literacy and leadership intervention in Solomon Islands (Paulsen & Spratt, 2020). In the project, *tok stori* as pedagogy was used to mentor leaders at the village level. The OCIES *tok stori* ran:

> We . . . observed this category of leaders who suggested . . . how to take the learnings from LEAP forward at the community level . . . Therefore, women are coming up . . . men are emerging from that whole scenario to ensure that there is sustainability, there is continuity . . . emerging leaders who are not necessarily position holders, either in the village level or in the traditional tribal context. But they are emerging because they see the need . . . for them to play a leadership role at the community level.

The *tok stori* speaker suggests that small-scale acts of leadership construct new leadership roles, perhaps close to those described in Solomon Islands written literature specific to women (Houma, 2011; Pollard & Walker, 2000). The *tok stori* points to the need to observe and listen carefully when researching school leadership in order to avoid over-concentrating on positional leadership and the models through which it has been theorized (e.g., Misite'e, 2008; Ruqebatu, 2008). There is a danger for our research that forms of leadership embodied in informal small-scale acts will be erased if we over-concentrate on positionally-defined leadership.

These two stories suggest the potential of *tok stori* as a review tool to illuminate missing perspectives (Haverkamp & Young, 2007) in written literature by drawing attention to the significance of small-scale acts that embody leadership framings such as reciprocity and need-based leadership. The starting off point for Solomon Islands school leadership literature is generally the thinking of those in leadership positions. However, beneath the skin there may be a silence that masks the work of others: students, staff, ancillary workers, community members involved with schools, and so on. In addition, some leaderful acts of positional leaders may be missed if deemed outside of "professional" leadership conversations. Weaving the *tok stori* with the written corpus offers our research guidance by making scale visible as an important aspect of perspective.

Direction of naming

Sanga and Reynolds (2017) say: "The naming and consequent framing of any field is an important concern. Naming is not a passive or inconsequential activity. It focuses identity. One's name has genealogical origins: it carries *mana* and defines who one is" (p. 199). Naming has ontological implications; the way researchers construct reference points for their work relates to their paradigmatic position. Paying attention to the philosophical underpinnings of literature is significant for research on how leadership is understood in the various domains in PICs, particularly in the relational spaces between leadership models. During the *tok stori*, paradigmatic considerations emerged at the intersection of

oral and written literature and can be exemplified through considering the treatment of gender in leadership.

Much of the written leadership literature cited above that deals with traditional contexts depicts complex gender relations. For example, the RMI stories of Liwatounmour and Loktanur (Dobbin & Hezel, 2011; McArthur, 2004) present explanations for why the female line is significant in chiefly succession. Similarly, some Tongan written literature cited (Aoyagi, 1966; Bott, 1981; Helu-Thaman, 1988; Herda, 1987; Wood-Ellem, 1987) shows how the female line can be ranked above the male line and how gender roles are a matter of complementary leadership operating across different domains (Wood-Ellem, 1987). Sanga (2008) discusses the relative presence of female leadership across different domains in Solomon Islands, while Maezama (2015) discusses female leadership against the backdrop of matrilineal Santa Isabel. These accounts "name" the significance and configuration of gender roles from the "direction" of local communities.

Contributors to the *tok stori* also provided examples of complex community referenced relationships in leadership between genders. Gender roles in Tongan leadership were described by a Tongan speaker as "complementary"; Tongan women's leadership is more evident in the spiritual as opposed to the secular field so that "mana is associated with the power of the sacred: a woman has mystical powers". A Samoan speaker depicted dynamic gender relationships in Samoan leadership:

> Yes, it was usually the men to whom was granted . . . the titles. But . . . now you're seeing more and more women. . . . So that's what I mean about balance, it's a dynamic understanding of change . . . My grandmother was the leader of our extended family. Yes, we had a high chief in our family which was her son and my dad.

According to Finau (2017), the more frequent gifting of titles to Samoan females is a reversion to pre-European Samoan practice reflecting more fluid relationships between certain forms of leadership and gender in the past. These examples of the complexity of gender in leadership support the community referenced written literature.

However, the direction of naming employed in a portion of the written literature of educational leadership cited above depicts leadership through a focus on leadership positions and follows introduced models. One result is that the Solomon Islands corpus (Akao, 2008; Edwards et al., 2016; Sisiolo & Giles, 2011) mainly alludes to women as absent from school leadership and training or as opposed (Sisiolo, 2010) and suppressed (Houma, 2011) by men. This approach signals an area of genuine concern: who becomes a manager in Solomon Islands education and how? However, it also has the potential to shape approaches to gender in leadership in descriptive ways through an oppositional or inclusion/exclusion dynamic.

A *tok stori* speaker asked a question that interrogates the paradigm from which this literature emerges: "If you draw from the *kastom* knowledge domain in the Solomons, you will note that women are doing very well there. And so why don't we bring some of that framing or understanding into the institutionalized domain." A suggestion was made that this could be because of the temporal position of the literature:

> The written knowledge base on Solomon Islands educational leadership . . . is in its infancy . . . what we might call descriptive and applied in nature . . . generally mimicking conventional University conceptualizations of leadership as well as methodological benchmarks.

The absence of community-based understandings of leadership in this literature could also be a matter of scale—what is recognized as leadership by research in school contexts. This is also a paradigmatic matter.

The relationships between local traditional leadership and institutional leadership are key areas for our research. One *tok stori* contribution provided clarification about what a woven relationship between two models of diverse origin might look like through a story of a visit to a Kura Kaupapa Māori, an iwi-led school:

> Before the school board appointed even the principal, what they did was appoint two of the old ladies of the community, to have the *kuia* . . . "They carry the wisdom of our community and so they have to be here first". So, the "normal focus" would be… . . . [appoint] the school board and the principal and the teachers, . . . but they [first] filled . . . [leadership roles] with the knowledge of community women.

The question and this partial answer illustrate how *tok stori* can act as a paradigmatic tool in literature review. *Tok stori* is a safe space where questions that get beneath the paradigmatic skin of literature can be asked and where people's storied experiences can begin to construct answers beyond the parameters of previous publications. Consequently, research such as ours is encouraged to question its own paradigm as a potentially limiting factor on what leadership is or could be.

CONCLUSION

This article has provided a discussion of literature as an element in research. Using our own endeavour as a case study, we have gone beyond a compendium approach to the literature review by attempting to get beneath the skin of some of the written literature we found. Especially when engaging with people strong in orally based practice, we have pointed to the value of including discursive, conversational material developed through virtual *tok stori* in the review process, honouring it by imagining through the status of oral literature. As a result, we have enhanced our understanding of several matters; these include: temporality as an aspect of literature; immediacy as a testament to the vitality of long-established thinking; history as a factor in the limitations of some written literature; and the way the paradigmatic orientation can be revealed through the direction of naming and the way scale is applied. For our research, the process has emphasized the need to consider both leadership and research as practice (Wood, 2006) and to try to avoid imposing limitations contingent on prior knowledge, previous practice and paradigmatic habit. The erosion of the boundaries between written and oral literature by matching the sanctity of the written word with honour for the spoken is a case in point.

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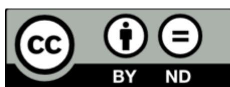

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Lessons from engaging sports role models and stakeholders in the promotion of literacy among school children in Suva, Fiji

Jeremy Dorovolomo
School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education,
University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji: *jeremy.dorovolomo@usp.ac.fj*

Loriza Zinnie Rafiq
School of Pacific Arts, Communication and Education,
University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji: *loriza.rafiq@usp.ac.fj*

This paper draws lessons from the Read like a Champion (RLAC) program implemented in Suva, Fiji, which engaged elite sporting individuals in literacy activities at schools. A qualitative case-oriented study was utilized, drawing on Esser and Vliegenthart's (2017) practical steps in analyzing comparative data to consider lessons from RLAC in comparison with available literature on lessons from similar programs. The analysis is inductive in nature, and we arrived at four lessons that are presented as analogical representations. The first finding is that literacy development among school children needs creative and innovative ideas. The second is that these innovative ideas are delivered in context and become situated practice. The third lesson is that literacy development among children requires genuine partnerships with stakeholders in society, and, fourth, that literacy skills could be enhanced through involving role models.

Keywords: Fiji; RLAC program; Literacy; Sports role models; school-university partnerships; reading promotion

INTRODUCTION

Wilkins and Terlitsky (2015) stress that literacy is key to success in education, and generally in modern society. The literacy of a nation's population is generally among the highest aims of any government, teacher, parent, and community. Getting school children to be interested readers and to willingly explore through reading are, therefore, imperative ideals. Thus, if the education system does not deliver literate individuals, it comes under immense criticism from society. However, although schools and teachers are often identified as responsible for children's literacy levels, the reality is that many groups have a stake in and, therefore, a responsibility for the wellbeing and literacy capabilities of children (Wilkins & Terlitsky, 2015).

Schools know that forging partnerships with other stakeholders, including parents, librarians, and the teacher education institution, can create a positive reading culture; however, forging such partnerships is often a daunting task for teachers, who already struggle to deal with the daily loads and demands of encouraging children to learn to

read and to read to learn (Valenza & Scheuer, 2017). Valenzia and Scheuer (2017) also stressed that building a reading culture does not happen by itself but through activities that engage and motivate young readers, such as having book clubs, poetry slams, or hosting author visits: "When we stop to consider the potential for powerful partnerships, we envision possibilities that involve us combining forces—both the art and the sciences of those forces—and leveraging synergies to build powerful cultures of literacy" (p. 16). Leveraging synergies needs to be innovative and with acceptance that partnerships can go beyond the triad of teachers, students, and parents. In the context of this study, the innovation is to include elite sports persons to encourage reading and comprehension.

In Fiji, where the programme that is the subject of this case study is located, English is predominantly a second language. In Australia, where the inspiration for the program was drawn from, there is an increasing number of children in classrooms where English is not the first language. An example from Canada can help emphasize the salience of partnerships in a context in which English is a second language. For the Inuit community, the partnership between the public library, the local childcare society, the literacy council, parents, cultural groups, volunteers, and the local government, saw the establishment and operations of the after-school homework club (Crockatt & Smythe, 2000). This after-school club facilitates activities such as reading stories and doing arts and craft for disadvantaged children. Crockatt and Smythe (2000) found that such after-school club activities made a difference to children and families. Furthermore, by uniting youth with elders and oral tradition and history, the program was able to insert important local knowledge into the club. As Crockatt and Smythe (2000) stressed, "we cannot expect families to value reading stories unless their stories are valued, in whatever form they may come" (p. 10).

Pihl et al. (2017) asserted the need to reconceptualize literacy education and view literacies as social practices rather than merely skills to be acquired. Key to this reconceptualization is, again, partnerships with stakeholders, including schools, libraries, the community, and other entities. Moreover, part of this reconceptualization is to have "teacher professionalism based on inter-professional collaboration" (Pihl et al., 2017, p. 1). In partnerships to promote literacy, a major challenge is to ensure that the reading and writing activities are meaningful and enjoyable. The choices of books should enable positive conversations and take the interests of pupils into account (Janiak, 2003). In a study involving 1,876 pupils, Janiak (2003) found that children who interacted with a stakeholder outside of the classroom in a structured and continuous manner, such as with parents, read more positively, confidently, and proficiently in school than those who do not read frequently with significant others.

Chai, et al. (2020), based at a US university, worked in partnership with a particular district to audit their literacy needs for K-5. The purpose of the authors' study was to gauge the available resources and how best they could be utilized by stakeholders. They hoped that the input they had on this audit would contribute to a balanced literacy framework (a balanced literacy approach, here, stems from the philosophical belief that reading and writing are developed in multiple environments (Chai et al., 2020)). Chai et al. (2020) stressed the importance of universities creating partnerships with the local school districts with mutual respect and trust. It is through conducting a literacy audit in partnership with local districts that plans can be data-driven to ensure logical and reasoned instructional practices (Chai et al., 2020). They advised that with university-

district partnerships it is pertinent that ongoing professional development opportunities are offered to schools and not the *one-and-done* model, because students are not the only learners (Chai et al., 2020). Moreover, Meyers et al. (2015) highlighted the value of professional partnerships with teachers at primary schools for improving the literacy levels of school children; they found that such partnerships resulted in improvements in children's literacy performances, and teachers felt the collaboration had strengthened their teaching.

In the coaching model, the coach is viewed as an expert working with teachers to help teachers reach required literacy standards for pupils. Meyers et al. (2015) advocated the partnership model rather than a coaching model. The coach is a content expert who uses student data to plan methods to improve the skill set of the teacher (Meyers et al., 2015). However, Meyers et al. (2015) underlined that, in the partnership relationship, there is a "connection between coach, teacher and students. Crucially, the focus is student-centered and aims to provide individualized, long-term professional development that emphasizes appropriate instruction that includes differentiated strategies based on the needs of the students" (p. 149). The focus is ultimately students, but the partnership involves the partner, teacher, and students themselves. Too often, teachers must teach to high stakes exams rather than focus on literacy and literacy skills for their own sake. Thus, Meyers et al. (2015) pointed out that the partnership model can help teachers move away from teaching to high-stakes exams and focus on those identified as underperforming children as well as those with disabilities. Pomerantz and Pierce (2019) noted the importance of the state and government consciously intervening in low-performing schools in literacy. They suggested that this can be done by conducting a needs assessment, providing professional development for teachers, and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the professional development activities. The authors implemented this idea at a low-performing school in literacy for two years as well as stressing the need to account for contextual factors of the schools. The results were that teachers improved in their practice and students gained increased reading opportunities, which helped their literacy skills.

Ronkainen et al. (2019) studied Finnish students and found that students viewed elite athletes as role models in addition to certain members of the family. The elements of work ethics, commitment, ambition, and achievement are vital elements that make elite sports individuals good role models (Ronkainen et al., 2019). It should be noted that elite sports persons are not always viewed as role models, as shown in research such as that by Vescio et al. (2005), who studied 357 female students at Sydney schools. The authors found the majority of students do not perceive elite sports personalities as role models but do so for family members. Lyle (2009), however, strongly asserted that appropriate elite sports performers are powerful role models in their behaviour and for the success and achievement they convey. Smoll (2015) noted that whether elite sporting individuals see themselves as role models or not, they are role models, good and bad.

This study aimed to elicit lessons from a program that use elite athletes to promote literacy at school. The program, Read Like a Champion (RLAC), was implemented in a school in Suva, Fiji. The RLAC utilized various elite Fiji sports individuals to promote reading and comprehension to class three pupils at a school in Suva (Rafiq & Dorovolomo, 2020). Studies that use elite sports persons as partners to help promote

literacy at schools are not commonplace. RLAC was inspired by the Read Like a Demon (RLAD) initiative, which was implemented in Melbourne, Australia and involved the Melbourne Football Club, commonly known by the nickname of the Demons, to promote literacy activities at schools and libraries (Fulco & Lee, 2010; Kirkby et al., 2018)[1]. A number of examples of using sporting teams to promote reading exist elsewhere, including using the English premier league, which had professional footballers advocate the love of reading among schoolchildren (Premier League, 2015). UK rugby targeted 9- to 11-year-olds at schools to help motivate reluctant readers (National Literacy Trust, 2021a), and the UK Football Association focused on girls aged 5 to 8, encouraging them to learn both soccer and be engaged in storytelling (National Literacy Trust, 2021b). Implemented across Australia and New Zealand, the National Rugby League (NRL) aims to have children have fun reading and it delivers its literacy program to over more than 70 schools (Gabor, 2016). These programs will be analysed in more detail in the discussions later.

METHODOLOGY

The intention of this study was to arrive at lessons from the RLAC literacy program, elicited, in part, through a comparative analysis of lessons drawn from literature on similar programs. This was done in a similar manner to that employed by Jetton et al. (2008). In this conception, literacy is motivational, literacy is a lifelong pursuit, and literacy is constructive. This study incorporates the ideas that literacy should be taught through innovative ideas, literacy should involve partnerships, literacy needs role models, and literacy should be thought of as a contextual, every day situated practice. Jetton et al. (2008) promoted the notion that teacher educators at university should proactively form partnerships with prospective teachers, district education officers, school leaders, and schoolteachers. Jetton et al. (2008) found that by doing so, they were able to collaboratively create a vision for literacy for the schools they worked with and helped reshape the manner in the way the curriculum is delivered. In this, the students and prospective student teachers were also part of the learning community, and this helped transform the literacy experiences of school students. Jetton et al. (2008, p. 329) asserted that those working together should be equal partners and have a shared vision for literacy. In the partnership, they agreed on the following vision of literacy: first is the idea that *literacy is constructive,* in that readers and writers do have existing knowledge to construct meaning; second, the vision states that *reading is fluent,* which seeks to get readers and writers to be proficient at whatever level they are currently at; third, the vision recognizes that *literacy is strategic* and students are able to access and engage in purposeful reading and writing to construct meaning; fourth, *literacy is motivated* where children are interested, informed, and capable of communicating what they read and write effectively; and fifth, *literacy is a lifelong pursuit* in which children are able to continue to develop, refine and enjoy reading and writing for a lifetime. According to Jetton et al. (2008), the partnership restructured the literacy curriculum in the writing processes, written products, content, and strategies. Everyone learned from

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[1] The authors acknowledge and give our thanks to Sue Wilson and colleagues at Monash University who provided the opportunity to first learn about the Read Like a Demon (RLAD) program. The descriptions of the RLAD program offered in this article are based entirely on the authors interpretation of available literature on the program.

the partnership including preservice teachers who were able to widen their notions of literacy beyond the school and university classrooms.

This study also drew on Jetton and colleagues' (2008) use of analogical representation (Aubusson, 2002) to help communicate ideas. Jetton et al. (2008) used analogical representations to depict the literacy vision of a school, such as *literacy is strategic, or literacy is a lifelong pursuit.* Moreover, Aubusson (2002) stressed that analogical representations such as these can also provide the conceptual framework for interpreting research data. Analogies are vital thinking tools to understand a phenomenon. In this study, the analogical representations are *literacy as innovative ideas*, *literacy should involve partnerships*, *literacy need role models*, and *literacy as contextual, every day, situated practice*.

This comparative study of lessons from literacy programs using elite sports role models utilizes a qualitative case-oriented design, which generally includes two to four cases (Palmberger & Gingrich, 2013), where the contexts of each case are examined. This study focuses on a single school, single classroom case of the RLAC program and draws lessons from this case, supporting this with analysis of lessons learned from other similar literacy promotion programs utilizing elite sports role models (for example, Fulco & Lee, 2010; Gabor, 2016; Kirkby et al. 2018; National Literacy Trust, 2021a, 2021b). To identify key lessons from literacy programs, this study relied on the secondary data about RLAC presented in Rafiq and Dorovolomo (2020) and secondary data presented in available, relevant literature. The RLAC project utilized focus groups with the pupils and readers for data collection (Rafiq & Dorovolomo, 2020). RLAC received ethics approval from the Fiji Ministry of Education.

The reliance on secondary data is a limitation of this study. Chandola (2021, p.121) noted that "one of the biggest limitations of using secondary data is that you are limited to the data that is already collected". Second-hand information can, nevertheless, be used to advance further strategies for how to optimize student learning in the future. However, there is an enormous volume of publications, and analysis of secondary data has become a more prevalent and viable options for researchers to add to current knowledge, help make recommendations and influence student learning (Chandola, 2021). Furthermore, Davis-Kean and Jager (2017) stated that secondary data is crucial for understanding how children learn and interact across educational contexts, highlighting that the use of secondary data is an important and "novel idea" (p. 4).

Data analysis

This study incorporated the five practical steps advocated by Esser and Vliegenthart (2017) to organize comparative data. Whilst this study is not directly comparing two or more cases, drawing on a comparative approach provides a carefully contextualized analysis that allows for comparison across available literature and with future cases. Esser and Vliegenthart's (2017) first step is the *contextual description* of systems, cultures, and phenomenon of interest. The phenomenon of interest in this case study is that the program used elite sports persons to read aloud for school children at school and helped class teachers and schools to organize literacy activities.

The second step involved recognizing *functional equivalents* so that objects with similar roles could be meaningfully compared (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017). In considering the

potential for comparison of RLAC to other similar cases, the phenomenon of interest (as noted above) and the purposes and benefits of the program in relation to promoting reading are likely to be the functional equivalents that can be meaningfully compared.

The third step was to establish *classifications and typologies* so that there were identifiable and shared characteristics; this helped make meaningful differentiations and similarities between systems and objects (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017). Analysis of the secondary data from the RLAC program produced "takeaways" and lessons that were derived in an inductive manner (Gray, 2014), which means they emerged from the study rather than deductively from an established theory or framework.

Explanation was the fourth step, where the classifications needed explanations to help reveal relationships and operationalize variables (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017). The third and fourth steps were combined, providing the classification or category as well as explaining them to distinguish each. The following four "takeaways" or lessons emanated from the RLAC project:

1. Literacy through innovative ideas: The use of elite sports persons to read aloud for school children and participate in related activities are not commonly occurring ideas and are innovative and creative programs.
2. Literacy should involve partnerships: Improving children's literacy levels must involve building rapport and successful partnerships with stakeholders.
3. Literacy needs role models: This acknowledges that children need role models and significant others to provide the inspiration and enjoyment of literacy activities such as reading and writing.
4. Literacy as contextual, every day, situated practice: That literacy is contextual and should manifest itself through meaningfully interacting with others.

The fifth step involves drawing lessons across countries and locations to enable solutions and suggestions (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017). The four lessons outlined above will now be expanded upon in the following discussion, including suggestions, general conversations, and possible solutions.

DISCUSSIONS

Literacy through innovative ideas

The first lesson from this study is that involving elite sports athletes in students' literacy activities is an innovative idea that is not widely utilized. The UK *Premier League Reading Stars* program mentioned above helped motivate struggling readers and stimulated improvements in student achievements in other subjects because being literate is vital to attainment in other subjects (Premier League, 2015). The UK *Rugby Reading Champions*, also mentioned above, was underpinned by rugby values, such as teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline, and sportsmanship, were often run over 10 weeks and were aimed at stimulating the motivation to read and greater reading comprehension (National Literacy Trust, 2021a). The UK *Shooting Stars* program, run with the Football Association in the UK, which specifically encouraged girls aged 5 to 8 to learn soccer through movement and storytelling using popular Disney stories and chosen books, not only improved the girls' physical skills but also their speaking and listening skills (National Literacy Trust, 2021b).

The National Rugby League (NRL) of Australia collaborated with the Australian Library and Information Association in *National Simultaneous Storytime* program, which advocates for reading and literacy among school children (Gabor, 2016). Gabor (2016) reported that the program was rolled out in 70 schools in Australia and New Zealand with the message that children should not just learn to read but also enjoy and have fun reading. Delivered via face-to-face visitations, online, and digital platforms, NRL produced resources for students and teachers to make the lessons interactive. The program received positive feedback from schools and the community (Gabor, 2016).

The RLAD program (Kirkby et al., 2018) collaborates with the Melbourne Football Club to help instill a love for reading among primary school children in the Casey region. The program is comprehensive, with lessons, student activities, videos, book reviews, and writing activities (Monash University, 2015). The RLAC program (Rafiq & Dorovolomo, 2020) engaged elite Fiji sports persons to read aloud to class three students at a primary school in Suva, Fiji. While there is another program besides the RLAD in Australia using sport to encourage literacy development at school (Gabor, 2016), there has not been in Fiji.

Using sports people to engage school children meaningfully in literacy activities is innovative. Goatley and Johnston (2013) defined innovation in children's literacy as the "process through which new ideas are generated and put into productive practice—"new meaning new to this situation or this location or this community" (p. 94). The RLAC is an innovative program that adds to the literacy activities of the schools in the local context of Suva, Fiji. Goatley and Johnston (2013) stressed that whether it is inviting children to create a book themselves or be a character in a book, it is important to be innovative. Innovation involves innovative ideas or events. In the RLAC program, the class three children participated in the library week and an end-of-term party with various activities that show children that reading and being literate is important (Rafiq & Dorovolomo, 2020).

Literacy should involve partnerships

The second lesson stresses that improving children's literacy levels must involve building rapport and valuable partnerships with stakeholders. Abodeeb-Gentile et al. (2016) cautioned that not all university-school partnerships have been successful but those that have been have characteristics of good planning, proper resourcing, and mutual respect among partners. As a result of a successful two-year partnership between their university, school administrators, and students, Abodeeb-Gentile et al. (2016) found markedly improved performances by pupils in their literacy-related high-stakes exams as well as content-driven professional development of teachers.

The RLAC program involved a partnership between the University of the South Pacific (USP) and participating schools and teachers. The USP funded the project, which made the RLAC program possible. The program also required partnership with the Fiji Olympic Committee and their Voice of the Athletes (VOA) initiative, which consists of elite Fiji personalities who take part in various activities in communities. Crockatt and Smythe (2000) emphasized that in order for long-term impacts of literacy initiatives to occur, establishing partnerships and local networks are crucial. Moreover, building community partnerships are particularly critical in places where there is a scarcity of resources, funds, support, and expertise. The after-school club ensures the books

children are read carry messages such as health and wellness, and other important values. Parents and guardians are also encouraged to share their experiences and possibly keep a journal of their experiences (Crockatt & Smythe, 2000). Peters et al. (2018) saw the value of a partnership between schools, parents, and universities when they organized successful literacy summer programs for children. Those who have an interest in children's literacy should work together rather than rely on normal school hours. The collaboration can also involve creating a shared literacy vision to help reshape the way literacy is implemented and experienced at the school (Jetton et al., 2008). Furthermore, Jetton and colleagues (2008) emphasized the salience of all stakeholders learning from their collaborative experiences, helping to pool valuable resources and draw on the expertise and knowledge of significant others.

Literacy needs role models

The third lesson acknowledges that children need role models and significant others to provide the inspiration and enjoyment of literacy activities, such as reading and writing. For example, when the Melbourne Demons went to Alice Springs in 2014 and conducted the RLAD program, the Manager of the local library noted that it was "great for children to have role models who encourage them to read" (Davison & Bergen, 2014, p. 1). In one of their visits to Casey-Cardinia libraries in 2013, about 500 pupils attended, all drawn to the football ambassadors who were spending time to celebrate the association that children have to literacy and a love of reading (Strachan, 2013). In the RLAC program, class three students' attendance was good when champion readers were due to come visit the school (Rafiq & Dorovolomo, 2020). The VOA program with the Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee (FASANOC), with whom the RLAC initiative partnered, designed it to be a platform for elite athletes, former and current, to be role models to the community (FASANOC, 2020). Elite athletes have incredible opportunities to positively encourage the next generation of young people and crusade for worthwhile societal change (Smoll, 2015). Smoll (2015) also reminded elite sports athletes to conduct themselves in a manner that does not destroy their personal integrity and devote themselves to altruistic missions by inspiring others and be selfless in benefiting others. Improved literacy levels are not void of role modeling from significant others whom the child want to emulate. Children's literacy levels will not improve unless they have higher benchmarks to strive for.

Literacy as contextual, everyday, situated practice

The fourth lesson is that literacy is contextual and should manifest itself through meaningfully interacting with others. While the RLAC initiative was inspired by the RLAD program, adaptations were necessary given that Melbourne and Suva are very different cities in size and context. Literacy activities must be contextually relevant so that they become meaningful and authentic. In addition, Shelton (2014) supports multi-literacies pedagogy in which the instructor recognize that literacy comprises situated practice in which meaning making occurs in context. It is necessary for a multiplicity of representational modes and resources be designed into the curriculum (Shelton, 2015). In the RLAD program, Kirkby and colleagues (2018) noted that prospective and practicing teachers view literacy through a "multi-literacy" lens, which is imperative for recognizing cultural and linguistic diversity and being competent in multi-literacies pedagogy. This concept was applied in the Suva RLAC program. For example, when it

was fathers' day, the schoolteacher and researchers brought in books related to fathers. Books relevant to the Fiji context are also bought and used in the RLAC program. Books are chosen carefully so that they do not carry racist, sexist, and religious prejudice, all issues that are especially important for a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country such as Fiji.

It is crucial to value the varying meaning-making that will ensue from reading, writing, listening, speaking, representing, and viewing. Kirkby (2018) emphasize the need for viewing literacy through both creative and critical lenses. Dharamshi (2018) supports this need by noting that critical literacy should view every day through a new lens and respect multiple perspectives. It should also promote social justice agendas and pay attention to the socio-cultural environment of the students. Getting teachers to problematize literacy materials ensures that pupils are exposed to critical literacy rather than simply accepting materials passively. This will require teacher education to take a critical stance. Educators need to implement critical and multi-literacies, not merely as topics but as critical stances (Dharamshi, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The authors of this article recommend that schools be willing to collaborate with others who have an interest in improved literacy among school children and believe that it is valuable to have a network of organizations that can contribute to the school's literacy programs. Many schools do have existing literacy programs and so new agencies coming in should not see themselves as coaches and experts to change things radically, but as partners who can help to contribute to activities of the school. Sporting organizations may not necessarily be seen as partners in children's literacy, but the RLAC and other programs have begun to see this potential and are proving that they have value in promoting improved literacy levels.

The RLAC program is an innovative approach to the promotion of children's literacy development. The program utilized sporting role models that school children look up to and who have the potential to make worthwhile contributions to sparking imaginations of school children, in this case, for the love for reading and engagement with literacy materials. Children do not just learn in a void, they learn through interaction with others in society, such as parents, teachers, through other institutions, and through significant figures such as sporting role models. Students can learn from role-modeling the desired behaviours. While contexts are different and require strategies that work in particular locations, literacy programs such as those explored in this article can be adapted and are agile enough to encompass different contexts.

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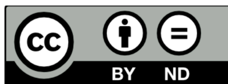

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He Waʻa He Moku He Moku He Waʻa

Matthew Limtiaco
University of Guam, Guam: *matthewlimtiaco@gmail.com*

The short film ***He Waʻa He Moku He Moku He Waʻa*** was produced in a partnership with the Polynesian Voyaging Society, The Nature Conservancy and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and World Heritage Site. The goal of this film is to introduce *waʻa* (canoe) values, to students and teachers in Hawaiʻi and across the Pacific. The values expressed, essential to open-ocean voyaging, translate well to ways we should live on our islands, and on this planet. Engendering these values in students supports social-emotional wellbeing and provides a means for academics to engage in solutions to our most critical environmental issues. The title, translated in English, means: The Canoe is an Island, and the Island is a Canoe, supporting a message of intentional responsibility, caring, cooperation, and striving toward sustainability.

He Waʻa He Moku He Moku He Waʻa opens with commentary from Polynesian Voyaging Society President Nainoa Thompson and features pillars of the Hawaiian voyaging community. The film serves as a tool for introducing strategies for how we can conserve limited resources; care for one another; understand our individual responsibilities; and seek knowledge to find our way as a community on land and in the ocean. Students and teachers who adopt these values in their classrooms will find that a journey of learning is less dependent on authoritarian rules and regulations, and more reliant on a shared value system that promotes individual and group growth and nurturing.

The film ending features students from several schools who have taken the voyaging values beyond the walls of their classrooms and applied them in the wild spaces of Hawaiʻi to restore native habitats in the forests, wetlands and coasts near their schools. During the production of this film, ten participating schools were visited by members of the voyaging community as well as experts in traditional ecological knowledge, botany, and wildlife management and restoration. The film is now utilized as a primer for UOG School of Education students working with Dr. Limtiaco, elementary schools, and restoration organizations, to show how academic pursuits might translate into accomplishments that reflect our island values.

As pandemic restrictions lift and schools reopen, social-emotional supports will be vital in establishing trust and camaraderie among students who have experienced isolation and potential trauma. ***He Waʻa He Moku He Moku He Waʻa*** continues to support and enrich the ongoing development and testing of culturally relevant social-emotional learning tools, supports and teacher pedagogy at the University of Guam.

"As an educator, it's important to instill a sense of safety, support, and personal responsibility in your students early on. Nurturing classroom settings are cultivated in human values and an understanding that, as a classroom community, we will care for one another along the way. This film was produced to help begin a dialogue about how we can

commit to building and sustaining a nurturing classroom, school, community, and world." – Matthew Limtiaco, Coproducer and Program Coordinator for the Elementary Education Program at University of Guam School of Education

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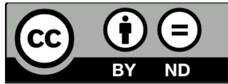This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA

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BOOK REVIEW:

Relational learning in Oceania: Contextualizing education for development

Martyn Reynolds
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand: *msdfreynolds@gmail.com*

BOOK REVIEW: S. Johansson-Fua, R. Jesson, R. Spratt, and E. Coxon. (Eds.). (2020). *Relationality and learning in Oceania: Contextualizing education for development.* Leiden: Brill Sense. ISBN 978-90-04-42529-3 (paperback). 172pp.

Relationality and learning in Oceania, edited by Seu'ula Johansson-Fua, Rebecca Jesson, Rebecca Spratt, and Eve Coxon is a welcome addition to the fund of knowledge about how relationships and learning exist in a central but complex dialogue. A central theme is the value of thinking through relationality, the state of being related, as a focus on people-centric thought and action. The book describes aspects of two interventions in the Oceania region in the context of development aid. Geographically, Oceania is roughly bounded by the shores of the Pacific Ocean. However, the region can also be thought of as a complex web of relationships between various people, their travels and their environments. This more dynamic definition of Oceania is honoured in this volume.

Divided into three sections, the book offers important insights into what education in context means, and the value of thinking about development education through relationality. The offerings, which focus on literacy interventions in Tonga and Solomon Islands, come from a wide range of well-qualified practitioner-contributors. The core value of the volume is as a timely counter-narrative to managerial views of education, development, and education for development.

After Eve Coxon's appropriately concise introductory chapter, the first section kicks off with scene setting by Eve Coxon, Jack Maebuta, and Seu'ula Johansson-Fua in Temotu, Solomon Islands, and Tonga. Their sketch encompasses demographics, history, and a profile of the two interventions: Temotu Literacy Support programme, and the Literacy and Leadership Initiative executed in Tonga. Attention to context provides readers with a sense of place helpful for unpacking later detailed accounts.

The relational foundation of the book is then framed in Seu'ula Johansson-Fua's chapter, an unpacking of *motutapu*, whereby an island is understood as a sacred, safe space for dialogue. In this context, the *motutapu* is a relational space for interactions between researchers and practitioners from small Pacific Island states and New Zealand, a far cry from contractual and bidding arrangements that generally configure donor aid relationships. The key messages are the importance of contextual means to promote solutions, and the significance of learning that acknowledges the strengths of community as experts in their own worlds. Design-based research (DBR), as described by Rebecca Jesson and Stuart McNaughton, is the concluding focus of the first section,

an account of value to those interested in sustainability in development education. DBR involves relationship-focused research-practice partnerships through which persistent problems are addressed in ways that produce learning for all.

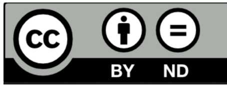
Section Two opens with Rebecca Jesson's DBR-guided additive approach to literacy. This includes attention to cultural functions and uses of literacy. She describes how warm relationships allow researchers to weave ideas about literacy into existing understandings, "nudging" all those involved to re-examine their ideas. Robert Early's case study of literacy in Temotu province puts more flesh on theory. He shows how vernacular literacy can be incorporated into previously English-focused classrooms. The payoffs are that children learn to speak, read, *and* write in their own language, and new kinds of collaboration between school and village communities developed. The contribution of 'Ana Heti Veikune, Jacinta Oldehaver, Seu'ula Johansson-Fua, and Rebecca Jesson illustrates how Tongan practices such as *lālanga* or weaving can inform education and provide a frame for local understandings including *ako* (reciprocal teaching/learning) to come together in the service of education. All in all, this section provides synergies of theory and practice, and deeply rooted examples of contextualization. By way of conclusion, Rebecca Spratt and Ritesh Shah remind us of the commonly encountered tension between assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning, and the way assessment acts to exercise power from afar at the expense local ideas of education in Oceania.

The third and final section begins with Irene Paulsen and Rebecca Spratt's proposition that if the approach to intervention through DBR is adaptive, pre-set rigid evaluative frameworks make little sense. They show how locally framed negotiated approaches such as *tok stori* (a Melanesian oracy), when leveraged as both intervention and evaluation, are more likely to produce deep descriptions and positive change. This is a consideration useful to those who navigate the straits between communities and donor agencies on an ongoing basis. Rebecca Spratt's closing chapter brings us back to the intersections between relationality and aid as a question for the future, focused on effectiveness and what that might entail.

What this book does well is to keep the common theme of relationality close to the surface of the varied chapters. Thinking about who we are to each other as people, and the ways flows of power can be shaped through deliberately re-configured relationships is a worthy focus; it has ontological relevance for many peoples of Oceania and matters in a world where the "glocal" discourse is growing. Unevenness between the chapters is the product of the approaches taken by various authors, who are associated with the University of Auckland, The Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific, and Solomon Islands National University. A spin-off of this diversity is the potential to interest a wide range of readers, policy makers, development professionals, and researchers. If space had allowed, I suspect the editors would have included more local stories of relational encounters in the field. After all, *he aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata. He tangata. He tangata* [What is the most important thing in the world? It is people. It is people. It is people].

Book-ended by blessings from Kabini Sanga and Konai Helu-Thaman, *Relationality and learning in Oceania* offers much pause for thought regarding established agendas and thought pathways about how relationships and learning are understood in the specific context of literacy intervention and development aid. However, its lessons

extend beyond that into re-imagining how we might live well together as caring people as we seek the common good through education in Oceania and beyond.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA

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