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*TalanoaMālie: An innovative 'space' in Early Childhood Education for revitalising
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*Revitalising and/or maintaining languages: Planning and implementing sustainable
language maintenance and language revitalisation programmes*

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WORK IN PROGRESS

TalanoaMālie: An innovative ‘space’ in Early Childhood Education for revitalising and maintaining Tongan language and culture in the University

Abstract

To ensure that the Mother-tongue of ethno linguistic communities, such as the indigenous migrants and their descendants from the tropical islands to the north of Aotearoa-New Zealand endures into the future, people in the University should develop curriculum and teachers to revitalise and maintain the peoples’ languages and cultures. In this paper, the writers will discuss an innovative space called TalanoaMālie developed by a few colleagues of the School of Education Te Kura Mātauranga, Auckland University of Technology in order to advance the education and training of Niue, Tokelau, and Cook Islands Māori students; Tongan, Samoan and Fijian students, hereafter, referred to collectively as Pasifika peoples enrolled in the undergraduate qualification, the *National Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education Pasifika)*. All this means that diversity in pedagogy is likely to increase on parameters such as language and culture, teacher recruitment, coursework and the timeframe. As a possible result of increased diversity in Mother-tongue education creativity, imagination, ingenuity and inspiration are likely to be strengthened and with imagination the ability to develop new ideas, new coursework and curriculum which are to all intents and purposes what keeps an education institution running.

In the new education context, diversity represents a possibility for a creative and innovative environment for Mother-tongue education and new frontiers of knowledge. That is to say, that when diversity and innovation are studied, intellectualised and politicised, ethno linguistic communities’ audacity to hope for the development and revitalisation of our languages and cultures might be boosted and strengthened. Aotearoa-New Zealand is in a unique position in this matter. The start point is for the people in the education context to talk about what diversity and innovation in revitalising and maintaining languages and cultures means to all of us and how our ideas will be put into practice.

The critique will be useful, therefore, in contributing to establishing diversity, especially, in relation to innovation, as an important point on educating students from ethno linguistic communities in the University, for the future. The modern nation of Aotearoa-New Zealand provides a unique natural laboratory to examine the issue of pedagogy and that would engender, in this space, the language and culture of Tongan people in the future, due to the society's longstanding linguistic and cultural diversity.

Scrutinising notions of diversity and innovation development

The focus on diversity in pedagogy or relationships between teaching and learning is likely to increase on issues such as language and culture, teacher recruitment, coursework and the timeframe. The theme or argument in the paper lies in the negotiation of these issues. In doing so, the authors will scrutinise current positions that the colleagues and the students in the Level 7 *National Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education Pasifika)* course occupy, the transformations they make as they teach and learn and, the challenge for them in understanding that diversity in pedagogy should bring about a better relationship between them and not, merely, profit for the University.

The idea that novel approaches to pedagogy are developed by the elite members of the prevailing society, such as the professors in the University in tandem with the career civil servants in government ministries, is deeply ingrained in both prevailing expectations and scholarship. When we as ethno linguistic communities complain about the shortcomings of the official education system and wish for a new one, 'they' commonly think that 'they' should develop the new education context – not us. Even the ethno linguistic colleagues who will teach the ideas received from 'them' implicitly suggest that they are not active in developing multilingual education and revitalising our languages and cultures. Nonetheless, there is strong verification by indigenous Māori or Tangata Whenua, Tongan, Samoan, Palau and American scholars, writers and researchers that diversity, innovation and imagination in teaching and learning is persistent, pervasive and imperative (McFall McCaffery, 2007; Māhina, 2007; Refiti, 2007; Tolenoa, & Hough, 2005; Taufe'ulungaki, 2004; Stevens, 2003; Stewart-Harawira, 2002). This innovative verification will be developed throughout the paper.

We begin this paper by discussing the objectives that the School of Education received from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to develop the *National Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood Education, Pasifika)*. We then portray that innovation development is concentrated amongst ethno linguistic communities and that our languages and cultures often become the innovations underpinning diversity in pedagogy and, most often, we develop a just-right special curriculum for us.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority states that holders of the National qualification are enabled to meet the genuine satisfactory teacher dimensions specific to professional practice, professional relationships, and professional leadership that the New Zealand Teachers' Council requires for teacher registration. The student can demonstrate knowledge and skills in the Pacific Islands Early Childhood domains of curriculum, family and professional development; and are enabled to use knowledge, skills and attributes associated with the promotion and maintenance of Pacific community structure and protocols, language, and traditional practices that encompass the cultural diversity of the major Pacific groups; that is to say, the people of Niue, Tokelau and the Cook Islands; Tonga, Samoa and Fiji living in Aotearoa-New Zealand; and are enabled to teach in any early childhood setting within Aotearoa-New Zealand (2003: 5).

The primary goal of the NatDipTchg (ECE Pasifika), therefore, is to prepare teachers who are effective practitioners in early childhood settings and, especially, within centres that are characterised as Pasifika-focused, or, incorporate significant numbers of Pasifika children. This includes the preparation of prospective teachers who will be eligible to apply for provisional registration as teachers, and for teachers currently registered who wish to undertake professional development in Pasifika education. This “manufacturer-centric” goal (Von Hippel, 2005: 1) has been the mainstay of education in Aotearoa-New Zealand for generations and, the tertiary education sector's recent enthusiasm for Pasifika focused education development takes for granted that their ethno linguistics communities' educators and researchers are increasingly available to them in large numbers. What is declared obvious and natural rarely is so. Recognition of this complexity should teach the professors and the civil servants to think that the world is more diverse than they would understand, for the

established views have frequently been created not through a process of faultless reasoning, but through centuries of scholarly muddle (De Botton, 2000). In this kind of development, moreover, the only role for the ethno linguistic communities is to have needs (deficit model), which the professors and the career civil servants then observe, measure and call their own experts to design more techniques, lists, recipes and formulae, introductory readers, dictionaries, software, and more copyrights and other protections to prevent imitators from mimicking their curriculum, recruitment procedures and timeframes. The manufacturer-centric goal just illustrated is in sharp contrast to a Tongan innovation space called TalanoaMālie and discussed below.

TalanoaMālie, an innovative Tongan space in Early Childhood Education ...

With respect to innovation development in pedagogy, the idea is that individual educational institutions will not always receive what they want from the Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and the Teachers' Council. The mass manufacture of curriculum and qualification of teachers tend to follow a process of development designed to meet the needs of a large market sector or the prevailing society well enough to persuade purchase from and corner significant profits from a large number of clients. More to the point, governmental policy and legislation sometimes preferentially supports innovation by the government agencies. Considerations of the National Diploma suggest that this state of affairs must change for multilingual education to take place.

As intimated earlier, for the most part, ethno linguistic communities develop curriculum, coursework and timeframes, and recruit teachers by ourselves because the ideas are not available on the market and we are willing and able to develop a custom pedagogy. Since some of us have become 'specialists' in language development and language revitalisation for use in our own coursework, guest lectures and community-based organisations, there is the possibility that we could design and develop custom curriculum for individual even international education institutions.

In the context of the National qualification, the beginning innovative space for multilingual education is for ethno linguistic communities, such as Tongans, to talanoa mālie/to question peacefully our personal and collective experience: In particular, our ways of thinking about how to develop and revitalise our languages and cultural beliefs, priorities and expectations, not simply to service the students' training. In this innovative development, we might come to understand that to probe ideas about the learning and teaching spaces that we occupy in the Auckland University of Technology is complex, demanding and disturbing. Since an important part of a Tongan space of TalanoaMālie ought to be the development of students who will question, not simply, rote learn prescribed lists of skills for application in Tongan Early Childhood Centres, it is important that Tongan educators and researchers do not exclude ourselves from the process of query and possibilities for audacious revolution in our approach to teaching and learning (Manu`atu & Kēpa, M. 2005; Manu`atu & Kēpa, 2003).

Education is a social space or market for generating products and services, often times for profit. When, say, a School of Education is dissatisfied with the received product and service, then, ethno linguistic colleagues should develop curriculum and teachers for the institution. This possibility or space led to the innovation to draw on Tongan language to name the 19 papers in the National Diploma: Course names include *Ako*: Pasifika Perspectives I,II,III; *'Ilo*: Pasifika Perspectives I,II,III; *Talanoa Ako*: Principles of Professional Teaching; *Fonua*: Pasifika Perspectives I,II,III Human Development; *Fale Māfana*: Pasifika Perspectives (Centre design in Pasifika ECE settings); *Kāinga*: Pasifika Perspectives (Working with parents as partners); *Tatala*: Pasifika Perspectives I,II,III (Critical issues in education) and *Ngaahi Lea*: Pasifika Perspectives (Language in Pasifika ECE) and so on. Indeed, leading language development and revitalisation with respect to renaming the coursework is an appeal to other ethno linguistic communities in education institutions to do so. This turns out to be the case in the National Diploma where the Samoan and Niue educators and students are drawing on their language and culture to name, conceptualise, teach and learn the coursework, to recruit students and educators. The social value of the development is increased when the Tongan educators and students somehow disseminate what they have developed to the other ethno linguistic communities in the National Diploma and Early Childhood Centres. They achieve this development

when the educators talk together at staff meetings and professional development courses, over morning tea and luncheon, sharing a cup of tea with a colleague at the end of the working day, through an email, a conference paper and when the students take up their practicum in the Centres. When the educators and students do not share what they have done, within and beyond the School, other ethno linguistics communities with very similar issues will have to develop related innovations on their own initiative. As a matter of fact, the act is a poor use of knowledge and wisdom from the viewpoint of the well being of society. And, in this act of sharing happily with the different ethno linguistic communities and, perhaps even, the professors and the civil servants their knowledge and wisdom becomes a public good. At the heart of the innovation, the ethno linguistic communities appear to be more robust with respect to recruitment, especially, of students. Of course, though, the workings of the intellectual property system should be of special concern to these ethno linguistic communities and the School. When materials and services are being developed, the communities associated with the innovative development should have commenced talking to each other, to the professor in the University and the civil servants in the government agencies about the direct use of the innovations and even selling or licensing them in order to profit from the innovations. Nevertheless, the workings of the intellectual property system are beyond the scope of this paper.

The other radical innovation development should be to develop a clear structure, meaning a concept of how the teachers, curriculum, and resources work, for collaborative governance and decision making in process. There should be a clear understanding of how a coordinated effort of people would share the School's finance to teach and learn in the context of their own people. As well, there should be a clear understanding of how the collective effort of people would share the School's finance for language development and language revitalisation, usefulness and fairness. Finally, there should be a clear understanding of how, when and where the 'seat of authority' for the ethno linguistic communities would be established, for example the Professor of Tongan language and culture, the Professor of Samoan Language and Culture even the Professor of Ethno linguistics, and so forth.

What is worrying is that the professor and civil servants mentioned at the start of paper simply tinker with timed coursework, teacher recruitment and reshuffle the

same old deck; rather than developing in a cooperative way what the Tongan educator, the students and the other ethno linguistic communities require to develop and revitalise our languages, and, indeed, multilingual education. Do not get us wrong there is a strong sense of commitment from the Auckland University of Technology to the National Diploma, how that qualification is developed, who develops the Diploma and for whose benefit is yet to be made

In this work in progress, we have scrutinised the notions of diversity and innovation development in Early Childhood Education in the University. We have also argued that there is an innovative Tongan space in Early Childhood Education and that there is an open and disseminated innovation process underpinned by the ethno linguistic communities and, that our languages and cultures have become the innovations underpinning diversity in pedagogy.

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