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HIGHER EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND: A FORM OF FAKALAKALAKA FOR EDUCATED TONGAN WOMEN?

A consideration of the perspectives of educated Tongan women on their experiences of higher education in New Zealand, and how this relates to fakalakalaka.

By

RUTH LUTE FALEOLO

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ABSTRACT

The key focus of this research is to understand whether or not higher education in New Zealand is a meaningful form of *fakalakalaka* for educated Tongan women.

This research firstly considers the analytic frames of educated Tongan women derived from theories in literature about *Pasifika* education, holistic dimensions, *fakalakalaka*, Tongan culture and identity. Secondly, this research considers these ‘everyday’ frames of thought alongside the images built up from the data gathered from *talanoa* (dialogue) with educated Tongan women in New Zealand. It is in the comparison of these two aspects of information that we can ‘challenge’ theories in literature, as well as ponder the range of ‘perspectives’ presented in *talanoa* of educated Tongan women (Ragin, 2011).

This consideration of the perspectives of educated Tongan women seeks to inform university educators and New Zealand tertiary sector policy-writers of the significance of supporting the holistic dimensions of learners, particularly *Pasifika*, in their higher education. The *talanoa* of the educated Tongan women have been captured and re-told in this study with the hope that it will better pave the pathway of further *fakalakalaka* for the next generation seeking higher education in New Zealand.
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“You will keep in perfect peace, all whose trust is in you; all whose thoughts are fixed on you.”

(Isaiah 26:2, NLT Bible)

First and foremost I would like to acknowledge God, my creator and faithful friend. He deserves all praise and glory for the work completed and my learning journey of which he is the Author.

I dedicate the fruit of this ako to my family. To my husband and lifelong companion Thom Faleolo and to my amazing children Israel, Sh’Kinah, Nehemiah, Lydiah and Naomi; your love and support is a constant source of inspiration. To my parents ‘Ahoia and Lose ‘Ilaiu, I am truly grateful for the way you have raised me and your unwavering faith and love.

‘Ofa ke tāpuekina kimoutolu ‘e he ‘Eiki!

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I am also indebted to the fifteen women who took part in this study. Your legacy of fakalakalaka fakalukufua shall live on to inspire the generations yet to come. I thank you all for sharing your perspectives; your talanoa has made this thesis complete.

Fakamālō lahi atu!

I pray that the learning journey becomes enlightened as we move forward with a better understanding of who we are as educated Tongan women in New Zealand.
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