INTRODUCING DISABILITY CONCEPTS WITH INTEGRITY INTO TONGAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

Seluvaia Leʻota Tuʻitahi Tahaafe

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Social Policy at the School of Social and Cultural Studies, Massey University at Albany, Auckland, New Zealand

2003
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ 5  
DEDICATION ........................................................................................................................ 7  
ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................ 8  

## CHAPTER 1  PRELIMINARY MATTERS ........................................................................... 9  
1.0  INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 9  
1.1  THE PROBLEMS ......................................................................................................... 10  
1.2  THESIS OUTLINE ....................................................................................................... 12  
1.3  THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS THESIS: THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES .......... 14  
1.4  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE ....................................................... 15  
   1.4.1  The Approach to Research ...................................................................................... 15  
   1.4.2  The Research Question ......................................................................................... 17  
   1.4.3  The Tongan Researcher’s Role ............................................................................... 17  
   1.4.4  The Participants ..................................................................................................... 18  
   1.4.5  Kainga Profiles ...................................................................................................... 18  
   1.4.6  Kainga Characteristics ........................................................................................... 19  
   1.4.7  Disabled People Profile ......................................................................................... 19  
   1.4.8  Data Collection ....................................................................................................... 20  
   1.4.9  The Interview Process ............................................................................................ 22  
   1.4.10 Ethical Issues ......................................................................................................... 22  
   1.4.11 Summary ............................................................................................................... 23  

## CHAPTER 2  DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES IN NEW ZEALAND ............................... 25  
2.0  INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 25  
2.1  GOVERNMENT OBJECTIVES ..................................................................................... 25  
2.2  THE NEW ZEALAND PUBLIC HEALTH AND DISABILITY ACT 2000 ...................... 26  
2.3  STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS) .... 26  
2.4  DISABILITY STRATEGIES .......................................................................................... 31  
2.5  FUNDING OF DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES ...................................................... 32  
2.6  IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIES ....................................................................... 34  
2.7  DELIVERY OF DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS) ........................................ 35  
2.8  ACCESS AND ENTITLEMENTS ................................................................................... 38  
2.9  HEALTH DISABILITY COMMISSIONER .................................................................... 39  

## CHAPTER 3  TONGAN PEOPLE IN NEW ZEALAND ...................................................... 40  
3.0  INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................... 40  
3.1  DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS ............................................................................................ 40  
   3.1.1. Numbers and Proportions ...................................................................................... 40  
   3.1.2. Age Distribution, Births and Location .................................................................. 41  
3.2  SOCIO - ECONOMIC SITUATION .............................................................................. 41  
   3.2.1. Education and Occupation .................................................................................. 41  
   3.2.2. Employment and Income Level .......................................................................... 43  
   3.2.3. Housing and Household Necessities ...................................................................... 47  
3.3  SOCIO – CULTURAL ...................................................................................................... 47  
   3.3.1. Families and households ....................................................................................... 47  
   3.3.2. The Kainga System ............................................................................................. 49  
   3.3.3. Religious Affiliation ............................................................................................ 52  
   3.3.4. Pangs and Pains of Adaptation and Cultural Assimilation in Aotearoa ............... 55  
3.4  TONGANS IN NEW ZEALAND: .................................................................................... 57  
   3.4.1. Social Economic Condition .................................................................................. 57  
   3.4.2. Tongan Migration into New Zealand .................................................................... 58  
3.5  SUMMARY .................................................................................................................... 61
CHAPTER 4  TONGAN DISABLED .................................................................63
  4.0 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................63
  4.1 KEY STATISTICS ON DISABLED TONGANS ............................63
  4.2 CASE STUDY ON 10 DISABLED TONGANS ...............................65
    4.2.1 Family Support .................................................................66
    4.2.2 Awareness of and Exposure to DSS .................................69
    4.2.3 Benefit Type ..................................................................71
    4.2.4 Dwelling .......................................................................72
    4.2.5 Attitudes and Beliefs .......................................................72
    4.2.6 Issues that Emerged from the Interviews ...........................72
  4.3 SUMMARY .............................................................................74

CHAPTER 5  CAUSES OF LOW PARTICIPATION OF DISABLED TONGANS IN DSS ........76
  5.0 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................76
  5.1 STRUCTURAL CHANGES ..........................................................76
  5.2 POLICY CHANGES – INAPPROPRIATE SERVICES ..................78
  5.3 BUREAUCRACY OF PROVIDING DSS AND INEFFECTIVENESS OF ASSESSMENT PROCESS ........................................................................81
  5.4 FUNDING LIMITATIONS ..........................................................83

CHAPTER 6: “FAKALOTOFALE ‘IA” : THE ALTERNATIVE .......................................................86
  6.0 THE GAPS: FURTHER ELABORATION ON THE THEORY BEHIND THE POLICY DEBATE .................................................................87
    6.0.1 Introduction ....................................................................88
    6.0.2 Universal Assumptions and Categorisations ......................88
    6.0.3 “Fakalotofale ‘ia”: The Alternative Theoretical - cum - Practice Framework .................................................................89
    6.0.4 Fakalotofale ‘ia and Disabled People ................................91
  6.1 PERCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY ...............................................92
  6.2 FAKALOTOFALE’IA IN PRACTICE ...........................................95
    6.2.1 Introduction ....................................................................95
    6.2.2 Illustrative Case Study (A) .................................................96

CHAPTER 7  CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..........................................99
  7.0 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................99
  7.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS ...............................................99
  7.3 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ...........................101

BIBLIOGRAPHY ....................................................................................105

APPENDIX 1 APPLICATION TO MASSEY UNIVERSITY ETHICAL COMMITTEE ........109

APPENDIX 2 COMMENTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CASE STUDY ........124

APPENDIX 3 CONSENT TO TRANSCRIBE - CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR TRANSCRIPTION OF TAPE .................................................................125

APPENDIX 4 QUESTIONNAIRE ....................................................................126
FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1: A ‘Mind Map’ of this Thesis ................................................................. 12
Figure 2: Recent History of Disability Services (1971 – present) ................................................. 27
Table 2.1 Organisations and Type of DSS related Services .................................................................. 28
Figure 3: New Zealand Health and Disability Support Sector 2002 - Overall Structure ................. 29
Figure 4: New Zealand Disability Sector - Simplified Diagram of Structure. ................................. 30
Table 2.2: Vote Health Appropriations 2002 - 2003 ........................................................................... 33
Table 2.3: Progress of Implementation - New Zealand Disability Strategy for Pacific Peoples .......... 35
Figure 5: The DSS Framework ............................................................................................................. 36
Table 3.1: Number of Tongans in New Zealand (1991 – 2001) ............................................................ 41
Table 3.2: Level of Education 2001 - Selected Pacific Islands Ethnic Groups (Aged 15 and Over) ..... 42
Table 3.3: Employment by Major Groups - Selected P I Ethnic Groups – (Aged 15 and Over) ....... 43
Table 3.4: Work and Labour Force Status 2001- Selected P I Ethnic Groups – (Aged 15 and Over) .. 44
Table 3.5: Sources of Personal Income 2001- Selected P I Ethnic Groups – (Aged 15 and Over) ....... 45
Table 3.6: Total Personal Income 2001 - Selected Pacific Island Ethnic Groups (Aged 15 and Over). 46
Table 3.7: Percentage of Households with Access to Necessities ....................................................... 47
Table 3.8: Structure of Families and Households (1991,1996,2001) .................................................... 49
Table 3.9: Patterns of Tongan Migration to New Zealand (1971 - Present) ........................................... 59
Table 4:1 Profile of Disabled People in New Zealand – 2001 ............................................................... 64
Table 4:2 Disabled Tongans’ Profiles .................................................................................................. 65
Table 4:3: Medical Requirements ........................................................................................................ 66
Table 4:4 Levels of Support Available to Disabled Group ...................................................................... 67
Table 5.1: Participants Waiting Time .................................................................................................... 80
Table 5.2: Proportion of Pacific Peoples with Disability (by age group) .............................................. 84
Table 5.3: Proportion of the Total New Zealand Population with disability (by age group) .......... 85
Figure 6: The SPI Model ................................................................................................................... 97
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would have not been completed without – and I must therefore commence with this acknowledgement - that from first to last - ‘Fakalotofale’ia’ has been in action to provide the support, encouragement and challenges it deserves. ‘Oku ou fakamālō ma’olunga foki ki he ‘Otua ‘i he tapa kotoa pē ‘o e feinga ni.

First of all, to the ten Tongan people with disability, their famili and kainga to whom I am indebted. “Fakamālō lahi atu” for your openness, honesty and humility in being able to share your stories and allowing me access to intrude and impose upon the privacy of your ‘fale’ to hear and share your journeys and your struggles both in bad and in good times.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Health Research Council with the funding they have so kindly provided for this research – and without which this work would have not been possible. I am also privileged to express my gratitude and appreciation to my Chief Supervisor Dr Michael Belgrave for his support and guidance and understanding especially over a very difficult period when I had to take time off to care for my mother who was taken ill at a very crucial time.

‘Ofa lahi atu Therese Weir. Thank you my friend, for your support and encouragement throughout this work and for your assistance to complete my funding proposal to HRC. Most important of all, your belief in my work, which has enabled this model to be implemented for the benefit of the Tongan disabled people, their famili, kainga and community.

‘Oku ‘oatu foki heni mo e fakamālō loto hounga mo’oni kia Dr ‘Ana Hau’alofa’ia Koloto mei he Koloto and Associates Ltd, ki he ngaahi tokoni kotoa pe ki he ngāue ni. Ko hono ngaahi fakatonutonu mo e ngaahi fale‘i kotoa pe mo e poupou ‘oku fu’u hounga ‘aupito kiate au. Neongo ne lahi e ngaahi faingata’a faka-fāmili, ka ‘oku ou fakamālō lahi atu kiate koe, taufe’ito ki he taimi lahi na’a ke to’o ai ‘a hono Supavaisa ‘o e ki’i ngāue ni, lolotonga e mama’o ‘a Dr Belgrave. Fakamālō lahi atu.
Fakamālō lahi atu foki kia Tu'uta Pōme'e ‘i he ngaahi pōtalanoa mo e ngaahi tokoni kotoa ‘o fakafofonga’i ‘a si’i kakai faingata’a’ia (disabled) ke fakaanga’i mo tokoni ke mahino ma’u pe ‘oku faka'apa'apa’i makehe kinautolu ‘i he fononga mai ‘o e ngāue ni.

Fakamālō loto hounga foki kia Uina Mahe, Pule ‘o e Komiuniti Langafonua ‘i hono fa’a faka'atā mai ke fai ‘a e ngai fakataha mo si’i kau faingata’a’ia ‘i homou senitaa. Fakamālō atu foki ki he fakalotolahī mo e poupou kotoa pe na’a ke fai ma’aku.

Fakamālō atu foki ki he’emau ki’i kalasi ‘aho ‘o e Ngaahi Famili Uesiliana ‘o Panmure, tautefito kia Sālote mo Malakai Fonua he ngaahi lotu na’a mou fai ma’aku lolotonga e feinga ko eni. ‘Io ko e mo’oni e mo’oni ko e kainga he ‘Eiki ‘oku fe’ofo’ofani mo ma’uma’uluta.

Fakamālō lahi atu ki si’oku fanga tuonga’ane mo honau ngaahi fāmili hono kotoa ‘i he poupou mo e fakalotolahī kotoa pe. ‘Oku ‘ikai ke fe’unga ha fakamālō kiate kinautolu si’oku famili kotoa pe, ki he ngaahi lotu, tokoni mo e poupou kotoa pē ‘o lava ai ke fakakakato ‘a e ki’i fatonga ni.

Hangē ko e taumu’a ‘o e pepa ni fe kamanahino ko e “Fakalotofale’ia” ‘oku katoi ai e ngaahi lelei mo e ngaahi mata’i koloa mahu’inga ‘oku tu‘unga ai e ma’uma’uluta ‘o e anga ‘o etau nofo fakafāmili, nofo ‘a kāinga, komiuniti pe ‘i ha tapa pē ‘o e kolope.

Fakamālō lahi mavahe atu foki kiate kinautolu Tupou, Sione, Ridvān, Sosaia mo Penisimani ‘i ho’o mou ‘ofa lahi ‘o faka'atā homou lotofale ke faka’osi ai e ki’i ngāue ni. Pehē foki mo e fakamālō lahi kia Max ‘i hono lau mo e ngaahi pōtalanoa mo e fakafehu’i ‘o fakama’ala’ala ai e ngaahi fakakaukau ‘o e pepa ni. Fakamālō foki kia Folau Tūtone ‘i he fa’a faka’atā ho feleti keu ngāue mei ai, pehē foki ki he ngaahi tokoni kotoa pē.

‘Oku ou ‘ofa lahi pea mo fakamālō makehe atu foki ki hoku hoa, ‘a Latainuku ‘i he kataki lahi mo e ngaahi lotu ma’aku pehē foki ki he ngaahi taimi ne ta fepulingaki ai kae lava ke faka’osi e feinga ni. Fakamālō foki kia Sarah ‘i ho’o tauhi mo fakakakato ‘etau ngaahi ngāue faka'api lolotonga ‘eku femo’uekina ‘i he feinga ni. ‘Ofa lahi foki ki he toenga ‘eku fanau tangata, Murray Wynn, Michael mo Joshua.
DEDICATION

This humble effort is dedicated to my beloved parents:

Talia mo Penisimani Takavaha Tu‘itahi.

Ko e hounga ho‘omo ‘ofa mo e mahu‘inga kiate au ho‘omo ‘Fakalotofale‘ia’

‘o lava ai ke fakahoko e ki‘i ngāue ni.
ABSTRACT

The case being advanced in this thesis is that “Fakalotofale’ia,” a Tongan concept, should be adopted as a viable and supplementary practice framework for disability services support and delivery systems – within the context of the Pacific peoples of New Zealand – and most specifically for the Tongan segment of that population.

Fakalotofale’ia encompasses the holistic worldview of Tongan disabled people in terms of their cultural, physical, intellectual, socio-economic and spiritual well-being.

Research evidence has established that the participation of Tongan disabled in available disability support services in New Zealand - is low. This study examines the reasons for the problematic of this low incidence and then reaches beyond that to propose and recommend possible alternatives.

An integral part of this same exercise involves an examination of the practice of Fakalotofale’ia within the structure and values of the “Kainga,” the most primary of Pacific kinship systems, processes and relationships. Fakalotofale’ia plays the widest possible and most pervasive range of roles and functions – from everyday maintenance of peace and good order, through to actual dispute resolution and as well as exerting a curative, preventative, educational, spiritual and economic influence on a Tongan’s life and entire social universe.

Tongans both in New Zealand and in Tonga have followed the precepts of Fakalotofale’ia – and have thereby gained a much more enlightened perspective of the reciprocal effects of the interactions between disabled people and members of the Kainga.

It is equally of significance to point out that this study had also found that in a number of cases the practice of ‘Fakalotofale’ia’ has been neglected due to some disabling factors and conditions of the new environment. This has had its obvious set-back effects.

For most of the disabled people and their kainga however, the practice of ‘Fakalotofale’ia’ facilitates their needs and fills in certain very critical gaps experienced under current mainstream disability support services and delivery arrangements.
CHAPTER 1  PRELIMINARY MATTERS

1.0  Introduction

Participation of Pacific Peoples - and especially Tongan disabled people in available disability support services and delivery in New Zealand has been found to be low\(^1\). This is an issue of very grave concern and is at the centre of this study.

This thesis thus takes as its point of departure an in-depth and detailed examination of this problematic situation and as well as the many and varied reasons which have given rise thereto.

In the process the fundamental elements of the intricate multivariate relationships between the main parties in this equation viz. the government’s health / disability services; the care provision and delivery systems; and the Pacific / Tongan disabled population - as well the problems that arise there from – are examined in detail.

At the same time and on the basis of findings from previous research – possible solutions to and means of alleviating (if not perhaps altogether eradicating) these difficulties are explored.

In concluding its discussions this thesis then follows through with proposals for possible alternative approaches and solutions for the problems raised and discussed.

Most significant amongst these proposals is the cultural practice of “Fakalotofale‘ia\(^ 2\)” – a concept of time-honoured utility within – and at the very root of the holistic universe of, Tongan culture, values and belief systems.

It is therefore the prime contention here that the cultural practice of “Fakalotofale‘ia” affords us the best perspective from which to view the whole spectrum of disability-related support

---