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Talanoa Vā: Honouring Pacific Research and Online Engagement

Dei! Me da dei ena noda yavu ni bula (Strong! Let us be firm on our foundational values and philosophies of life)

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Dei! Me da dei ena noda yavu ni bula (Strong! Let us be firm on our foundational values and philosophies of life)

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This special issue of the Waikato Journal of Education is a MUST read! The special issue delves into Pacific ontological understandings of reality and epistemologies to address the most important issue of education in our perceived ‘new normal’—that is, how do we as educators, including Pacific educators, address success and pedagogical relevance to ensure university students succeed in the new normal?

The special issue is appropriately titled, *Talanoa Vā: Honouring Pacific Research and Online Engagement*. The special issue is a gift of sorts penned by a number of authors who are informed by Pacific values and ideas of relationships that deliver mutual benefits. The education enterprise is about developing and improving people’s lives for community, nation, world sustainability, longevity and quality of life that includes happiness and good health. This is the gift—this basket of knowledge with the 14 papers, presented to us readers.

The knowledge basket opened here in this special issue via *talanoa*, and *tok stori* speak of spaces, ideas, philosophies of learning and teaching, and relationships that Pacific writers enact to facilitate success and deeper learning. Pacific peoples’ age-old values of nurturing and enhancing relationality to all life forms, spiritualities, as well as appropriate pedagogical tools or ploys including *talanoa*, *tok stori* or local variations of these, clothe new ideas in the new normal!

COVID-19 has given us Pacific people new challenges to rethink, reimagine and recreate lives and sustainable futures. In higher education, this has meant re-imagining student experiences and success given the online mode via digital platforms. To do this while remaining true to our Pacific ideas of nurturing relationships (Va‘ai & Nabobo-Baba, 2017), we dig deep into the *moana* to inhabit a space that is enabling for our students. To recreate new learning spaces, we reach out to age old values and transmission styles—*Kane Lobal*, *va*, *talanoa moe vā*, *talanoa*, *faikava*, *hanuju* and *fakalukuluku* to ensure we show care and at the same time produce positive outcomes for Pacific students.

COVID-19 has introduced new possibilities too. There are new technologies and new ways to understand leadership via virtual spaces and reality. There is possibility, as well, for enhancing Pacific languages with newly coined words and vocabs to language new ideas in the new normal.

The special issue carries within it as well representations of Pacific peoples’ voices of self-determination and a zest for life beyond the hardships posed by the pandemic. There is no doubt that we will continue to seek new ways and answers of addressing issues of learning and communities of learning with Pacific and beyond, and we must expect more of these to come.

The special issue also raises a number of pertinent and new questions as well, for instance:



How do we nurture the spirit of stability and success even though things may appear disruptive and traumatic? How do we rethink and recreate to build resilience among our people especially as we increase the use of digital technologies? How do we ensure we aren't creating further disparities in access and success? How do we include home grown and time-tested leadership ideas and philosophies like *Kane Lobal* to improve modern school leadership? How do we ensure that virtual social spaces like that of the digital *faikava* ensure respectful engagements and utilise *talanoa* appropriately to deliver educational outcomes and the related needs of our people?

The volume promises to be both enjoyable and informative. It embraces a labyrinth of Pacific ideas of working in higher education in the new normal that inspires readers to engage with different epistemological and ontological bases of life!

It is a refreshing take on the broader message of moving ahead and looking back into our Pacific pasts to be informed, as well as using newer tools of today to face that unmapped and rugged terrain of the 'Post' COVID-future. We remain in hope that there will be a 'Post'!

The special issue adds our Pacific voices to the pandemic of our time—what I hear in between the lines are a few reminders from our pasts. Deep within all our Pacific heritages is a sea voyaging tradition that is as old as our oldest islands. In sea voyaging, our Pacific chants speak of a lot of deep values and beliefs, such as move ahead with determination; respect all nature and the sea; search out the good winds; build better relationships to all beings; and connect vertically as much as you do horizontally, as God is ever present. And, after a storm, try to build better and show you are informed by the last and biggest storm!

These are some of the parting words and messages from this very special issue.

References

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