

## **Chapter 8**

### **Summary and Concluding Comment**

#### *Tulituli mata gau le ufi a Sina*

All good effort should reach a proper end. (Good deeds will be rewarded)

### **Overview**

This chapter summarises the major findings and conclusions of the research. To conclude, teachers, parents, and focus group members report their reflections on being a COI.

### **Major Findings**

In summary, this 3-year COI action research project addressed two major research questions:

1. What helps learning and language continuity as children make transitions within and from the A’oga Fa’a Samoa?
2. How can the key approaches that help learning and language continuity be implemented in practice?

Examples of key findings of the research, interpreted in the light of socio-cultural theory are synthesised and presented below.

### **Values, Principles, and Aspirations**

- Key principles of the research included those which inform our actions within our different *aiga*: service and responsibility (*tautua*), love and commitment (*alofa*) and respect (*faaaloalo*). The “connections” that we made (in terms of new knowledge, understandings and perspectives, and relationships with others) were a consequence of the principles that informed our research practice.
- The innovative transition practice of having a primary caregiver making transitions within the centre with “her” group of children clearly contributed to

the children's sense of belonging, their security, and their communication in Samoan. Therefore, our key findings for children are consistent with the aspirations of *Te Whāriki*, as stated in the curriculum document:

“This curriculum is founded on the following aspirations for children:

*To grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society”.*

(Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

## Innovative Transition and Language and Cultural Continuity

- The COI research, tracking the children's transition to school, shows that physical location (on the same block of land as the primary school which has a bilingual unit) and transition practices, together with the language immersion policy at the centre, served to support and strengthen the confidence and Samoan language competence of the children making transitions.
- As part of being a COI, the staff/teacher-researchers at the A'oga Fa'a Samoa carried out observations and reflected on the data. This led to teachers and management making further changes that enhanced language continuity. Learning increasingly took place in Samoan, as the improved structural layout to the centre and our changed practices ensured that Samoan immersion really happened. For example, much more of the centre space became designated as Samoan-speaking-only areas.
- Teachers took on more study in immersion and bilingual education, and there is evidence in the translated interview data that teachers were using techniques Baker (2000) specifies as supportive in language education. (Further data to support this finding are presented in Appendix F).
- The teacher-researchers, reflecting on children's conversations with their teacher, are convinced that children were confident about speaking in Samoan, they had meaningful conversations among themselves and with their teachers, and they were proud of their achievements.

- For children moving from the infants' and toddlers' area to the over-2s area of the centre, knowing where shoes and bags belong, clothes are hung, and about sleeping places and patterns is important. Teachers reported that a new initiative they introduced, of using the child's own photograph to label the place where a child's bag and shoes belong, worked well for the children in transition and their teacher.
- Making transitions as members of a small peer group fostered a sense of belonging to, and contributing to, the group. This is consistent with the *aiga* principle, and was evidence in the observations of small groups/s of children, and parents' written comments on their young children's transition within the centre.
- Innovative transition practices (e.g., spending time in the new entrants' bilingual class in the primary school), and language immersion practices, supported children's competence and their confidence to express themselves in Samoan, and their identity.

### Community of Learners; Community of Inquiry

- Teachers reflected on their interactions with children, and introduced more scaffolding and co-construction to support children as active learners and communicators.
- The focus group, as a "community of learners", extended to include representatives of the primary school. Our research at the A'oga Fa'a Samoa shows how a wide group became part of the research process and reflection.
- Parents and centre staff/teacher-researchers participated actively within the centre and the focus group. During the process of the research, the focus group became a "community of inquiry". Focus group members reflected on data, findings, translations, and all of the A'oga Fa'a Samoa research reports.

## Final Reflections

The teachers and staff who participated in the COI research work reflected on this report, on the research processes, and on what being a COI meant for their own learning. They expressed their reflections in English and in Samoan, and described the challenges and learning that took place during the 3-year action research project.

### Teachers' Voices

#### **Teacher's Reflections - Lucy Tulia**

##### **What I learnt of being part of COI research**

For me personally, it was tough because I didn't know what to expect. In the beginning I was excited to be part of the research. Having been to a focus group meeting and meeting parents whose children are part of the research has made me realise how important it is for children to keep up with their language and their cultural identity. Also to watch what these children have achieved in the time of the research, whether their transition to primary has made them more confident in who they are.

Lucy Tulia

The next reflections show how the research project extended teachers' knowledge of working with children, and emphasise the importance of listening to children's voices to extend their conversations. Being a COI offered new challenges like going out and learning with other centres. The research also confirms the importance of their heritage language to children's learning and identity.

#### **Teacher's Voice: COI Research Project March 2003-March 2006 Final word from Mrs Mane Kiliva, Senior Educator**

O le matou A'oga e ese ma le pisi. Ua toe faaopoopo mai foi ma nei suesuega ua atili ai le pisi. Ae aoga le pisi e ola ai le mafaufau.

O lenei suesuega e ese ma le tele o lona taua ia te au. E aoga e faalautele ai lou malamalama i galuega a tamaiti. Ae maise o le faatauaina leo o tamaiti ma o latou matua.

Ae maise ai lava lou fiafia e talatalanoa i ai. Ou te fiafia e faaoga le laau pue leo e pue ai a latou faamatalaga. Ae maise a matou fetufaiga.

O le taua foi o nei suesuega ua maua ai foi le avanoa e feiloai ai ma isi aoga ma tufa mai foi lo latou tomai ae maise foi o le faaaogaina o nei suesuega e faasoa atu i fono a le NZCA.

O le alualu i luma o nei suesuega e taua lava le faaaoga o lata lava gagana na foi mai e le Atua e tautala ai.

O le isi mea taua ua maua ai le lototetele o isi tamaiti e faaaoga masini pei o Laptop, komepiuta ma maua ai foi le lototetele e o atu ai i aoga tulagalua ma faasolosolo atu ai lava i isi nofoaga lautele. O lenei galuega e le se galuega faigofie ae faafetai i le Atua i lona fesoasoani mai. A maea se galuega ona tatou faapea ifo lea. O tatou lava o auauna leaoga.

E momoli atu ai le agaga faafetai i le filifilia o lenei aoga e fai ai nei suesuega, ua tele ai le tamaoiga ua matou mauaina e ala i fetufaiga ma fefaasoiga mai i aoga eseese ae maise o le faasoa mai o manatu o e ua i ai le potu ma le tomai faapitoa i suesuega tau i fanau iti.

A uma se galuega ona tatou fa'apea ifo lea. O tatou lava o auauna le aoga.

Fa'afetai lava  
Mane Faleifi Kiliva

Several teachers talked about Information and Communications Technology (ICT)—using the digital camera and Powerpoint—and the professional development that happened in this area.

### **Faiaoga Reflections – March 2006**

Taua ma le aoga o le COI ia te au ua faalautele ai le malamalama i tala tusitusia e uiga i aoaoga a tamaiti ma manatunatuga i mea ua tuana'i.

O le isi vaega taua o le taua ma le aoga o le transition mai le taimi o laiti tamati seia oo ina lima tausaga. Le mafanafana o le mafutaga a le faiaoga ma ana tamaiti.

Ua malamalama ai foi i le faaaogaina o le camera ma tuu i le powerpoint mo le molimauiina o galuega a tamati.

Milo Fili  
Educator

Teachers commented on the networking and learning that had happened as being part of a COI, and look forward to further learning and innovation.

**Teacher's Reflections: Mrs Ta'a Tuai**

**To manatunatuga e uiga i le suesuega**

1. Ua maua mai isi metotia taua i le fetufa'aiga ma isi aoga e iai.
  - Exemplar workshops
  - Mt Roskill South Kindergarten
  - ma isi aoga sa au ai
2. O le faatauaina o leo o tamaiti ma o latou aiga
3. Ua mafai ona ou mafaufau totoa ma iloilo totoa i tala tusitusi a tamaiti.
  - i aoaoga o lo'o tupu mai ai
  - faatauaina o manatunatuga a faiaoga ma le fesili.

What next and where to?

As shown in the following teacher-researcher reflections, important learning, leadership, and professional development took place during the action research and dissemination processes. These experiences, and the commitment of the teacher-researchers to reflection and to using practices that enhance children's learning, are inspirational for other COIs and for Pasifika immersion/bilingual services.

**Teacher's Reflection—COI**

**Au Luatua**

Being able to do research on this particular topic was hard at first. Why?—not understanding it, the word “research” made me think “oh no, more work for us to do.” It was quite frightening for some of us. Our professional development workshops that we did with Chris Bayes, helped me to understand and set us up for the BIG one (research for COI). Understanding the different steps of the action cycle that we had to go through took a while for me to get to grips with. It was confusing because I did not know what I was doing and not knowing what was to be expected. It was a lot of hard work, long tired nights of discussions about reflecting on children's language and work, and how they might be thinking, what language they were using...

Overall it has been an interesting experience, being part of the COI research has really opened up my eyes at how well we can achieve something when we all work together. Working together with parents, staff, focus group, and management and Val Podmore has made it possible for us to be successful. We are all part of the community of learners, we all know that we can never do anything on our own, working together at A'oga is like being in a aiga (family), it is not a family until the work is done together. This is all part of being Samoan; it's part of our culture and traditions.

It was important to get the work done in order to get the answers to the questions of our research. Information gathering was a vital part to our research, observations, interviews, and recording of children's language is what we had to put together in our journals. Working alongside Val Podmore has been a great opportunity to learn from someone like her who is very knowledgeable and very helpful to me and I am sure to the rest of the staff. It was interesting to find out the information that we got from our information gathering, things that we had never seen or heard before about children who were being observed, which helped with understanding the children's needs and interests and how we could extend their learning with the knowledge that we had learnt, to me its all about enhancing the children's learning, what ways can we as teachers make learning for children interesting and exciting? This is probably another research question...hmm

### **Ene Tapusoa, Teacher-Researcher**

Being part of this research has been a great learning curve. Sure it was hard work at times, but looking back now it was all worthwhile. Reflecting on the data collected gave me a better understanding of the principles and strands of *Te Whāriki*, and also indicated the areas we need to improve. It showed theorists we learnt through studies being implemented through teachers interacting with children.

Findings from each cycle helped us plan to meet children's needs, and this helped transition and language learning run more smoothly.

Disseminating this research has been a great professional development for me as we document children's learning and share findings at different workshops and conferences attended.

I have seen great minds come together in the focus group, sharing knowledge and experience and working collaboratively in nurturing and guiding this research from the beginning till the end.

The COI Hui have been helpful to see where everyone was, to learn from the sharing and to know that we were on the right track.

Ou te faafetai i lenei suesuega ona ua faalateleina ai lou malamalama i le aoaina o tamaiti laiti, ae maise le a'oa'oina o le gagana Samoa. O nisi nei o ni auala na faaogaina.

- Fai oe ma faataitaiga lelei,
- Faaoga na'o le gagana Samoa, tusa pe tali mai le tamaititi i le fa'aperetania, faasamoa pea iai.
- Faalateleina le gagana a le tamaititi i le tu'u fesili iai i ni fesili e tautala mai ai, ae le na'o le ioe po'o le leai.
- Vivii le tamaititi i ana taumafaiga uma.
- Faailoga se pito o le A'oga e talanoa ai i matua po'o tagata e leiloa faasamoa.
- Galulue felagolagoma'i o faiaoga ma matua ma aiga

Fa'atuauaina lau gagana, o lau meaalofa lea mai le Atua.  
Soifua.

The next quotes show that, for focus group members and the centre manager too, the experience of being a COI and part of a community of learners was an insightful, collaborative learning and teaching experience.

### Parent and Focus Group Perspective

#### **Riki Apa, parent and focus group member**

In “*O Le Taeao Afua*”<sup>\*</sup> a study of Samoan perspectives on mental health, Tupua Tamasese writes that, when *Tautai* (Samoan fishermen) are out fishing, there are three perspectives that guide them to plentiful fishing stocks:

- the view from the top of the mountain to signal the distance and travel of schools of fish;
- the view from the tree-tops on the shore to monitor the distance of the fishing boats; and
- the view of the fisherman on the boat catching the fish.

All three perspectives are important to ensure that the village receives all that it needs from the sea.

I believe that this analogy captures the essence of the “community of learners” —who gravitate about, and are part of, the A’oga Fa’a Samoa—particularly during the COI research. One’s view or perspective is certainly influenced by where one stands relative to the core activity, and yet everyone has a valid contribution to make towards a common goal.

The view from the COI focus group has been both enlightening and insightful for me as a parent, a management committee member, and as a learner. It has increased my understanding and appreciation of the complexities surrounding language continuance, good transitional practice, and the importance of working together as aiga in a supportive and collaborative way to ensure that our children develop and learn in an early childhood educational environment enriched by language and cultural values. To this day, my two daughters provide me with ongoing evidence that the A’oga Fa’a Samoa way works.

<sup>\*</sup> K. Tamasese, C. Peteru, & C. Waldegrave (1996). *O Le Taeao Afua/The new morning: A qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services*. Wellington: The Family Centre.

## Co-ordinator/Manager Perspective

To conclude, the final words of this report come from the centre manager and COI project co-ordinator:

### **Jan Taouma, Project co-ordinator**

#### **Centre of Innovation**

As the co-ordinator for of this 3-year research project it has been a wonderful learning experience and a reassurance that the philosophies, theories and practices at the A'oga Fa'a Samoa are sound.

Hosting all the overseas groups at the centre also verified this as they were so impressed with the transition processes especially the ability to work so closely with the Samoan bilingual classroom in Richmond Road Primary School.

The contributions to the research by the focus group and the teaching staff made this such a wonderful collaborative process. The leadership and guidance by Dr. Val Podmore added to the security that the research was thorough and inclusive of all. Highlights were presenting of keynote addresses both here and in Samoa and witnessing the growth of staff as they gained confidence in preparing and presenting when called upon.

It has been a wonderful experience and we hope will be helpful to other Pasifika early childhood centres.