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Looking towards the source – social justice and leadership conceptualisations from Tonga

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Abstract

Purpose – This article aims to explore Tongan conceptualisations of social justice and leadership from a cultural perspective.

Design/methodology/approach – The approach taken is from a cultural perspective based on evidence that culture influences our thinking and consequently our behaviours, and the argument that social justice is about recognising our values, philosophies, processes and structures in our education system and that theorising social justice should be founded on our knowledge systems that are embedded in our cultures.

Findings – The Tongan conceptualisation of social justice is based on *Faka'apa'apa* (respect) while Tongan leadership is based on *Vā* (relationships); both concepts converge on the role of leadership. The example of the Tongan conceptualisation is given as a guide for other Pacific countries to consider when confronted with global educational instruments.

Originality/value – By conceptualising social justice from a cultural perspective, an alternative understanding is brought forward and a more global perspective is evident.

Keywords Social justice, Pacific region, Education, Leadership, Culture, Tonga

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Social justice is about recognising our values, philosophies, processes, and structures in our education system. Conceptualising social justice should also be based on our knowledge systems, which are embedded in our cultures. Leaders, particularly educational leaders, are tasked to ensure that social justice is not only theorised from our source, our culture, but also that social justice is ensured in our schools. The author argues for the need to articulate social justice and leadership from a Tongan cultural perspective. To illustrate this, an analysis of Tongan theory of social justice and leadership is presented. The author concludes by drawing upon possible implications for educational development in Tonga and in the South Pacific when social justice and leadership are theorised from our cultures.

Challenges of social justice in the South Pacific

The political philosopher John Rawls (1971) defines social justice in accordance with four key principles. The first principle is based on equality of treatment of all members of society (equal rights and liberties); the second principle being that all people are regarded as individuals; the third principle being based on equal opportunity, that everyone is given a fair chance; and the fourth principle being based on the notion that the greatest social and economic benefits be given to those who are least advantaged.

The term "Looking towards the source" was first used by Konai Helu Thaman (1992).

Journal of Educational Administration
Vol. 45 No. 6, 2007
pp. 672-683

0957-8234
DOI 10.1108/09578230710829865

Nevertheless, there are countless other debates and much discussion on different interpretations of social justice and what it means in a given context. Social justice is generally concerned with the belief that society should be based on giving individuals and groups fair treatment and a just share of the benefits of the society without discrimination of class, gender, ethnicity or culture. Much of the discussion on social justice and as theorised by Rawls is based on an Anglo-American, English-speaking, Western perspective[1]. The collection of articles in this edition intends to extend the understanding of social justice to a more global perspective where other conceptualisations of social justice are included.

Until recently, the educational administration literature – which has been largely dominated by an Anglo-American, English-speaking, Western perspective – has opened up the discussion to consider the role of culture in the discourse (Begley, 2000; Cheng, 1995; Dimmock and Walker, 1998a, b, 2000; Walker and Dimmock, 1999, 2000a, b). Hallinger and Leithwood (1996a, b, 1998) were amongst the early Western scholars to question and to probe the advancement of educational administration literature by considering culture – not only from an organisational perspective, but also from a societal cultural perspective. Since then, there has been a steady growth in exploring educational administration and specifically leadership from not only a Western perspective, but also from a growing literature from Asian perspective (Walker and Dimmock, 2000a; Cheng, 1995; Pye, 2000; Sharp and Gopinathan, 2000). In these works, cultural perspectives have been applied to better understand leadership in educational administration within the given context; however, much work remains to be done. For the Pacific, few have been involved in a serious conceptualisation of leadership from a Pacific perspective (Johansson Fua, 2003; Paongo, 1990; Sanga, 2000).

In this Special Issue attention is given to the role of educational leaders in ensuring social justice in schools. The educational administration literature on the application of a cultural perspective on leadership strongly recognises the influence of societal culture in not only the role of leadership but also in the structures and processes of educational institutions. In light of the current discussion the author argues for a need to consider social justice from a cultural perspective, as has been done for leadership and educational administration. This will not only allow non-Western views to be brought to the table, will but also expand the understanding of social justice to a more global perspective. Further to this, to discuss "social justice" as if it is value-free and culture-free would in itself be an injustice. According to Rawls (1971) social justice is based on Western ideology, beliefs and value systems that support ideologies of human rights, equality and democracy as believed by most English-speaking Western societies. This conceptualisation of social justice is based on Western culture and to take this articulation of social justice and apply it to another context without due recognition that such context has its own theories of social justice would be an injustice. Such acts of "borrowing" Western beliefs and concepts have not always been successful in the Pacific largely due to the failure to reconceptualise imported notions. Our interpretations and subsequently implementation of social justice are based on our beliefs, value and ideologies, which are all embedded in our cultures.

Social justice as discussed in this paper is from a cultural perspective. Culture here is defined "as a shared way of living of a group of people, which includes their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values, and which is perceived by them to be unique and meaningful" (Thaman, 2003, p. 3). By taking a cultural

perspective it recognises that social justice is subjective, context-specific and, therefore, based on values, processes and structures of the context, in this case the South Pacific[2]. It also recognises that social justice is a concept that is already embedded within each South Pacific knowledge system in various degrees and form. Further to this, by taking a cultural perspective on social justice, the author argues from the perspective of a Tongan – a person that is within the culture, not outside. Similarly, by taking a cultural perspective on social justice, the author gives voice to a minority group and explains its theories and beliefs – theories that have been trialled and tested over time and recorded through oral traditions and stories, not written books and journals. As such, then, the legitimacy and validation of these theories and beliefs rest with the people who live them through their customs and culture. The author is part of that culture and custom.

However, there are key challenges to ensuring that social justice as conceptualised by Pacific people (i.e. various structures and processes) are built into each Pacific educational system. One of the key challenges to ensuring social justice in South Pacific schools occurs in the global and regional/national interfaces where there is a failure to reconceptualise global educational instruments (GEI). Since most Pacific countries gained their independence in the 1970s, the educational development sectors have continually been barraged with various GEIs. More recent GEIs such as Education For All (EFA), the UN Literacy Decade (UNLD), the UNESCO Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) amongst others are currently pushing educational development agendas in the region. The application of these global educational instruments are backed by a line of donor agencies ranging from New Zealand Aid (NZAid), Australian Aid (AUSAid) within the region, to Japanese International Aid Cooperation (JICA), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the European Union (EU) to the two colonial powers still in the Pacific (i.e. the USA and France).

The promotions of GEIs have recently gained momentum with globalisation and the global effort to achieve the MDG by 2015. It is without doubt that some of these GEIs are and may prove beneficial for the development of Pacific education. However, all too often these GEIs fail to perform as implementing agencies, that is, as donor, regional agencies and national ministries of education, fail to reconceptualise these GEIs within Pacific context. As the agenda, time frame, and funds usually come from outside of the region, there is often very little time to allow for Pacific people to reconceptualise these GEIs before it is implemented. Further, as the GEIs are from outside of the region, the criteria and measurement for success are also defined from outside of the region. Such an approach continues to operate from a deficient perspective on the need for outsiders to "develop" the region. This deficit perspective continues to measure performance, achievement and progress in the Pacific according to global criteria that are often assumed to be value- and culture-neutral. With such an approach, people of the Pacific will continue to be viewed as deficit as it fails to recognise their own asset, capital and resources, thereby perpetuating one of the greatest injustices to Pacific people.

This is an injustice that is the responsibility of not only donors, but more so of Pacific people. On one hand donors continue to support processes and structures that fail to provide time and resources so that Pacific people may take responsibility for reconceptualising these GEIs and consequently finding authentic Pacific strategies to

address Pacific problems. On the other hand, Pacific people need to take responsibility for educational development in their own region. They need to educate donors and development partners on processes and structures that are needed to ensure GEIs are worthwhile and useful for the region and consequently achieve donor effectiveness and ensure sustainable livelihood for Pacific people.

An added challenge to ensuring social justice in Pacific schools lies within Pacific communities themselves. Formal education was introduced to Pacific countries by European missionaries during the late nineteenth century, and despite independence for over 30 years, much still remains to be done in decolonising our schools. Pacific schools' curriculum continues to be laden with more global knowledge systems than Pacific knowledge systems. Similarly, English language, science and mathematics are valued over Pacific languages, music and physical education – where most young Pacific Island students excel (Taufe'ulungaki *et al.*, 2007). As limited research has been done on Pacific epistemology, teaching and learning styles continue to be irrelevant and consequently ineffective (Taufe'ulungaki *et al.*, 2007; Taufe'ulungaki, 2000, 2002; Teaero, 2003; Mel, 1996, 2003; Mokoroa, 2003). Added to this is the continual rise in school leavers and the decreasing quality of teachers in schools due to various reasons including poor recruitment of teacher trainees, increasing challenges in financing education and lack of pedagogical development specific to traditions and changes in the Pacific region. Consequently, the majority of Pacific students are still struggling to gain physical access as well as access to attainment in the formal education system. Throughout the region, rural schools continue to receive fewer resources and often less experienced teachers. Furthermore, in certain parts of the region students travel by boat, bus or walk for over an hour to get to school on a daily basis. Such are real challenges to achieving universal access to education in the region. Additionally, the irrelevancy of the curriculum and the inappropriateness of the teaching and learning methodology to Pacific students perpetuate problems of access to attainment, equity, relevancy and consequently quality of education for Pacific people. The consequent of an irrelevant curriculum is the continuing rate of young people leaving school without formal qualifications or skills that will enable them to earn a livelihood within their own communities. This discrepancy between the knowledge systems in formal education – which are heavily based on foreign knowledge systems – and societal knowledge systems – which are based on local skills, knowledge and values – is not helping Pacific people to live sustainable livelihoods in their own communities.

Need to reconceptualise

Why do we need to reconceptualise? The process of reconceptualisation, as with other psychological processes such as perceptions, consciousness, cognition and intelligence, is influenced by culture (Matsumoto and Juang, 2004). Our subjective experiences, social environment, education and other social factors all come to have a bearing on our thinking processes and how we act them out. Added to this is our identity formation process, which is also influenced by culture.

In Linnekin and Poyer's (1990) work on Pacific cultural identity and ethnicity, they argue that Western cultural identity is based on biological descent, unchanging boundaries, and the acceptance of a person as a self-actualising individual. Pacific cultures, on the other hand, emphasise the environment, behaviour, and relationships.

Pacific cultures generally define a person not as an individual, but through the relationships that they have with others. Matsumoto and Juang's (2004) work as well as the work done by Linnekin and Poyer (1990) on Pacific identity strongly argue that culture influences the way we theorise and behave. What this means, then, is that any GEI constructed, whether in the Western or the Pacific context, is neither culture-free nor value-free but is influenced by the culture of the context. Based on this, it is therefore necessary to reconceptualise GEIs and other introduced notions from the perspective of the host culture in order for GEIs to make sense as well as to be useful for the host culture.

Currently, most Pacific countries are working to ensure that issues of access (both physical and attainment), equity, relevancy and, consequently, quality education and sustainability of Pacific people are addressed through strategic plans and implemented throughout educational systems. The University of the South Pacific's Institute of Education is involved in several projects on various fronts to reconceptualise GEIs, research Pacific knowledge systems, develop Pacific educational processes and principles, and implement these through strategic plans, policy advice, curriculum reform, resource development, and leadership training, amongst others. This is a regional effort to finally decolonise our education systems, recognise our knowledge systems and restore social justice for Pacific people. This regional effort is part of a global movement by various indigenous groups to restore social justice by recognising their philosophies and knowledge systems in their education systems.

The Institute of Education, in partnership with NZAid, national Ministries of Education, and Pacific communities, are collaborating on a project, "Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative by Pacific People for Pacific People" (RPEIPP), to re-examine Pacific education processes and systems through research projects in the areas of leadership (Sanga, 2000), values (Johansson Fua, 2005), knowledge systems (Bakalevu, 2003; Nabobo, 2003) and sustainable livelihoods (Taufe'ulungaki *et al.*, 2007). In rethinking these educational areas, the RPEIPP project is also developing Pacific research frameworks (Thaman, 1997), ethics and methodologies (Taufe'ulungaki *et al.*, 2007) to ensure that research approaches are in congruency with Pacific epistemologies and values. The project is based on the belief that it is not sufficient to rethink Pacific education processes and systems without simultaneously rethinking research approaches to Pacific issues. Likewise, in reconceptualising GEIs, and in this case, social justice and leadership, the process of questioning and theorising is more important than the final identification of the concept.

Through RPEIPP the process of reconceptualising GEIs, amongst other global concepts, begins by looking towards the source, i.e. Pacific cultures. This process of reconceptualisation based on culture recognises existing Pacific philosophies, knowledge systems, processes and structures. It is an approach that is operating from a sufficiency rather than a deficiency perspective. It is an approach that recognises Pacific people's assets, capital and resources as defined by Pacific people. It is also an approach that allows Pacific people to define criteria, measurements and benchmarks of educational development and achievement as it applies to the Pacific context. By adopting this process of reconceptualisation based on Pacific cultures, social justice is then restored for Pacific people.

Reconceptualising social justice: a Tongan case

To demonstrate the cultural approach to reconceptualisation, the author provides an example from a Tongan perspective. A Tongan perspective is not, however, a Pacific perspective. The Pacific – although seemingly a small collection of islands – is a richly diverse, unique and complex collection of cultures each with its own indigenous theories of identity and historical processes which consequently have different assumptions and view points (Linnekin and Poyer, 1990). The Tongan case presented here demonstrates how Pacific countries and other developing nations may approach social justice and other GEIs.

Tonga, similarly to other Polynesian countries in the region, has its fair share of problems – small-scale economy, limited natural resources, increasing rate of non-communicable diseases, increasing rate of youth unemployment, shortage of land, changing political climate, and more recently the impacts of rising sea level. Such a list of problems can be made of any other Pacific island state, and the problems are experienced to various degrees. However, what has always set Tonga apart from the rest of her neighbouring countries is that Tonga was never colonised. However, the influence of missionaries through education and Christianity has made its mark on Tongan history and has influenced contemporary Tongan culture. Thaman (1988) best describes contemporary Tongan cultures when she refers to it as a "composite culture". It is a composite culture as it has selected – and continues to select – and adopt foreign customs that best serve societal purposes and are "acceptable" to established customs and beliefs. Most notable in Tongan culture is the place of Christianity, introduced by foreign missionaries in the early seventeenth century. Christian values are the basis of the Tongan constitution and have come to be internalised as part of "Tongan custom". Further to this, as foreign missionaries, particularly British missionaries, were instrumental in establishing formal schooling in Tonga, much of their own values and beliefs about work, school and life in general have also been adapted to become part of the Tongan way.

Tongan conceptualisation of social justice is *Faka'apa'apa*. The concept of *Faka'apa'apa* is often loosely translated as "respect". However, *Faka'apa'apa* is more than respect as understood within a Western context. *Faka'apa'apa* is an unwritten social contract that all Tongans aspire and adhere to in various degrees and contexts. *Faka'apa'apa* begins with a shared understanding that this is a relational social contract between two people. *Faka'apa'apa*, as much as it is a value, must be demonstrated through behaviour, speech, dress code and meeting cultural and familial obligations.

Studies done by Thaman (1988), Johansson Fua (2001, 2004) and Taufe'ulungaki *et al.* (2007) have identified *Faka'apa'apa* as the core value for Tongans, the philosophy that guides Tongan relationships, or *Vā*. *Faka'apa'apa* operates from a collective perspective where the good of the collective is valued over the individual. Such a philosophy is based on social cohesion, harmony and maintaining collective peace. However, it also recognises that to achieve social cohesion and harmony there is foremost a more personal level of social interaction within smaller groups. *Faka'apa'apa* begins with an individual giving, sharing, considering and listening to the other; it is fundamentally about honouring and protecting the dignity of the other. By honouring and protecting the dignity of the other, it recognises the other person's emotions, intelligence, beliefs, resources, and other relationships that this person may

have. In recognising the other, it also realizes that the other does not exist in isolation, but within a complicated network of relationships. As such, then, *Faka'apa'apa,* which may have begun between an individual and one other person, is extended to cover others whose relationships are intricately woven. However, this is done with the assumption that the other will reciprocate in due time and that there is a shared understanding of the processes of *Faka'apa'apa*.

While valuing the collective, *Faka'apa'apa* also recognises differences and the uniqueness of individuality. *Faka'apa'apa* is based on equity rather than equality and makes sense when we consider that Tongan society is based on a ranking system that is hierarchical as well as vertical. Tongan hierarchical structure is based on a ranking system that explicitly displays inequality while recognising differences of relationships and context. Such a context is fluid, dynamic and certainly not static. The context of place/land (*Fonua*) and relationships (*Vā*) always defines the ranking system and *Faka'apa'apa* is the guiding principle for this system. At the societal level the monarch is the *Hau* – paramount chief, followed by the Nobles or *'Eiki* and the commoners. At the village level, the highest ranking person is the Noble, followed by his talking chief, *Matapule*, and the Noble's people, who are his clan or *Kainga*. Within an extended family the *'Ulumotu'a*, or the eldest son, and the *Mehekitanga*, the eldest daughter, share a unique partnership in leading the extended family. In Tongan society women as sisters are ranked higher than their brothers. *Faka'apa'apa* is mainly concerned with promoting the protection and honour of individual differences and uniqueness. *Faka'apa'apa* then recognises and values equity more so than equality.

Faka'apa'apa is guided by several key principles, including *feveitokai'aki* (sharing, generosity), *fe'ofa'aki* (compassion, love), *fetokoni'aki* (helpfulness) and *loto fakatōkilalo* (humility). These key principles that guide *Faka'apa'apa* are obviously designed to honour and protect the other by sharing, showing compassion, being helpful and being humble so that others may be honoured. Tongans share a belief that in displaying *Faka'apa'apa* to others, others will subsequently display *Faka'apa'apa* to oneself. As such it is an investment in building and maintaining relationships, which is the most essential social capital for Tongans and Pacific people. In a recent study by Taufe'ulungaki *et al.* (2007), Tongans' conceptualisation of poverty is based on *'ulungaanga* or a display of appropriate behaviour. A person is poor when that person lacks the appropriate behaviour in order to build and maintain relationships; *Faka'apa'apa* is crucial to building relationships. Poverty in Tonga is not measured in monetary terms, but rather in the intangible, values and relationships.

Knowledge in a Tongan context is only as valuable as it is useful. *Faka'apa'apa* can be conceptualised and discussed, but if it is not displayed appropriately, then it is not useful or worthwhile. *Faka'apa'apa* is displayed through several key modes in a Tongan context.

Tongan language has three registers, in which the verbs and nouns change to reflect the social hierarchy that is being addressed. There is a register for the monarch, one for the nobles, and one for commoners, and each is applied accordingly with given context. The skill of using different registers at the appropriate time and in the appropriate context is a display of *Faka'apa'apa*. Furthermore, *Faka'apa'apa* is displayed through clothing and the wearing of traditional mats around the waists of men and women, through body language, in how one sits, gestures, stands and walks, and through the presentation of gifts and the value of those gifts. In all, *Faka'apa'apa* is a holistic

approach to life in Tonga. It is not compartmentalised as one aspect of being, but rather it is a philosophy that guides a Tongan's life.

The value of *Faka'apa'apa*, although still claimed and adhered to by most Tongans, appears to be changing (Taufe'ulungaki *et al.*, 2007; Johansson Fua, 2000, 2003; Thaman, 1988). Much of this change is the impact of globalisation manifested through various forms of economics, politics and social factors. The November 16, 2006 will go down in Tongan history as the day that all value of *Faka'apa'apa* was lost when pro-democracy supporters rioted, looted and burned down 80 per cent of Tonga's capital Nuku'alofa. This event clearly demonstrated for the minds of Tongans what happens when *Faka'apa'apa* is lost – human rights are violated, liberty is threatened as property is destroyed, criminal acts are undertaken and relationships are broken. While *Faka'apa'apa* is an intrinsic value to Tongans, like any other value for any other cultures, it is susceptible to change.

Tongan conceptualisation of social justice is based on *Faka'apa'apa* as it is displayed through *Vā* or relationships. Such a relationship is based on rank, status and consequently on equity rather than equality as in comparison to social justice as defined by Rawls (1971). Further to this, social justice in the Tongan conceptualisation is relationship-based and therefore focuses more on the collective good over the individual – again this is different from Rawls's (1971) principle of social justice that focuses on all people being regarded as individuals. Undoubtedly there are other areas to be compared further between social justice as generally understood within the Western perspective and the Tongan conceptualisation, but it suffices to state that these are some of the key conceptual differences.

Reconceptualising leadership

The Tongan conceptualisation of leadership is based on the framework of the *'Eiki* and *Pule*. Leadership has traditionally been the business of chiefs and kings; they are leaders as they are *'Eiki*. Leadership in this framework is often hereditary and ascribed and is today personified in the form of Nobles and the Monarch. Since the introduction of organisations such as churches, educational institutions, commercial organisations, government and non-government organisations a new framework of leadership is emerging. This more recent leadership is increasingly taken up by commoners in the form of *Pule*. The framework of *Pule* is based on achievement and merit and is closely tied to a formal organisational position. It is in this form of *Pule* that we find the *Pule Ako* – the school principal.

A study by Johansson Fua (2003) explored Tongan conceptualisation of leadership with a focus on *Pule Ako*. One of the key findings of the study is that leadership for Tongan commoners is fundamentally based on the leader's ability to build and maintain relationships. It is through relationships that leaders can gain influence, draw support and maintain cohesiveness. When relationships are strong, conflicts are resolved quickly, staff morale is high and work production and services are delivered efficiently and effectively. Tongans respond positively to decisions and participate well when relationships are harmonious and encouraging.

To build and maintain relationships, leaders within a Tongan context are guided by the key principle of *Vā* – which is *Faka'apa'apa*. As leader, *Faka'apa'apa* as respect is given only after the staff have recognised key principles of *feveitokai'aki* (sharing, generosity), *fe'ofa'aki* (love, compassion), *fetokoni'aki* (helpfulness) and *loto*

fakatōkilalo (humility) that are appropriately demonstrated by the leader through their relationships. To build and maintain relationships between a school leader and teachers, parents and other stakeholders, the school leader must demonstrate the key principles of *Faka'apa'apa* through his/her relationships. The school leader must show generosity, sharing of resources, including his/her personal resources at times, and show compassion and love when needed. The school leader must always be helpful in all responsibilities and obligations in the school and, most important of all, the school leader must always show humility. These are the principles that, when demonstrated, will gain teachers' support, loyalty and motivation. Such principles, when demonstrated through school leaders' relationships, will also gain parents' financial and moral support. Case studies of Tongan schools (Johansson Fua, 2003) have shown a strong correlation between school leaders who demonstrate the key principles of *Faka'apa'apa* in their relationships and the positive impacts it has on student achievements, teachers' morale and parental support. These case studies clearly demonstrate that following the principles of *Faka'apa'apa* is not always an easy task and that it is very much a negotiation process to reach a collective consensus and maintain harmonious relationships amongst multiple stakeholders.

In this sense, leadership in a Tongan context is always a process of negotiation. As such, negotiating relationships is vital to building and maintaining leadership. This is demonstrated through the leaders' ability to show appropriate measures of compassion, to be helpful but not at the expense of the organisation, and to show appropriate degrees of humility when and where needed. Further to this, in order to negotiate and read maps of relationships within an organisation, a leader must display the key principles of *Faka'apa'apa*. What this means in a Tongan context is that a leader is judged more on his/her behaviour and appropriate display of *Faka'apa'apa* than any other technical skills of leadership. A leader in a Tongan context must be seen to "walk the talk".

Conclusions

This conceptual paper has argued the need to reconceptualise social justice and leadership from a cultural perspective. For the South Pacific, there are countless educational development strategies being promoted. Each of these strategies is based on certain concepts, philosophies with underlying assumptions that are often foreign. And all too often these strategies are adopted blindly with very little opportunity to reconceptualise them within Pacific context. This paper has given an example of Tongan conceptualisation of social justice and leadership. It has shown that *Faka'apa'apa*, a core principle for Tongans, is also the Tongan conceptualisation of social justice and the key principle in guiding leadership processes. The example given also demonstrates reconceptualisation by looking towards the source, – that is, our cultures – to find new understandings and new knowledge that is useful for our context.

Implications for educational leadership and social justice

Social justice in a Tongan context is based on *Faka'apa'apa*, the principle of protecting and honouring others. It is also based on the shared understanding that it is a reciprocal process – that is, by protecting and honouring others, oneself will, in turn, be honoured and protected.

Leadership for commoners in a Tongan context is based on building and maintaining relationships, *Vā,* and is guided by the key principle of *Faka'apa'apa.* A leader that is able to demonstrate *Faka'apa'apa* to others receives support and respect that leads to a healthy organisational climate and culture that promote productivity. By reconceptualising social justice and leadership from a Tongan context, it becomes clear that the key principle of *Faka'apa'apa* converges on the role of leadership. *Faka'apa'apa* should guide strategies and policies that work to address issues of access, equity, relevancy, quality and sustainable development. Such an approach based on the principle of *Faka'apa'apa* becomes not only a guide for educational leadership, but one through which, by educational leaders demonstrating *Faka'apa'apa*, social justice is ensured in Tongan schools.

The Tongan conceptualisation of leadership is not the only leadership approach that is focused on relationships. Servant and transformational leaderships are also focused on relationship building and maintaining relationships; however the nature of relationships have yet to be considered from a social justice perspective. What is clear from this reconceptualisation process is that social justice (based on *Faka'apa'apa*) and leadership (based on *Vā*) are intertwined, fundamental and essential to ensuring effective leadership. When educational leaders are guided by the principle of *Faka'apa'apa*, they will be encouraged to not only lead in such a way that protects and honours Tongan people, but also protects and honours Tongan knowledge systems, values and philosophies. As *Faka'apa'apa* is central to Tongan ways of being, one cannot compartmentalise Tongan knowledge systems, values, language, philosophies, processes and structures. Through *Faka'apa'apa* educational leaders in Tonga can restore social justice to Tongan schools – not only through the process of leadership, but also through the process of education.

Notes

1. Anglo-American, English-speaking, Western countries here predominantly refer to English-speaking societies including the USA, the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.
2. South Pacific refers to the 12 member states of the University of the South Pacific: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

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