

## uLearn21 reflections: Thriving individuals and communities

### Identity, language and culture

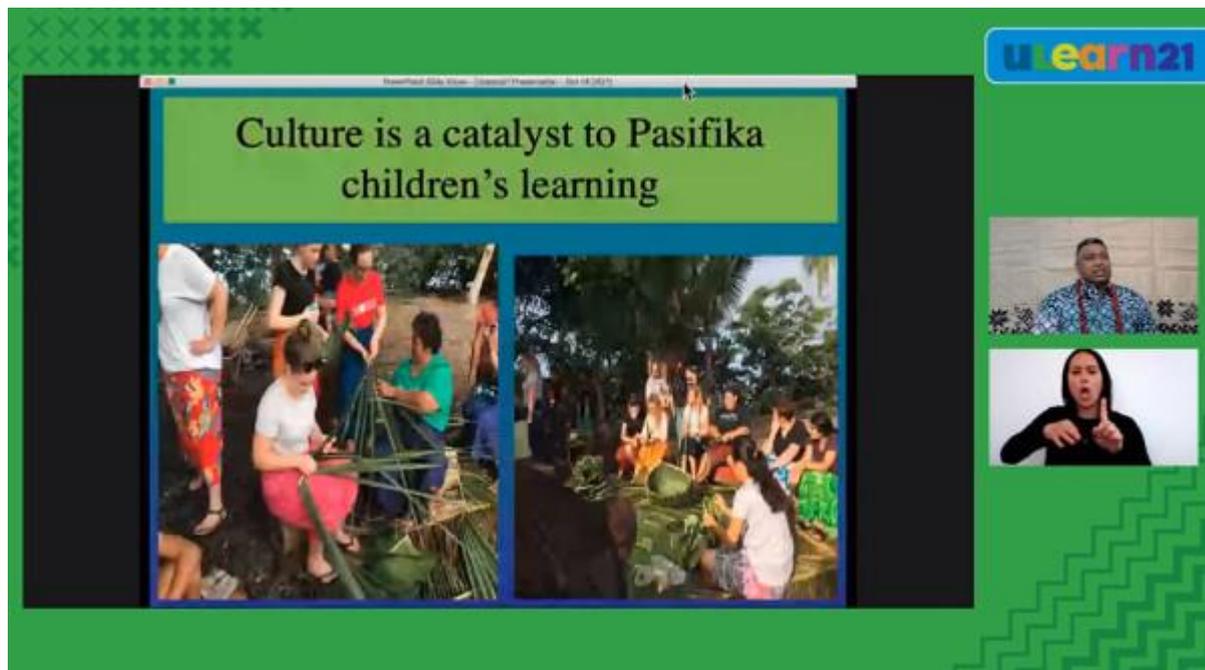
This year's uLearn allowed me to introduce one of our Pasifika academic activators Leali'ie'e Tufulasi Taleni, but more importantly it was a chance to immerse myself in the wealth of Pasifika knowledge shared throughout CORE's two-day online conference. uLearn21 also gave me the opportunity to reflect on the journey of the Pasifika diaspora to Aotearoa and consider what thriving individuals actually means.

For Pasifika, thriving might simply look like being able to connect with their identity, language and culture. It could be about being proud of their cultural connections and roots here in Aotearoa that enable them to fill up their agaga (soul/spirit) and have access to the resources they need to nourish themselves and their aiga/kainga (family).



*Tufulasi presents his activator session at uLearn21*

Leali'ie'e Tufulasi Taleni described thriving as a notion that aligns with the concept of Pasifika people migrating to Aotearoa. He reminded us that Pasifika children in Aotearoa thrive when they are able to demonstrate their cultural values such as the values of service and love at school. Leali'ie'e used a Samoan proverb, "E felelei manu ae mapu i o latou ofaga"—birds migrate to environments where they can thrive and survive so when are children are nurtured in the classroom and supported by the whole extended family so they can succeed.



*Tufulasi's presentation*

Another Pasifika academic speaker who shared the spotlight on Day 1 of uLearn was Jacoba Matapo, Associate Dean Pasifika and Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Social Work University of Auckland. She presented on "Wayfinding Pasifika success in education and the Va that binds relationships." Jacoba used navigation and wayfinding as an art form that generates connection. She told us that conceptual mappings of Pasifika success are framed by Pasifika students within the University of Auckland and are presented through imagery, poetry and story as examples of thriving in their education. She explored the Vā as a philosophy that brings ethical, spiritual and moral dimensions to the teaching and learning relationship for Pasifika learners and by using this philosophy will continue to allow them to thrive in and out of the classroom.

**How can we come to understand Pasifika Success?  
How do your Pasifika learners and community conceptualise Pasifika Success?**

We are reminded of the **"embodied"** nature of navigation as a way of being with, in and through the world—the body and nature multiplicity.

**"Wayfinders** can use the whole body as a perceptive instrument, attuning to the changing and often seemingly imperceptible signs of nature. They move with purposeful stillness, and know the world around them as they know themselves. Theirs is a highly disciplined way based on using all of their senses and different types of intelligence to truly "see" what is going on—and processing these signs to understand the relationships between them" (Spiller et al., 2015, p 17).

CORE **uLearn21** @uLearnNZ #uLearn21

*A slide from Jacoba's presentation*

Both Pasifika academics Tufulasi Taleni and Jacoba Matapo drew on common threads in their presentations that for the Pasifika diaspora to strive and succeed in Aotearoa there is a need for decolonisation of our formal education system. Specifically, how the current educational discourse is deeply rooted in individual success, and not collective success which is highly valued by Pasifika. They referenced systemic issues such as racism and exclusion access, the knowledge power base where there is a marginalisation of indigenous knowledge.

*Jacoba presents her activator session at uLearn21*

Both Taleni and Matapo agreed that to see more thriving and successful Pasifika learners in Aotearoa educational policies must be grounded in valuing Pasifika cultural capital, indigenous knowledge and Pacific epistemology which is steeped in their land, language, identity and aiga (family) as Matapo writes, “The notion of success is elusive and complex , it is grounded in the spirit of the collective (Matapo, 2019)”. Also this collective which Jacoba Matapo talked about aligns with CORE’s ongoing work around raising the equality flag especially for Māori and Pacific. As a collective organisation CORE will continue to advocate for the silent voice, the marginalised, the minority and against this sharp end of equality in education.



**How can we come to understand Pasifika Success?  
How do your Pasifika learners and community conceptualise  
Pasifika Success?**



We are reminded of the “**embodied**” nature of navigation as a way of being with, in and through the world—the body and nature multiplicity.

*“Wayfinders can use the whole body as a perceptive instrument, attuning to the changing and often seemingly imperceptible signs of nature. They move with purposeful stillness, and know the world around them as they know themselves. There is a highly disciplined way based on using all of their senses and different types of intelligence to truly “see” what is going on—and processing these signs to understand the relationships between them” (Spiller et al., 2015, p 17).*



**CORE** uLearn21 @uLearnNZ #uLearn21



**Tutuila Lio Va'auli**