

THE POLITICS OF LEARNING

Nōku anō te Takapau Wharanui

NZ Association for Research in Education Annual Conference
Victoria University of Wellington: 20-23 Nov 2016



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

KABINI SANGA, Victoria University of Wellington

Split-worlds, Side-Questions and Weaving: Storying the politics of Pacific Learning

Using a storied approach, I share the learning experiences of Pacific Islands students as encountered in the Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative, a reform movement which has influenced the emerging indigenous Pacific scholarship. This work challenges our understandings around learning, what it means to learn, and what learning is valued. Learning, like life itself is complex.

Through the experiences of a young man, Teatim, from Kiribati, this address will explore learning in a different way. In New Zealand on scholarship, Teatim is a Marine Science student. His lecturers think him attentive but quiet. Not engaging. His fellow students enjoy his jokes but shut him off in discussions. Teatim finds studies boring. Most times. Except when the class is out on the sea. None of his lecturers or fellow students know what Teatim knows about the sea. Prior to coming to New Zealand, Teatim (and his friend) drifted in a 20 feet open canoe across half of the vast Pacific Ocean. What began as a fishing trip in Kiribati ended 30 days later in Papua New Guinea waters when they were picked up by a foreign fishing boat. As Teatim attested, none of the knowledge he needed and used to survive on the sea was learnt from school. Why did Teatim come to university in New Zealand? Why did he enrol in Marine Science? Sadly, no one asked him these questions.

In retelling these stories, I counter the assumptions of learning in split-worlds that appear to limit Pacific Islands learners within school settings. Using insights drawn from these stories, I offer lessons on how to bring wisdom that asks side questions of learners and weaves their life patterns into their learning.

Biographical Note:

Kabini Sanga, PhD., is a Solomon Islands educator and mentor to hundreds of emerging leaders throughout the Pacific region. With colleagues Konai Thaman and 'Ana Taufeu'ulungaki from the University of the South Pacific, Kabini initiated the Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative, a reform movement which inspired assumption of responsibility by Pacific educators, researchers and policy makers to lead changes in their own educational and other contexts. Kabini undertook his post-graduate studies in Canada as a Canadian Commonwealth scholar. He undertakes research, writes, advises and speaks on leadership and public ethics in Pacific Islands settings.

