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Editors

1. *Miss Siniva Samani*
2. *Mr. Vilimaka Foliaki*

We also welcome contributions from our stakeholders and readers.

Please send us your articles and high definition photographs.

Tel: 28136

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Malo fau!

Message from the CEO

Dear friends and colleagues,

Welcome to the third edition of the TNQAB Newsletter, 2001.

Quarter 3 of the TNQAB newsletter offers a glimpse of the approaches TNQAB are taking to maintain and articulate all key priorities of its deliveries. This quarter has been identified by a plethora of risk-based approaches with a diversity of themes on facing and coping with challenges, and less so with coming up with new solutions.

As we glance at the past financial year 2019/2020 in the rear-view mirror, forthwith is the moment we blend thoughts, images, reflections, experiences and articulate how to make things more productively, effectively, and collaboratively to ensure the most valuable outcomes for the following year.

TNQAB is currently delineating the 2021-24 Corporate Plan, establishing the strategic priority and direction for the next four years. This intention reflects the priorities established by Government to achieve our goal, with a crucial centre on best practice regulation to enable and support the stakeholder's role in economic recovery, which we know is vital to Tonga's future progress and development. In addition, we are devoted to our own continuous improvement through evidence-based and appropriate regulation and supporting continuing quality in training provision across the different sectors.

In this Quarter 3 Newsletter, I hope you will enjoy learning more about ongoing developments across the sector and here at TNQAB – including provider tips and resources, insights from our ongoing quality assurance processes, trainings, programme approval accreditation, site visits and quality audit updates.

I acknowledge the continued challenges of the impact of COVID-19. Our regulatory strategies and approaches in 2021-22 will build on new approaches applied in 2020-21 and proceed to utilise risk-based proportionate responses working with registered providers to manage risks and respond using a variety of fit-for-purpose approaches.

Unquestionably, registered providers and associated sectors merit commendations for investing an incredible amount of effort in facing the quality assurance and regulation challenges, predominantly aimed at meeting essential standards and criteria for their programmes that lead to an award or qualification. Due to travel restrictions and lockdown, quality audits and associated quality assurance practices, especially site-visits, which can be one of the best practices in exploring the root causes, are being done online, in some cases, a mode that is not yet fully ready to offer the necessary close-to-real-life experience.

Another good news, the Tonga Skills was kind enough to finance ten new laptops, LED TV screens and web cameras and a camera for the TNQAB. We undeniably believe that this is a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge and supports TNQAB deliveries and systems in our developmental activities.

Sadly, as many of you know, Miss Liuaki Fusituá, Dean of Tonga Institute of Education, passed away. Miss Liuaki Fusituá made an extraordinary contribution to Tonga's education and training system over a sustained period, particularly TNQAB, which we recognised internally last months. TNQAB's thoughts are with Ms Liuaki Fusituá family and friends at this time.

As an education and training community, we need to seize the momentum and come up with solutions that work, are trustworthy and ensure relevance in the long run.



Dr. 'Opeti Pulotu, CEO, TNQAB

Quality quotes:

1. *It's not your qualifications but your exposure in life that makes you who you are!*
Jaggi Vasudev

2. *Friends who mock your dreams are not qualified to keep dusting your door step with their footprints every time.* Israelmore Ayivor

The TNQAB staff and I are happy to meet and individually talk to all those with proposals for solutions to current challenges and would be happy to join efforts in developing systems that win.

I look forward to the service we will all deliver over the coming years, so that together we can proceed to produce high-quality outcomes for students, employers, industries and the community as part of a leading education and training system.

We are always here with you and for you!

Malo mo e lotu,

Opeti Pulotu, PhD

(CEO-TNQAB)

Qualification development

'Ahopaniloto pursuing a national qualification

by Vilimaka Foliaki

A new national qualification in *employability skills* and *work readiness* is currently being initiated by key stakeholders and development partners. Since Thursday 9th of September 2021, Vilimaka Foliaki from the National Qualifications Unit of TNQAB, participated in weekly meetings with the Management Group for this exciting initiative. These meetings are held online using *Microsoft Teams*.

The Management Group is made up of representatives from the Tonga Office of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Australian government's *Pacific Labour Facility* (PLF), the *Labour Sending Unit* (LSU) of the Tonga *Ministry of Internal Affairs* (MIA), the *Australia Pacific Training Coalition* (APTC), TNQAB, and 'Ahopaniloto Technical Institute (ATI).

The first meeting of the management group was held on Thursday 9th September and was led by Dr. Alisi Kau-toke-Holani, the PLF Labour Mobility Engagement Manager (Tonga). Participant members logged in from Australia, Samoa, and Tonga.

The fine details of this national qualification are yet to be finalised, however, during this meeting, the governance structure of this initiative was endorsed. Other important issues which were also clarified during this meeting included the following:



- ◆ That a national qualification for Tonga, focusing on employability skills and work readiness, is to be developed for registration on the Tonga Qualifications Framework (TQF);
- ◆ As part of this initiative, 'Ahopaniloto Technical Institute (ATI) is the primary provider and will be supported to meet TNQAB accreditation requirements to offer the relevant training and to award this national qualification;
- ◆ There should be advisors from the Tourism and Hospitality industries in Tonga and Australia.

Continue.... from page 2

- ♦ APTC and PLF will provide technical assistance to ATI.
- ♦ TNQAB will provide the guidance needed to ensure the qualification is registered on the Tonga Qualifications Framework (TQF) and ATI is accredited to deliver and award the qualification.
- ♦ The resulting qualification is expected to facilitate labour mobility initiatives of the *Pacific Labour Facility* (PLF).

This is truly a very exciting project, as far as the National Qualifications Unit of TNQAB is concerned. Although the unit had already provided similar support and guidance in the recent past which led to the successful development and TQF registration of three other national qualifications, this project is the first time the issue of involving advisors from the relevant Australian industries has been identified and discussed as important.

Having advisors from the relevant local industry is one of the key TNQAB requirements for the development of national qualifications for Tonga. To ensure every proposed national qualification is relevant to the training needs of a local industry, TNQAB requires the establishment of an Industry Training Advisory Committee (ITAC), comprising at least 4 industry experts, to provide industry advice to the developer of every national qualification. However, to also engage the services of advisors from the Australian industry is a step in the right direction.

Having advisors from the Australian industry inform the qualification development will further enhance the quality of the Tonga national qualification, a move that would improve the recognition of such qualifications in Australia. Such a move will benefit both Australia and Tonga, especially the employers and the graduates and their families.

Congratulations to ATI for taking the bold move to develop a national qualification in this important area (employability skills). Your effort to work locally and think globally for the greater good deserves praise. Thank you also Tonga government and Australia DFAT, PLF, and APTC, for the continuing partnership and support.

Quality quote:

Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort.

John Ruskin

To develop a national qualification

Please:

- 1) Consult widely; contact TNQAB
- 2) Carry out needs analysis and functional analysis

Enquiries

If you need further information, please get in touch.

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New TQF–registration

Certificate in Horticulture: a milestone for TIHE *by Kisione Manu*

The School of Agriculture (SOA) of the *Tonga Institute of Higher Education* (TIHE) was able to register its first qualification in Horticulture in May 2021. This is an important milestone because it signifies the emergence of a new learning field in the existence of TIHE's School of Agriculture.

This registered qualification is titled, *TIHE Certificate in Horticulture (General) Level 2* and was carefully vetted by a registration - accreditation panel consisted of Dr Viliami Toalei Manu (former CEO of Tonga Ministry of Agriculture, Foods and Forests), Mrs 'Ana Heti Veikune (Research fellow, Institute of Education, USP), Mrs Lesieli Tupola (Quality Assurance Officer, TNQAB) and Mr. Kisione Manu (Head of Qualifications Framework, TNQAB).



Figure 2: Seated, L-R: Dr Viliami Toalei Manu , Mrs 'Ana Heti Veikune, Mrs Lesieli Tupola, Mr Kisione Manu. Standing: (TIHE Students) L- R: 'Ana Folau, Huufifale Fa'aese, Josephine Kolo, and Mafi Tangilapa

Later in August 2021, two other qualifications were evaluated by the same panellists and progressed on to the accreditation phase. The panellists admired the commitment made by the SOA to developing these new qualifications to meet the needs of TIHE and the agricultural sector.

These qualifications are more Competency-Based in approach to both teaching, learning and assessment. This signals the move of the School towards implementing programmes that are more practically oriented and placing more emphasis on developing graduates who are 'work-ready' and able to 'demonstrate' and 'apply' what they have learnt.



TIHE's Horticultural resources - seedling nursery



TIHE's Horticultural resources - equipment



TIHE's Horticultural resources - chemicals

Quality quote:

"Do whatever you can with all you have , wherever you are."— THEODORE ROOSEVELT

New accreditations granted

TTI granted accreditation to deliver training in Aged-community care *by Lesieli Tupola*

On the 27th of August 2021, the Board of Directors of TNQAB granted accreditation approval to the *Tupou Tertiary Institute* (TTI) to deliver training and award the newly registered *National Certificate in Aged Community Care Level 2*. The Board's decision was based on a report submitted by an Accreditation panel which conducted a site visit to TTI on 11th August, to confirm the institution's readiness to deliver the relevant training.

On the day of the site visit, the said Accreditation panelists led by the panel chair Sr. Tilema Cama (Principal of *Queen Salote Institute of Nursing and Allied Health*) and assisted by Mrs. Betty Blake (Director of *Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili*) and Mrs. Lesieli Tupola (Quality Assurance Officer, TNQAB), were welcomed to TTI by Dr. Mele'ana Puloka (Director of FWC Education) and Mrs 'Ofa Va'enuku (Dean TTI).



Figure 3: Seated, L-R: Dr. Mele'ana Puloka, Sr. Tilema Cama, Mrs. Lesieli Tupola, Mrs. Betty Blake, Mrs 'Ofa Va'enuku

In a very short time span, TTI managed to install in its *Fasi-moe-Afi* premises, a state of the art facility for the training of Aged-carers and Community support workers. Thus at the end of the site visit, TTI was evaluated to have successfully met the minimum requirements to deliver the relevant training and award the national certificate.

Both TTI and TNQAB would like to acknowledge timely support and financial assistance from the World Bank's *Skills and Employment for Tonga* (SET) which had enabled TTI to secure state of the art facility to meet the curriculum and resource requirements for accreditation.

This is an important milestone not just for TTI but Tonga as a whole as this is the first time a qualification in the area of Aged-care has been granted TNQAB accreditation.

This training is expected to improve service delivery in this important area of Tongan society and also make positive contribution to national development. More tertiary and vocational institutions in Tonga are expected to apply to TNQAB to deliver this same training in future.

Skills and knowledge in the areas of Aged and Community care are very much in demand locally and for labour mobility purposes.



Figure 4: TTI Aged care training facility - (adjustable bed for the elderly)



Figure 5: TTI Aged care training facility— training room with Wheel Chair and Linen storage shelves



Figure 6: TTI Aged care training facility bathroom sink and mirror

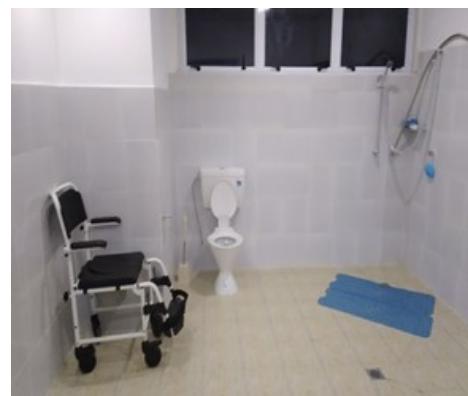


Figure 7: TTI Aged care training facility - bathroom, shower, non-slip floor cover and bed-side commode.

Quality audit

Up north at *Pouono Institute* by *Kisione Manu*

A team from TNQAB was assigned to carry out a quality audit of Pouono Institute in Vava'u from the 23rd August 2021 to the 27th August 2021. A quality audit is an independent review of a provider of education and training, including its management processes for achieving quality outcomes.

This was a "full audit" which required members of the audit panel to evaluate all documentations and evidences provided by the provider against all elements of quality standards 1,2 and 3 provided by TNQAB. A full audit usually entails a site visit to ascertain information through 'talanoa' sessions with relevant stakeholders, students, teachers and management team and through direct observation.



The team included a quality audit panel which consisted of Mr Tevita Fakateli as chairperson. Tevita is a Senior tutor at St. Andrews High School, and he was assisted by Mr Tuituihu Mafi (Lecturer, Tonga Maritime Polytechnic Institute (TMPI)), Mr 'Aisake Manu (Chief Engineer, Palu Aviation Ltd.), and Mrs Lesieli Tupola (SQO, Quality Assurance Division, TNQAB).

The team was also joined by the Mr Kisione Manu (PQO, Qualification Framework Division, TNQAB).

This review was also an opportunity for Pouono Institute to review its qualifications. The panel members were able to look at each qualification characteristic for

Audit panel with students:
Standing, L-R: Mr Tevita Fakateli (Panel Chair, Senior Tutor, St Andrew's High School), Mrs Lesieli Tupola (SQO, TNQAB), Mr. Tuituihu Mafi (Panel Member, Catering instructor, TMPI)

their training programmes in automotive, hospitality (cookery) and carpentry. The qualification review process is an important phase in the life-cycle of a qualification registered on the TQF. It is the responsibility of registered providers to undertake the review of their programmes, a process that is informed by their Quality Management System (QMS) as well as TNQAB Qualification Review policies and guidelines.



The quality audit also included an impromptu site visit to Mosese Lomu, one of the stakeholders who offer workplace training for Pouono automotive students.

The hospitality of Pouono Institute's Management team and staff was exceptional and they made us feel at home. In fact, the delicious dishes they prepared for us captured the true essence of the *Vava'u fatafata mafana*.

On behalf of the TNQAB CEO, Dr Pulotu and staff we would like to extend our deepest appreciation and hope we will work more proactively in pushing Pouono Institute to the standard it most capably can reach so that it will be recognized for the quality education it provides so that Vava'u will be able to recognise its 'value' and 'relevance' in providing quality education to its people.

END

An impromptu site visit to workplace training facilities.
L-R: Mr 'Aisake Manu, Mosese Lomu

Training re-quests:

We welcome training re-quests from our stake-holders especially training providers.

Enquiries

If you need further infor-mation re the above, please get in touch.

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Professional development trainings

First training on TQF-level descriptors *by Ikatonga Hingano*

A training workshop was held on the 3rd of August 2021 at *Ancient Tonga*, Fangaloto focusing on *TQF level descriptors*. This workshop was conducted by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for TNQAB, Dr. 'Opeti Pulotu and was attended by 19 participants from post-compulsory education and training (PCET) providers around Tongatapu.



Workshop participants

The TQF level descriptors have been identified by TNQAB as one of the important topics on which further stakeholder training is required. This was the first time a training workshop on this topic has been conducted by TNQAB.

Funded by the World Bank's *SET Project*, this workshop provided an opportunity for PCET providers, especially the developers of qualifications and training programmes, to understand level descriptors in relation to the Tonga Qualifications Framework (TQF). Interactive activities during the workshop allowed participants to share their experience in using the level descriptors to better understand their qualifications and programmes of study.

In the following pages, Dr. Pulotu provides a more detailed overview of the TQF-level descriptors.
END

Quality quotes:

1. *Quality assurance begins with training and ends with training*
2. *Friends who mock your dreams are not qualified to keep dusting your door step with their footprints every time. Israelmore Ayivor*
3. *Respect the training; honour the commitment; cherish the results!*
4. *Hard work and training. There's no secret formula.*



Dr. 'Opeti Pulotu facilitating the workshop



Participants at the workshop



World Bank's *SET Project* Team leader, Ms Lisia Latu

Level Descriptors: The Building Blocks of the Tonga Qualifications Framework

by Dr. 'Opeti Pulotu

Background

The *Tonga Qualifications Framework* (TQF) is a critical component in the architecture of the Tonga education and training system. The TQF defines the essential characteristics, including the required learning outcomes, of the 14

TONGA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK			
LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TITLE		
10			Doctoral degree
9			Master's degree
8	Postgraduate certificate	Postgraduate diploma	Bachelor's degree with Honours
7	Graduate certificate	Graduate diploma	Bachelor's degree
6		Advanced diploma	
5		Diploma	
4	Certificate		
3	Certificate		
2	Certificate		
1	Certificate		

different types of qualifications issued across the post-compulsory education and training systems in Tonga.

The TQF is Tonga's Lifelong Learning Framework. It was created by bringing together all Tonga mainstream and non-mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. It was developed to provide an agreed means of recognizing and valuing learning. Essentially, it provides a shared context for learning in Tonga.

Although the structure and purposes of national qualification frameworks vary between countries, their central purpose is to establish a basis for improving the quality, accessibility, linkages and public or labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally.

Ten (10) levels of the Tonga Qualifications Framework (TQF)

International comparability of qualifications and alignment with other qualifications frameworks are

important national goals. The international mobility of graduates and workers is significant. To support this mobility, recognition of the relationship of qualifications in the national qualifications frameworks of other countries or regions with the TQF may be beneficial.

Qualifications for the future

To retain their relevance and effectiveness, qualifications will need to respond to current and emerging workforce and social needs, be delivered in fashions that meet learners' needs and circumstances and be trusted by learners, employers, and the community in general. The conventional purpose of formal qualifications is challenged by the instant availability of information through the Internet, diminishing trust in providers and conventional sources of authority. Many people attain skills and experience in a mixture of contexts outside the formal education and training system.

The persistent effect of new technology is transforming the world of work through its dynamism to analyze, aggregate and disseminate information, including new knowledge. In addition, the production of goods, transportation, and services, including health and the media, are in a constant state of disruption and innovation.

Many current job duties will become redundant, particularly in standardized and routine production and service delivery areas. But new businesses are also emerging, professions that place a premium on human capacities and skills, including the capacity to understand, shape, interpret, and reshape technology. In addition, skills required for sustainable development, including the transition to lower carbon emissions and which address the impact of climate change, are also increasingly critical.

Workplaces are also evolving. They are becoming more diverse and inclusive, more flexible in employment and work practices, and broadly less hierarchical. Teamwork and collaboration are more valued, as is collective rather than individual initiative and achievement. Effective and ethical leadership and governance are essential to the success and reputation of organizations.

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Employers have influential and increasing expectations that graduates will be work-ready and productive. In turn, employees expect to have their skills and capabilities recognized and rewarded with open-ended career and personal development opportunities. As a result, individuals will need to manage multiple career transitions and build their own career paths and business opportunities through constant development. Many professions are also redirecting their demands for professional entry and ongoing accreditation on a broad range of capacities and aptitudes; their outlook is expanding from the common center on industrial and occupational skills.

Innovation within industries and across businesses, underpinned by workforce capability, will be crucial to improved productivity and competitiveness. Industries and providers are increasingly nationally engaged. Many Tonga will live and work overseas. Immigration will continue to be a source of the Tonga economy. Education services will continue to be one of Tonga's major export industries, founded on the quality and recognition of Tonga qualifications and the providers that offer them.

Benefits of alignment of the TQF

The benefits of alignment between the TQF and national or regional qualifications frameworks are at several levels. These range from economic benefits at a national or regional level to benefits for individuals. The benefits of alignment include:

- providing a systematic basis for improving mutual trust and the recognition of qualifications between nations or regions
- facilitating transparency and reliability of information about qualifications and the qualifications framework in each nation or region
- increasing international understanding, comparability, confidence and recognition of qualifications for both study and employment
- contributing to the credibility and robustness of each nation's or region's qualifications systems, including knowledge and understanding of the various quality assurance systems and processes supporting the qualifications framework.
- assisting the international mobility of students and skilled workers by increasing confidence that their qualifications will be understood and recognised in Tonga and other countries
- improving employers' understanding of qualifications to assist with skills supply, and
- providing a comparative benchmark for the TQF

The rationale for reform

The TQF sets the overall framework for the design and quality assurance of education and training in Tonga. It does not prescribe course content or methods of delivery and assessment. Factors such as funding, governance, regulation and



Mele Fakahua of TIOE making a presentation during the workshop



Participants working on a group activity in the workshop

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provider responsiveness have far greater influence on education and training than the TQF. Qualifications also sit within broader economic, social and cultural contexts, which can strongly influence perceptions about their standing and expectations about what they should provide.

Nonetheless, the relevance, effectiveness, and utility of the TQF is arguably more important today than it was in 1999. This is because it provides the common language for the design and description of the types of Tonga qualifications and the relationships between them in a future where increasing levels and closing gaps in levels of educational attainment, will remain a central economic and social policy goal for Tonga.

The current version of the TQF is a more comprehensive and complete framework. As a result, it is widely used and applied. However, several comments have found that the TQF should be significantly reformed.

Too much weight is placed on its level structures rather than the qualifications aligned to those levels. Its ten-level structure is duplicated but not consistently expressed, too rigid and overly hierarchical, with artificial and arbitrary distinctions between levels. This issue results in poor differentiation between some qualification types and description of skills and knowledge that do not reflect existing leading practice, let alone meet future requirements. The assumption that knowledge and skills can both be defined and differentiated at ten levels is flawed. The application of knowledge and skills is context-dependent and cannot be automatically linked to levels of knowledge and skills without entrenching hierarchical assumptions about TVET relative to higher education qualifications.

Further, those using the TQF did feel that there was a real need and opportunity to ensure that the language reflected more fully both the occupational and professional sectors. In addition, there was support to tighten up on the consistency and progression of terminology across levels and to generally tidy up any possible anomalies.

The use of highly generic graduate outcome statements to define and differentiate qualification types is not meaningful, given the range of different qualifications, their purposes, and also the context within which they are delivered. The Tonga secondary school external qualifications have been sat apart from other qualifications in the TQF since its inception, and the TQF currently has little influence on senior secondary education.

The Level Descriptors

The Level Descriptors are the building blocks with which the TQF is constructed, and, as the TQF itself seeks to be utilised in the broadest possible range of assessed learning in Tonga, they need to be inclusive. In essence, they must also be fit for purpose in terms of ensuring the integrity of the TQF and be internally consistent and educationally sound.

An important purpose of the Level Descriptors is to support the design and implementation of qualifications and programmes of study that lead to a stated qualification within the TQF. They have been designed to contribute to coherence in learning achievement and facilitate evaluation criteria for comparability and thus articulation within the TQF.



TNQAB staff providing moral support during the workshop



Ms Maletina Hilate, Principal of Ahopanilolo presenting her group's ideas

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TQF levels are based on a single set of Level descriptors that are the common reference points and definitions which provide a way of recognising learning that is outcome-based and quality-assured, irrespective of whether that learning is academic, vocational, non-formal, or informal.



Workshop participants: L– R: Fatui Langilangi (Principal School of Agriculture, TIHE), Siofilisi Hingano (Principal TIOE), and Mele Fakahua (TIOE).

The main content of a TQF taxonomy is the Level descriptors. They specify the Knowledge, Skills, and Application features of Levels and qualification types. As such, they specify what features should be used in qualification design to foster the appropriate graduate outcomes. They also provide a learning progression for Knowledge and Skills and a list of possible design features for Application focus areas.

The ability to specify descriptors that effectively differentiate qualification types is determined by choice of Domains. The focus areas proposed to describe characteristics of knowledge and skills that allow qualification

types to be readily distinguished and specify the relevant and contemporary knowledge and skills likely to be required.

Level descriptors embrace learning in various contexts (vocational, occupational, academic, and professional) and environments (classroom, laboratory, field, clinic, community, etc.). Contextual interpretation of the level descriptors within each of the three domains across academic, professional, and occupational contexts is encouraged. Level descriptors provide a scaffold from which more specific descriptors can be developed by a variety of different sectors and practitioners, for example, discipline- or profession-based. It is also recognized that in the processes of curriculum design and development, the interpretation of these generic level descriptors will be influenced by, for example, field-, discipline- and context-specific nuances.

Level descriptors are designed to act as a guide and a starting point for, inter alia:

- Writing learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria for qualifications and short courses.
- Pegging a qualification at an appropriate level on the TQF, used together with purpose statements, outcomes, and assessment criteria
- Assisting learners to gain admission through RPL at an appropriate level on the TQF
- Making comparisons across qualifications in a variety of fields and disciplines pegged at the same level of the TQF
- Programme quality management, used together with purpose statements, outcomes, and assessment criteria.
- Level descriptors provide a broad indication of learning achievements or outcomes that are appropriate to a qualification at that level. Level descriptors do not describe years of study.

In using the Level Descriptors, three key factors should be kept in mind:

- the Level Descriptors are for guidance only – it is not expected that every point will necessarily be covered;
- context is absolutely key - much depends on the focus of the Domain and/or Level Descriptor in which the term is applied; and
- the terms are used in a broadly linear manner from least to most advanced across the Level Descriptors for each Domain, but no term is exclusively the domain of one particular level.

END.

Professional development trainings

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) by Vilimaka Foliaki

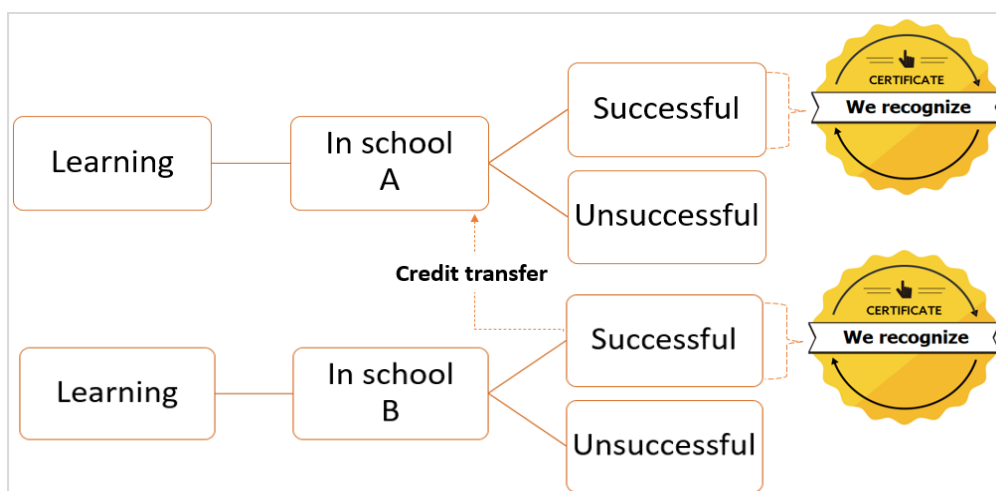
Background to the workshop

For a very long time, we've been conditioned to think that the only learning that's worth recognizing is that which happens in the school or university (i.e., formal education). Even though a lot of worthwhile learning also takes place in informal and non-formal settings, most if not all higher education institutions in Tonga do not have systems in place to formally recognize them. It's high time for a change!

This was the message put forward by the workshop facilitator, Vilimaka Foliaki of TNQAB, in another half-day training workshop on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Once again funded by the World Bank's SET Project, this workshop was conducted at *Ancient Tonga* in Fangaloto on Wednesday 4th August 2021. More than 20+ participants, mostly from providers of *post compulsory education and training* (PCET) in Tonga, attended this workshop.

Existing RPL systems

RPL refers to "the granting of formal status to learning acquired prior to enrolling in a training programme. As alluded to in the first paragraph above, this concept has been traditionally interpreted to refer to the usual *Credit transfer* system which most PCET providers in Tonga have. In such a system, as seen below, two or more PCET providers, after having studied the learning outcomes and content of each other's training programmes, come to an agreement to formally recognize the



Traditional *Credit transfer* systems

prior learning of their own students in each other's training programmes.

This means that a student's prior learning at PCET B can be counted towards his/her study in PCET A (and vice versa) provided that the two institutions have already formally agreed to it.

Unfortunately, this conception of RPL is deficient as it does not consider previous learning in informal and non-formal contexts. Learning does not happen only in schools or universities. People learn all the

time. This is particularly true today with the ubiquity of information communication technologies (ICTs) such as the computer and the internet, many people are learning on their own, any time and in any place where access to these technologies is available and unrestricted.

RPL, a paradigm shift

The need to recognize informal and non-formal learning is a reflection of an important change in the way people the world over, perceive what quality learning is, a paradigm shift. Key proponents of such a vital change include leading UN agencies such as the *International Labor Organization* (ILO) and *United Nations Education Scientific and Culture Organization* (UNESCO).

The efforts to promote RPL is consistent with UNESCO's effort to promote a culture of lifelong learning and the importance of education as a human right and articulated in Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. UNESCO's *Institute of Lifelong Learning* has been mandated with the role of promoting the recognition of and creating the conditions for the exercise of the right to education

Enquiries

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and learning.

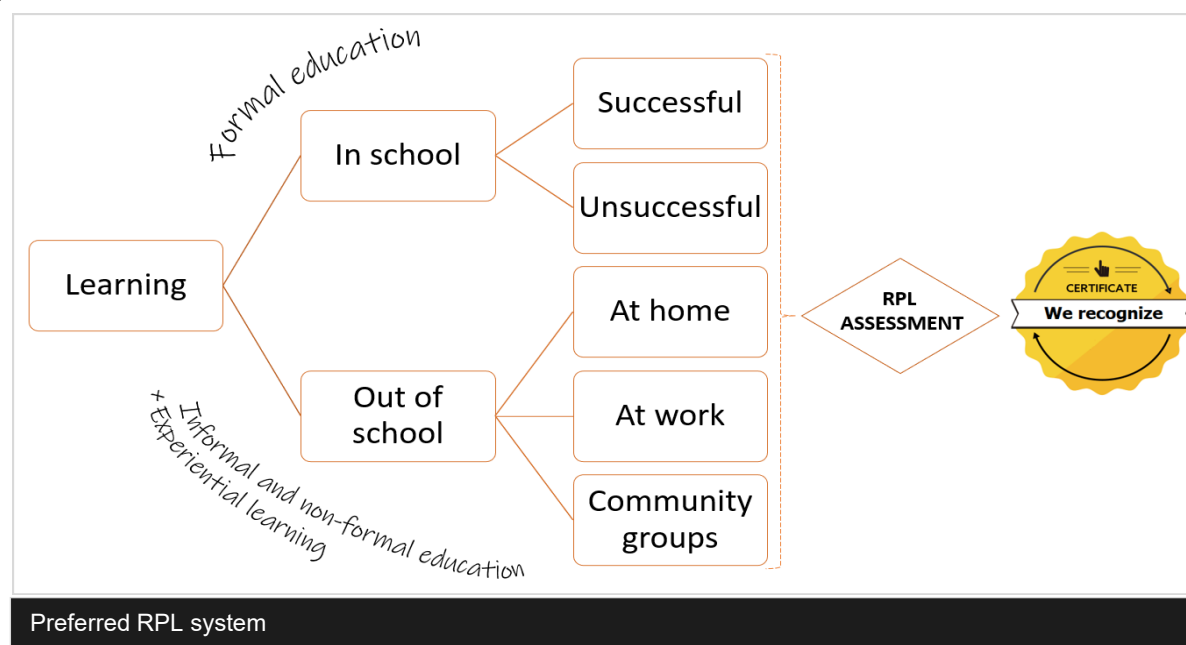
RPL paradigm shift is important not only for education and training but also for job-creation and employment, as well as poverty reduction. Such a shift acknowledges the recognition of all types of learning as beneficial not only to formal education and training, but also to labour markets and the self-esteem of the human person.

Expected RPL systems

Thus, having an RPL system established is an indicator of a quality education system and is therefore one of the criteria that TNQAB expects of every provider that is applying to register a qualification or to accredit a training programme.

It has been identified by TNQAB as an important training theme so this is the 3rd year in a row this workshop has been conducted. Even though this year's workshop has shown improvement in provider's awareness of RPL, there were still signs of a few resistant misconceptions which need further persuasion.

The quality RPL system that is expected of an TNQAB-accredited training programme is one that recognizes all forms of learning, as shown below:



The expected RPL system has two important features that distinguish it from the tradition RPL system. These include:

1. The inclusion of previous learning from both informal and non-formal contexts ('out-of-school' learning);
2. Having an assessment system in place to assess all claimed prior learning before they are recognized.

It's important to note that the RPL system described in this article does not apply only to educational institutions for the purpose of gaining credits towards some form of credential or qualification. Such an RPL system can also be used for other purposes such as meeting the:

- entry requirements for an education or training programmes, or
- minimum qualification requirements for an advertised position, or
- skills requirements for migration to another country.

Thus, basically, wherever some form of formal qualification or experience is required, an RPL system is mandatory to support the pursuance of outputs, and broader outcomes and goals.

END

Professional development trainings

Qualification approval training in Vava'u by Kisione Manu

A training on *Qualification approval* was conducted at *Pouono Institute* on the 25th of August 2021 to promote awareness of the Tonga Qualifications Framework to relevant stakeholders in Vava'u.

Pouono Institute is the only registered PCET provider that is currently operating in Vava'u, and unsurprisingly the awareness of the role and function of TNQAB, is quite limited up north.



Standing, L-R: Trina 'Asitomani, Taniela Latu, Robert 'Ofa, Langi Sika, Seleti Mahe, Sione Maile 'Ofa, Viliami Mailangi, Sanele 'Ulupano, Kisione Manu, Samuela Molimoli, Lupe Fe'aomoeata, Uaioulu Mausia, Lesieli Tupola
Seated, L-R: Malakai Moala, Losimani Finau, Vilisoni Malimali, Hingano Kaufusi, Lilio Fakava, Susitina Koluse, Moala Vainikolo.

The Qualification Framework Division of TNQAB saw the quality audit visit to Pouono Institute as an opportunity to create awareness amongst relevant stakeholders who are working in the Technical and Vocational Education sector.

Invitations were then sent to various schools, mainly: 1. Saineha High School (LDS Education System); 2. Tailulu College (Free Church of Tonga Education System), 3. Chanel College (Catholic Education System) and 4. Vava'u High School (Government Secondary Education System) to attend a Training Workshop on *Qualification approval* and *Recognition of Prior Learning*.

It was the first time to expose these stakeholders to the criteria we use to approve a qualification for listing on to the TQF and to acquaint them with the principles of *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* and the importance of having a RPL Policy in place as a tool to promote life-long learning.

The outcomes of this training will enable the participating stakeholders to:

- develop their own qualification based on existing framework and assistance through active engagement of relevant stakeholders in the qualification development phases.
- develop a RPL Policy and tools to be used to recognise suitable candidates into their existing qualifications.
- strengthen the 'working relation' between other education systems in Vava'u.

The participants voiced the need for them to participate in any future training workshop activities so that they will be able to understand TNQAB's role in Tonga. END



Workshop participants working on group activities

Internal quality assurance

Performance appraisal moderation! TNQAB takes a bold step! *by Vilimaka Foliaki*

The regular review of staff performance and overall contribution to the operation of TNQAB, or 'staff performance appraisal,' has become an important part of the organization's operation since its inception in 2008. At TNQAB, twice during every financial year, divisional supervisors review the performance of the staff who work under them, one in June and another in December.

During performance appraisal, divisional supervisors use specifically designed evaluation tools to rate employee's skills, achievements, and growth, or lack thereof. The outcome of this evaluation provides staff with big-picture feedback on their performance and to justify pay increases, bonuses, as well as demotions.

This year, TNQAB took a bold step in an attempt to further improve its performance appraisal process, by including a 'moderation process'.



During the month of August, senior staff were divided into groups of 4-5 moderators and were tasked with the moderation of the performance appraisal rating of supervisors. This involved meetings with both supervisors and their staff and discussing the outcomes of the moderation activities with them before the outcomes are finalized. During these meetings, staff were asked questions to clarify issues and were also given opportunities to ask questions to their supervisors as well as moderators.

In retrospect, I believe this process has indeed helped us in many ways. It has helped us not only to better understand our work and how we can do our jobs better, but openness of the discussions has also improved trust and working relationships between staff members.

Although this new improvement meant an extension in the duration of the performance appraisal period, we believe it has improved the fairness and consistency in the evaluation of staff performance. We understand this isn't perfect yet. However, we are happy that we have made that fine attempt to quality assure our own processes. END

Quality quote

Appraisals are where you get together with your team leader and agree what an outstanding member of the team you are, how much your contribution has been valued, what massive potential you have and, in recognition of all this, would you mind having your salary halved.

Theodore Roosevelt

Principles of assessment

TNQAB uses four main principles of assessment in their quality assurance of assessment:

1. **Is reliable:** A reliable assessment (method, tool, or instrument) is one that consistently and accurately measures performance.
2. **Is fair:** A fair assessment assesses all candidates equally. A fair assessment considers the needs of candidates.
3. **Is flexible:** A flexible assessment includes provisions to address the changing conditions of candidates. Flexibility is also about considering the needs of candidates. Making an assessment flexible also makes it fair.
4. **Is valid:** A valid assessment is one that actually assesses what it intends to assess.

Rules of evidence

TNQAB also uses the four rules of evidence to quality assure assessment:

1. Evidence of learning must be valid;
2. Evidence of learning must be current;
3. Evidence of learning must be authentic;
4. Evidence of learning must be sufficient.

Internal quality assurance

Internal auditing: another bold move by TNQAB! *by Vilimaka Foliaki*

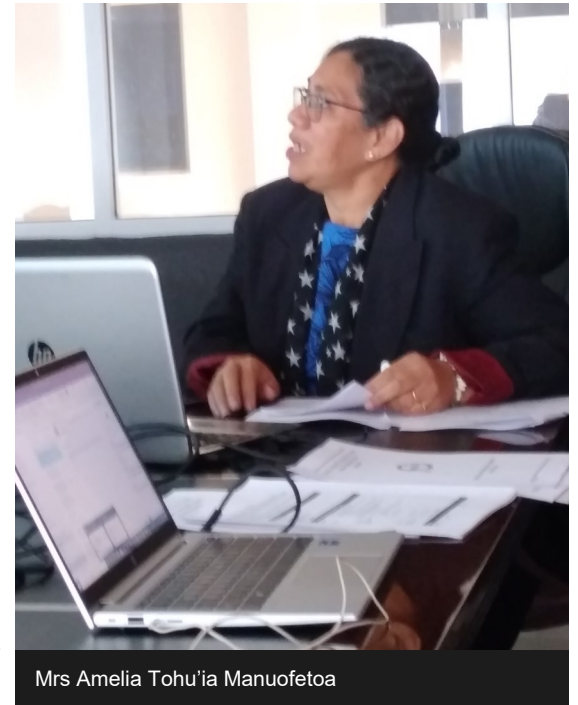
On Friday 10th of September 2021, Mrs Amelia Tohu'ia Manuofetoa, *Senior Policy Analyst*, made an excellent presentation to the management and staff of TNQAB on the ideas of monitoring and evaluating policies as well as policy auditing.

These processes are parts of Tohu'ia's job description and she believes are important processes which need to be carried out.

The primary purpose of Tohu'ia's presentation was to make staff understand specific policy auditing tools that she had prepared for carrying out internal compliance audit of staff in regard to their use of policies for work.

All staff who attended the presentation unanimously agreed with the importance of the processes that Tohu'ia targeted in her presentation. However, it became clear during the presentation that TNQAB still does not have an internal audit policy to provide clear guidelines to the processes Tohu'ia focused on in her presentation.

Although there is an existing Internal audit manual, that document refers only to financial audit. Therefore, the staff agreed that a new policy for internal auditing needs to be developed first to provide clarity to the key processes and responsibilities of the staff. The staff believe such a guiding document will ensure that the key processes are thoroughly understood, carried out effectively, and are not sources for debate and conflict. END



Mrs Amelia Tohu'ia Manuofetoa



TNQAB Staff during Tohu'ia's presentation

Enquiries

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Partnership for success

Tonga Skills assists TNQAB with new laptop computers *by Vilimaka Foliaki*

In August, TNQAB was fortunate to receive ten (10) *Hewlett-Packard Probook Intel® Core™ i5* laptop computers, as assistance from one of its main development partners, the Australian Government development programme, *Tonga Skills for Inclusive Economic Growth* (or *Tonga Skills* for short).



Ms Sally Bannah (Tonga Skills Team Leader) handing over the computers to Hu'akavameiliku (TNQAB Chair and Minister of Education) and Dr. 'Opeti Pulotu (CEO, TNQAB).

On 17th of August 2021, in a simple handover ceremony held at the office of the Minister of Education in Nuku'alofa, Ms Sally Bannah, the Tonga Skills Team Leader handed over the new computers to Honorable Hu'akavameiliku, the Minister of Education and TNQAB Chairman and Dr. 'Opeti Pulotu, the CEO of TNQAB.

On behalf of TNQAB as well as Tonga education, Hon. Hu'akavameiliku thanked Ms Bannah, Tonga Skills and the Australian government for their unwavering support of TNQAB and education in Tonga.

The assistance by Tonga Skills also included the provision of an IT Staff from the supplier of the computers, *Office Equipment Limited*, to take TNQAB staff through the configuration and setting up processes for their devices.

These light-weight and slick-looking computers come in their own carry bags, and are preinstalled with *Microsoft Windows 10* and *Office Suite*.

Being light-weight and portable make these devices more energy efficient than their desktop counterparts, which is an important benefit to the cash-strapped organization.



Tonga Skills IT staff assisting TNQAB Staff with setting up of their de-

These laptop computers are expected to improve the key services provided by TNQAB. The convenience of having work emails, files and documents at easy reach all the time to staff, is also an important advantage that these new devices will bring to the staff of the organization. The staff are already using their devices for both office work as well as for support visits and for conducting quality assurance training outside of TNQAB.

The staff as well as the management of TNQAB would like to, once again, thank Tonga Skills and the Australian government for their continued support.

This is just one of Tonga Skills and the Australian government's many assistances to TNQAB. We hope this great partnership will continue in years to come. END

Staff social events

The small things that matter: farewell Siu! *by Vilimaka Foliaki*

Going to work is more than just waking up in the morning, getting dressed, and battling the traffic to reach *Molisi Central building*. To Mrs Siumafua'uta Latu, TNQAB's long-serving office assistant and cleaner, going to TNQAB was like going home.



TNQAB, to Siu, is a place she has known from day-1 and where she would find her friends. However, after twelve years of dedicated service, Siu has decided to bid her last farewell to TNQAB.

On Friday 30th of July 2021, the TNQAB staff social committee organized a special lunch to mark this important occasion and to say farewell to Siu.

Saying good-bye to TNQAB must have been a difficult choice for Siu to make. During the farewell lunch, it appeared that Siu had come to the realization that she wasn't just leaving a workplace but a home, with people whom she had grown to call friends and family.

To the staff of TNQAB, Siu was not just any ordinary colleague. During the farewell lunch, staff shared their experiences and reminisced on the past years and spoke of Siu's hardworking character, friendly personality and great sense of collegueship.

While she would be removing every speck of dust off every nook and surface, from floor to ceiling, Siu still had the time to brighten up the office ambience with fresh flowers and to cheer up the weary souls with a few quotations and verses from the Bible.

It was these small things that Siu did made the TNQAB Office, a home.

Malo e ngaue lahi Siu, moe ofa lahi atu.



Event organizer and Chairlady of the staff social committee, Mrs Ikaton-ga Hingano, welcoming the staff to the farewell lunch

Staff social events

Staff weekly mufti: diversity of colours! *by Ikatonga Hingano*

Earlier in the year, the TNQAB staff started a Friday-mufti fundraising initiative in support of its Social committee. In recognizing the importance of inclusivity, acceptance of diversity, and teamwork in the workplace, each month calls for a different color. Every Friday staff don the colour of the month and pay a small charge as donation to TNQAB's social committee

The different colors this initiative brings also represents the great diversity in the organization's taskforce. This diversity has assisted the organization in dealing with its numerous challenges and achieving its goals.

Here are a few of the captured mufti days in the past few months at TNQAB's office.

"Be uniquely you. Stand out. Shine. Be colorful. The world needs your prismatic soul!"

~Amy Leigh Mercree~



Staff social events

Fine dining at TIHE! *by Vilimaka Foliaki*

On the evening of Thursday 12th of August, I had the pleasure of being invited by Mrs Tu'utanga Vainikolo, the Coordinator of TIHE's *Diploma in Hospitality Operations Level 5* training programme to witness and experience the fine dining cuisines and exquisite service provided by their students on practical.



Guest being served by student with grilled chicken entree

The weather was just gloomy when I arrived at TIHE at around 6 pm. It had been drizzling most of the day so it was a wet and cool evening with a gentle south-easterly breeze.

I was one of the first to arrive at the venue for the event – just the veranda of TIHE's parking lot, neatly walled using green coconut fronds and a few balloons.

As soon as I entered, I could feel the warmth and welcoming atmosphere as one of the elegant waiting staff, with impeccable manners, showed me to my table already set with fancy cutlery and glasses.

I believe the strength of this special event was its simplicity. It was nothing compared to services and food which you would expect in fine dining restaurants overseas.



Mrs Tu'utanga Vainikolo, Course Coordinator, welcoming guests

The customers were just parents, family and friends of TIHE. There were no charger plates nor a comprehensive wine list but, to me, actually seeing these wonderful things, the decor, the savory cuisines planned, prepared, and served by locally trained cookery students really made the whole experience gratifying.

It was just a one-menu dinner comprising a 3 course meal. The entrée was grilled chicken strips on a fresh tomato salsa. To me, this was top-notch. It was well-seasoned and the tanginess was spot on! The main course was chicken ballotine with green salad and served with rice.

The chicken may have been a bit on the dry side, but for someone who only knows how to cook lu-moa, the main was also of very good quality. I couldn't figure out what the white sauce was but it was brilliant! The dessert was a tiramisu in a wine glass, party style. Just perfect! All of these for just 30 pa'anga.

This humble event clearly demonstrated how the teaching staff and students made do with just the bare necessities of resources to produce high quality food and services at an affordable price.

Most importantly, the whole event – from recipes and ingredients to venue décor to food production and service - was planned by the students themselves. From here, they will improve!

Kudos TIHE! *Malo e ngaue lahi ke hiki hake e tu'unga faifatongia ho tau kii fonua!*



Main course of chicken ballotine with green salad

Tribute to Liuaki Fusitu'a

Facing death, embracing life *by Vilimaka Foliaki*

'Oku ofongi ma'u pe kitautolu 'e mate! is a sincere description of the stage of shock, uncertainty and confusion I was in the very moment I read a Facebook update by Lord Fusitu'a regarding the unimaginable loss and untimely passing of his beloved cousin, Liuaki Fusitu'a. It was hard to believe that she had gone especially when I only had just spoken to her a week or two earlier. She was her usual self. She looked well, healthy, and as usual jovial, cheerful and ready to share a good story about work – teaching, learning, schools, education!



Liuaki Fusitu'a (Courtesy: 'Ofakilevuka Fa'asolo Fatukala)

I drive by Tonga Institute of Education (TIOE) three or four times a week since Liuaki's passing and every time I see the institution, I think of her. It has been more than a month since her passing, but as we all know the memories of a great friend and colleague will always linger around until the pain dissolves completely. I identify Liuaki with TIOE, teaching, and teachers for Tonga.

Liuaki was a beautiful woman, inside and out! I came to know of her back in the 1990s while we were still working as junior teachers for the Tonga Ministry of Education. She was always working for the Tonga Teachers Training College (now TIOE) while I was teaching at Tonga College and later at the University of the South Pacific (USP).

Other staff members of TNQAB are also fortunate to have known and worked closely with her. Some of them shared these memories:

"Liuaki challenged me professionally during the first time I conducted a TNQAB support visit to TIOE, which helped me to reflect and evaluate on what I need to do to improve my approach and myself so that I can be a better quality assurance officer", as described by Kisione Manu

"I always admired that she had a wealth of knowledge and skills in both the English and History subjects. We are both History graduates and we shared the same passion", as shared by Amelia Tohu'ia Manuofetoa

"Liuaki was a humble person. Although she was the Dean of TIOE and laden with responsibilities, she always had time to listen to professional advice and counsel that I provided regarding TNQAB's standards and requirements", as Uinimila Kakapu recalls.

Liuaki was a very intelligent person with a great sense of humour. As captured in the above memories, everyone enjoyed having a chat with her. She would look you straight in the eyes and describe in vivid details whatever she may have been thinking about. She had this unique ability to find meaning or something to ponder in the mundane of things.

Liuaki was a visionary educational leader. The 2000s and the decade after was a period of many important changes occurring in the Tonga political arena. During this time, Liuaki was a senior staff of the Tonga Ministry of Education. She was Principal of the *Tonga Institute of Higher Education* (TIHE) and was instrumental in seeking the completion of the TIOE institutional review, a process which gave rise to key improvements instituted at this institution including the inception and implementation of the Tonga educational philosophy *Faiako-ma'a-Tonga* (or Teacher for Tonga), as well as the development of the new bachelor degree programmes which are currently available at the institute.

The Tonga Cabinet had recently approved the Tonga National University Act which is paving the way towards the establishment of the national university for Tonga. It's important to note that the contribution that Liuaki made towards the foundation of such an important institution, is immense. She was very supportive our quality assurance processes, and we will definitely miss seeing her face and hearing her voice at TNQAB.

Though we may not ever know what the last few days may have been like for Liuaki, we do know that she fought a courageous battle against cancer. She took it one day at a time, never really complaining and filled her days with the hope that the sickness will end. This was also the hope of many others, including myself.

But God had a better plan for Liuaki! He heard her laboured breathing and saw her suffering, and called her home to rest! Today, we remember Liuaki with this tribute. Her friendship and colleagueship have been a blessing to us at TNQAB.

We bid you goodbye Liuaki, until we meet again on that beautiful shore.

Mau 'ofa atu ki ho fofonga



Munomuna 'o Liuaki Fusitu'a

by 'Amelia Tohu'ia Manuofetoa

1. Malu efiafi pea ma'ili e Matangi 'o ne houtu'u 'i he'eku manatu
Ongo Ha'angana mo Vailahi ko e ngata ee e sau'ilunga 'etau fanautama
Mulu mai aa e maile laumomo pea paki e langakali ne fai si'ono fakaola



'o tuia si'ano lei fakamokomoko he vao kakala 'oe 'Aitu'uua
Ke ne Kumuniloto 'etau koloa ne fatu ki ha 'aho ko hano longa
He kuo ongona e piuaki talupite 'a e hokohoko ui mei Mo'unga.

2. Te u lau e puka 'o e talanoa he ko e polopolo 'o e kauala
Ko e kilisitala ne 'a'ala he mala'e 'o e fekumi mo e Hisitolia
Vale loto ni ke 'auliliki pea taufaaa ha fe'unu 'e fe'unga
'Isa, ko Satai kuo ne tu'u he vaivai he ko e kihi pe he fatongia
'Ene mamahi'i e ngaue, tui mo 'amanaki he melino mo e 'ofa
Tala pea ngali he ko e finetoli uhu na'e aoao lea, poto mo 'ilome'a

3. 'Ene kaveinga ko e Laka ki mu'a, "sio atu" 'o fakamama'u ki he 'Maama'
Mo'ui fakasevaniti, fua kolosi hono kahoa fotufotuaki he faiva vavanga
Koloa 'a poto ko e malimali fiefia, lilingi hange ha lolo 'I ha ha'ofanga
Si'ene 'aikona ko e oloolo he folofola 'a e mo'ui 'o e faiako ma'a Tonga
Ko e huni 'o e mateaki, tutui 'o kapapuna hange ha manuma'a
Lote ai e ngaahi kakala kaloniahi ke 'alaha pea manongi ma'ae fonua.

4. 'Isa, Makahokovalu ee, Ko e haa si'ata laufola ke taau
'E Fungafaa'imata ee ho'o 'fefine' kuo faiteunga 'o takaimonuu
Ko e fatufatufala 'i falelalava fakaholosio'anga ma'au mo au
Fakamo'oniako tokamu'a 'a hota kake'i ko e fakamulituku
Kehe ke 'omi e kuohili mo e kaveikoula ke no'opotu he fakakaukau
Ko e takiamaa, kuo ne mu'omu'a 'o kaunga hiva he 'Alofi 'o e Hau.

5. TNQAB ko fee ho'o seikoula, na'e fonofono siasipa mo e safaia
Fakapo te te nonga, ko e Maama Kamo kuo ta'alo mai tuhu ki he Ope
'A e Fine taukei kuo fakamo'oni 'a e hiki tohi he maka 'o e vahamohe
Poate Ako ma'a Tonga mo e 'otu falemaama, ko 'ena aa 'eta fuakava
Hu'i atu mo e kakala 'o taimi ki ha'a matematika mo mohu faiva
He ko hoku ngalutuku ee kuo maau, tuku aa ke u mu'omu'a.



Note to contributors

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