



Department of Education

15 Norham Gardens



Mālō e lelei



Māfana

**Playful Pedagogies:
Critical Thinking, Creativity,
Constructing Meaning**
25 March 2026



The
Oxford
Education
Deanery

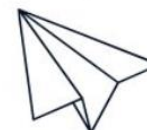


Policy into Playful Practice

When children explore with curiosity, talk with purpose and play with intention, something remarkable happens – they construct meaning that lasts. Jasen Booton's workshop presents the unique Vā Framework; a culturally-integrated Tongan approach for learning and teaching, which emphasises the importance of creating a nurturing, relational space for growth and development of young students in the Kingdom of Tonga.



Register here!



Where we fly



Where we fly
Domestic & International





Indonesia

Papua New
Guinea

Australia

New
Zealand

Tonga

South
Pacific
Ocean













MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Potungāue Ako mo eAko Ngāue





SMOKING IS STRICTLY
PROHIBITED
INSIDE THIS PREMISES

A WORLD BANK STUDY

Alanga Fale 'o e Ako

Vision 2032 and Strategic Policy Framework



Early Childhood Development in Tonga

BASELINE RESULTS FROM THE TONGAN
EARLY HUMAN CAPABILITY INDEX

Ministry of Education
& Training
THE KINGDOM OF TONGA

 WORLD BANK GROUP

Sally Brinkman and Binh Thanh Vu

Copy & Paste





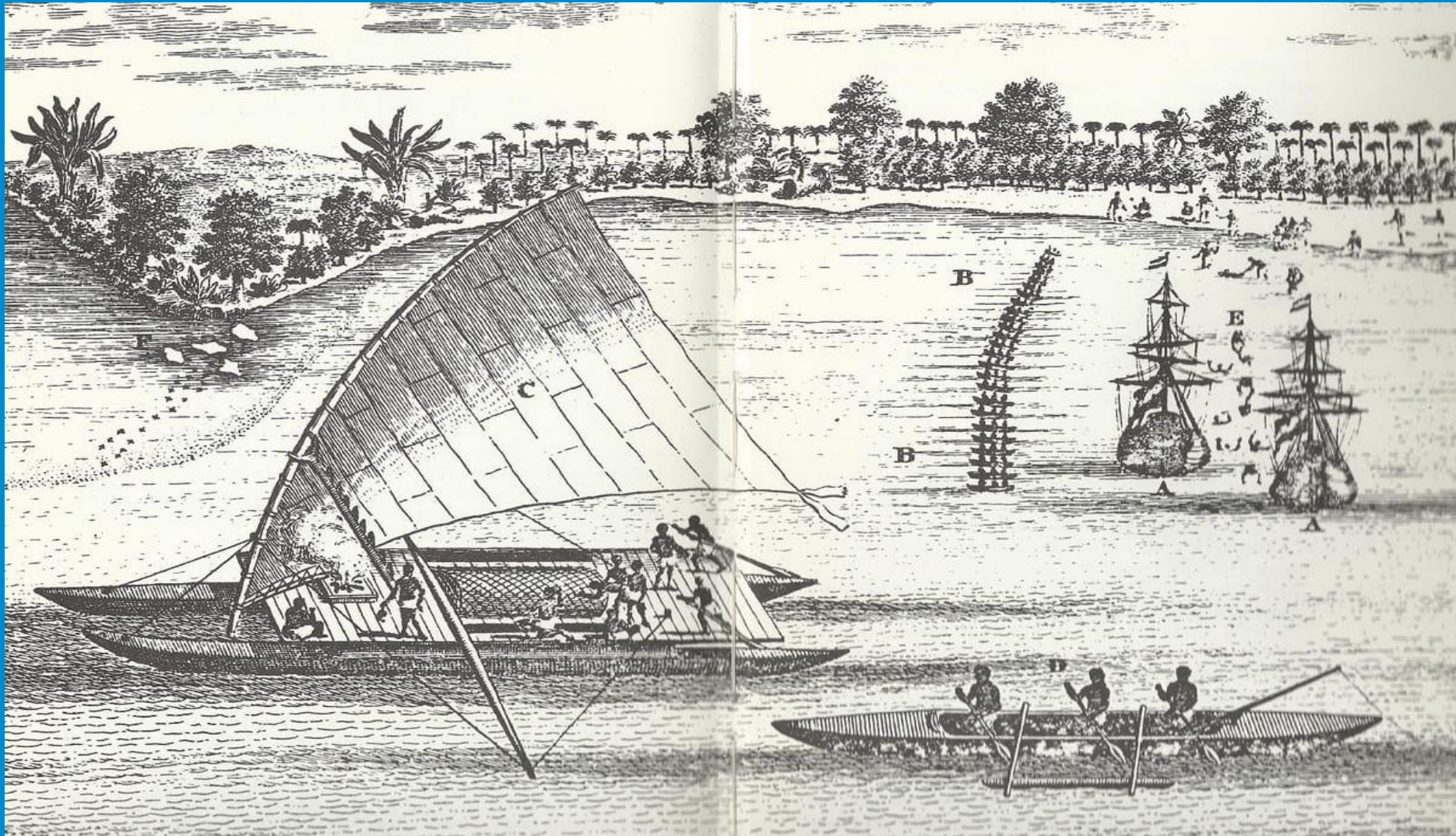
*'Reform is like ripe fruit. It rarely travels well'.
Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018)*



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*'Transform policy into clear,
doable and rewarding practice
in diverse Pacific Island States.'*

Mahon (2024)



“Wayfinding may be described as the process of embarking upon a purposeful, intentional, and self-regulated journey that takes an individual from an intended region in one landscape to another.” (Woods et al., 2020, p. 1).

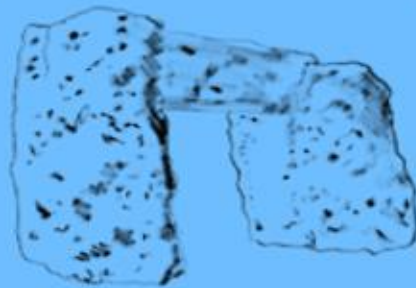
[...] wayfinding is an activity that confronts us with the marvellous fact of being in the world, requiring us to look up and take notice, to cognitively and emotionally interact with our surroundings. O'Connor (2019, p. 20)

O'Connor, M. R. (2019) Wayfinding: The Science and Mystery of How Humans Navigate the World. St Martin's Press.

Values

Values

Shine a light on



Values

Resourceful Past



goals



goals



goals



Preferred
Future

Moving forward with purpose

Talanoa – a talking, connecting, thinking environment

“Talanoa is often referred to as storytelling, especially in the context of Fijian Talanoa. However, it is worth noting that talanoa has different shades of meaning to different groups of Pacific people (Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba, 2014). For some, talanoa could be simply a casual chat, while in more formal contexts it could form the basis of a structured, ritualised methodology for resolving issues and conflicts. The unifying theme is ‘connecting through dialogue’.”

Lofthouse, R., Hollweck, T., & Booton, J. (2025). *Coaching with purpose: Learning encounters for educational change*. Hatchette.

Key Qualities of Tongan Talanoa

Listen to understand

Listen without interruption

Be present – in the moment

Look for the speaker's good intentions

Notice how the speaker is feeling

Reflect and connect to the ideas shared

Bring your true self to the talanoa

'The quality of everything we do depends on the quality of the thinking we do first. The quality of our thinking depends on the way we treat each other while we are thinking.'
Kline (2009)



Let's Explore: Policy into Playful Practice

Tauhi Vā: 'taking care of the space that connects us.'



The Vā Framework:

A culturally-integrated Tongan approach for learning and teaching



Talk: *Talanoa, Tālanga*

Explore: *Fekumi,
Wayfinding*

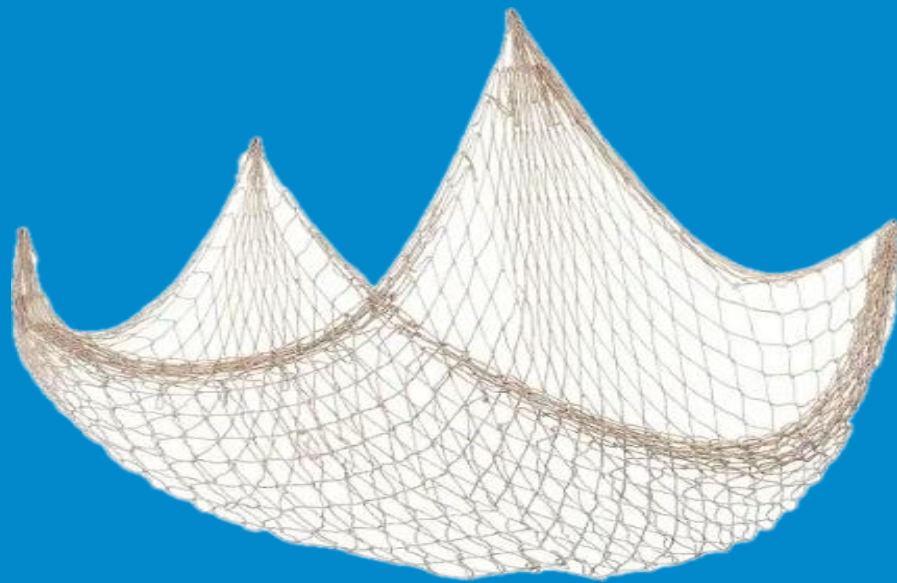
Active Playful Learning:
Mafana



The wonderful Sesi explaining the Vā Framework

A playful classroom needs playful teachers!























unicef
for every child

Ako Kau Kātoa



GMS Tokomololo



GMS Havelu

...nu
...a ke
...ei.



GOVERNMENT
OF TONGA



...TRY OF
...AINING





Talanoa with a Partner

What one insight will you carry into your practice from today?

What have you learned and found useful?

What have you found hopeful and optimistic?

What gives you 'māfana'? 

What is your freshest thinking?



Māfana



Key References:

Hargreaves, A. and O'Connor, M. (2018) Collaborative Professionalism: When Teaching Together Means Learning For All. Corwin Press.

Lofthouse, R., Hollweck, T., & Booton, J. (2025). Coaching with purpose: Learning encounters for educational change. Hatchette.

Kline, N. (2020) The Promise that Changes Everything: I Won't Interrupt You. Penguin Life.

O'Connor, M. R. (2019) Wayfinding: The Science and Mystery of How Humans Navigate the World. St Martin's Press.

Woods, C. T., Rudd, J., Robertson, S. and Davids, K. (2020) 'Wayfinding: How Ecological Perspectives of Navigating Dynamic Environments Can Enrich Our Understanding of the Learner and the Learning Process in Sport', Sports Med - Open, 6, 51. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40798-020-00280-9>