

Faiako ma'a Tonga

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The vision of the Tonga teacher is to *teach for Tonga*. The vision – albeit simple, is reflective of multiple layers of values and core beliefs about being Tongan, about Tongan philosophy of education and about Tongan notions of development.

Faiako – is the Tongan translation for teacher, which is made up of two separate words *fai* and *ako*. The first word refers to doing, action, getting something done – it is practical and task oriented. The second word *ako*, refers to education both formal and informally in the Tongan context. *Ako* can also refer to learning – learning to read, learning to cook, learning to relate to others – it is a form of learning that is neither bounded by classrooms, age nor by subject field. *Ako* in the true sense of the Tongan word refers to all kinds of learning throughout one's life as such reflecting a life-long approach to learning. Additionally, *ako* is not only the acquisition of *'ilo* (knowledge) but also the *poto'i* (demonstration) of the *'ilo* in given context where it proves meaningful, worthwhile and thereby useful. When knowledge is demonstrated meaningfully and usefully, education then is of quality. As such, in the word *Faiako* itself, here rests the Tongan philosophy about learning, knowledge and education. Additionally, in the concept of *faiako*, the personal values¹ of the Ministry of Education- in being purposeful and seeing the bigger picture, in focusing on achievement, support and helping each other, seeking fulfillment, bringing solutions through constructive engagement and the development of healthy mind and body- are all within the concept of *faiako*.

Ma'a – is translated as *for-* suggesting, service, loyalty, gifting, giving, dedication, sacrifice and commitment. When *ma'a* is placed after *faiako* – it also focuses and reconfirms the task of the teacher as a service providing gift of knowledge, as much as it is about dedication and commitment to service.

Tonga – refers to the *fonua* – which is the land as well as the people of the land – which are inseparable. As such the development of Tonga is the development of the people as well as the land, the ocean and all its resources – a holistic development. Given this perspective, it also means that in thinking about Tongan people and land, other aspects are brought to light, such as Tongan history, economics,

¹ Tonga Policy Framework 2003 – 2019, Tonga Ministry of Education, Approved by Cabinet 2004.

philosophy, religion, politics, culture, language, art, music and all other aspects of Tonga and being Tongan. Such thinking also reinforces the Ministry's philosophical values² of focusing on the individual learner, acknowledging the primary role of parents, government, NGOs and church communities in the development of education – which individually and collectively is Tonga. This thinking also makes obvious that the teacher in Tonga is Tongan and should be reflective of all that is Tonga. Tonga being a dynamic and changing society, it also recognizes the role that foreign agencies, including donors and lenders, contribute to the development of education in Tonga. Forging new working relationships and common working understanding of what is best for Tonga can only improve donor harmonization, maximization of donor assistance and most importantly ensure sustainable contributions to Tonga. Also reflected in this conceptualization of Tonga is the diaspora of Tongans around the globe – as they continue to play an important role in the political, economical and social development of Tonga.

As such then, the vision of the Tonga teacher is to *Faiako Ma'a Tonga* – to demonstrate learning in context through commitment to the development of Tonga being its people and the land. *Faiako Ma'a Tonga* also focuses the services of teachers to the development of education in Tonga – which means that the delivery of education is context specific, it is for Tonga. Additionally, *Faiako Ma'a Tonga* is for the purpose of development, of moving forward – of *sio atu* – which is the motto for the Tonga Institute of Education. *Faiako Ma'a Tonga* is not only developmental in its approach, but also strategic and purposeful in that it has a clear focus – which is Tonga. This means then, that the Tonga teacher's knowledge, pedagogy, profession should be rooted on Tongan epistemology.

1. Tonga Professional Development Framework

Based on the vision of the Ministry and the suggested vision for the Tonga teacher, the following draft framework for professional development is put forward for dialogue:

Langa Fale Ako Framework – Building a House of Learning for Tonga Teachers

The Langa Fale Ako framework is to serve two purposes:

1. To illustrate a developmental approach to teacher education with suggestion of key streams for professional development and the progression through the developmental phases of a teacher.

² *ibid*

2. To illustrate the vision for Tonga teachers and the pathway to achieving this vision – as all too often visions are just that – perpetual wishful thinking statements.

Components of the Fale Ako:

1. Fakava'e (foundation of the house) – the foundation of a Tongan fale is soil with coconut palms on top of it and a mat over the coconut palms. The building of the fale on solid ground – without cement or timber – signifies a strong foundation on the land (kelekele 'o Tonga). At the foundation of the professional development of the Tonga teacher is all that is core to being Tongan – our beliefs (Tefito'l tui), our identity and what makes us Tonga. The land site where this Fale Ako will be constructed is the Tonga Institute of Education.
2. Pou fale (posts of the house) – there are four posts to the house and each post is grounded firmly on the foundation connecting the fale to the land – the fonua and the people. As each Pou is rooted to the land, each Pou is connected to core Tongan beliefs, values and philosophies. Each Pou represents a key stream in the development of teacher profession for Tonga. The following are the Pou:

Pou ko 'Lea Fakatonga' (Tongan Language) – Pivotal to articulating, teaching and researching about Tonga is the Tonga language. The Tongan language is equally vital for the cognitive development of students as well as the preservation and development of Tonga culture and epistemology. The Tonga teacher must master the Tongan language – spoken, written and well articulated.

Pou ko 'Ilo (Knowing) – teachers need to be equipped with the right and appropriate knowledge for teaching. Teachers are also encouraged to be creators/builders of knowledge as well as transmitters of knowledge. This knowledge is grounded on the foundation of the fale – the kelekele – which symbolises the core values of Tonga. Reflective of a changing society, the Tonga teacher is also expected to have sufficiently mastered Pacific and global knowledge systems as they pertain to their teaching subjects.

Pou ko 'Poto' (Able to do) – teachers need to be equipped with the right and appropriate pedagogy for teaching in Tonga. As teachers advance through the stages of professional development, their repertoire of teaching methodologies should also increase and refined.

Pou ko 'Fakafeangai 'a e Faiako' (Teacher Profession) – teachers need to be clear and committed to a set of philosophical beliefs about education and about being a teacher. In the Teacher professional stream, teachers will also learn leadership skills, resource management and convinced of the need for ethical behavior. This post is pivotal to the delivery of quality education and the commitment of a Tongan teacher. As such, this post is decorated with additional sinnet throughout the post to signify its

importance to professional development. The sinnet is woven through to reflect the four core values of a Tongan teacher which are:

Loto 'Ofa (faitotonu, anga ma'a, talangofua, mo'ui faka'apa'apa, anga fakatokilalo, fa'a kataki, anga 'ofa, mamahi'l me'a)

Ngaue Mateaki (ma'u ngaue, tauhi taimi, loto fiengaue, fa'a ngaue, longo mo'ui, loto to'a, ngaue vave, mateuteu, ngaue tokamu'a, fakatokanga me'a, fakaongoongo, fa'a fekumi, ngaue fakalakalaka, fa'a fakakaukau, mohu founa, ngaue maau mo ma'a, mamahi'l fatongia)

Ngaue fakataha (fie fanongo, fakafeohi, fevahevahe'aki, fietokoni, fekoekoe'l, uoungataha, fa'a akonaki)

Anga Fakamatapule (teunga fakamatapule, talitali kakai lelei, Talanoa lelei, Talanoa langa hake, poto he hua, tauhi vaha'a, toka'i)

3. Holisi Pola (walls for the house) – the walls are woven from coconut leaves and are tied to each Pou with coconut sinnet. Each pola is laid carefully overlapping the pola beneath it and that it also reinforces the coverage and the structure of the wall. Each pola is also arranged strategically and in a progressive phase. Each pola – being from the coconut tree, the life plant of Tonga – symbolises Tongan culture, history, politics, economy, past and contemporary issues and all things related to being and Tonga. The pola also signifies the connection between school and communities and the relationships that teachers and parents foster to support schooling. As the weaving of the pola is also a communal work. Each teacher in his/her development learns to weave a pola and built one on top of another. The building of the wall of the house, also signify a 'working' phase – or where the Potopoto 'a Niumui practices, reflect and improve on teaching skills to become a master teacher or Poto'l Faiako.

Pola ko 'Potopoto 'a Niumui' is the term given to young apprentices who are just beginning their learning. The first pola on the wall represents the teacher trainee and the first year teacher. They are still developing their knowledge, their pedagogical approaches and their profession as such they need the guidance, the mentoring of the Poto'l Faiako.

'Otu Pola – (In progress) between the Potopoto 'a Niumui and the Poto'l Faiako are several stages of professional development.

Pola ko 'Poto'l Faiako' is the term given to the master and specialist teacher. The teacher who has been in the system for a sufficient time to gain skills that knowledge that can be taught to others. This is the teacher who may already be at Head of Department level or seen as a specialist teacher in his/her

field. The Poto’I Faiako is also a teacher who can provide leadership and mentor the Potopoto ‘a Niumui as well as those who are still in progress towards the Poto’I faiako.

4. Kafa Lalava (coconut sinnet) – the kafa is used to tie or to lalava the pola to each pou and to connect to other pola. The Kafa is used for functionary purposes as through the building of the walls, as well as holding the house frame together. The lalava of the kafa can also be decorative and artistic. The kafa in this metaphor is to symbolise ‘*Sio atu*’ – which is to look forward, or to see beyond and to be visionary. As the motto for the TIOE it is appropriate that it is used to hold or to lalava the Fale Ako together. TIOE as the sole teacher education provider in Tonga – is the centre, the clue factor for teacher professional development in Tonga. By using ‘*sio atu*’ it also signifies a reflective practitioner, that the teacher is a researcher who seeks knowledge and is able to transmit knowledge through publication, reporting and teaching. As the teacher weaves the pola and lalava the kafa in the construction of the wall, the teacher gains knowledge of Tonga language, forms of knowledge, acquire pedagogical approaches and practice ethical leadership. In this progression, the teacher moves from *Potopoto ‘a Niumui* to *Poto’I Faiako* and finally to being the *Faiako Ma’a Tonga*.

‘Ato Fale – (roof of the house) – represents the *Faiako Ma’a Tonga*. The ‘Ato is also made from pola and is tied together using the kafa. The pola on the roof faces upwards to shield the house from rain, sun and natural disasters. It is as much about protection as it is about finishing a house that can be useful for living. Without a roof, the house cannot be used. The *Fata* is a space for storage in the loft of the house. Storage space for Tongan fale is located up in an attic like space close to the roof. In a Tongan house the *Fata* is the storage for all the ‘treasures’ or valuables of the family – including mats, baskets, tools and all kinds of valuables. A Tongan house with such storage is always believed to be filled with many valuables and it is rarely without such valuables. In the same way, it is believed that the *Faiako Ma’a Tonga* symbolises a storage of knowledge, strategies and educational treasures. The ‘treasures’ of a *Faiako Ma’a Tonga* are collected through the experiences and the knowledge having built the house from the Potopoto ‘a Niumui stage to the Poto’I Faiako stage and finally with the completion of the ‘Ato. The ‘Ato represents the vision of the Tonga Teacher and the final stage in the Tonga teacher development – that is to teach for Tonga and be the Teacher for Tonga. Hence, *Faiako Ma’a Tonga* is the vision becoming personified in the teacher, the community educator. At this level, the *Faiako Ma’a Tonga*, should be useful for all of Tonga, be able to research, teach, advice, write and be a living symbol of the vision. That the pola faces upwards, also suggests an outward look, to *sio atu ma’a Tonga* – to see beyond, find innovative ideas, create new strategies, use the best of all knowledge forms for Tonga.

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