



**A Case Study of how
the Va Shapes School
Leadership
Strategies to
Enhance Selected
Pasefika Learner
Outcomes.**

Fuimaono Ta'ituuga Atua Asafo



Paternal grandparents

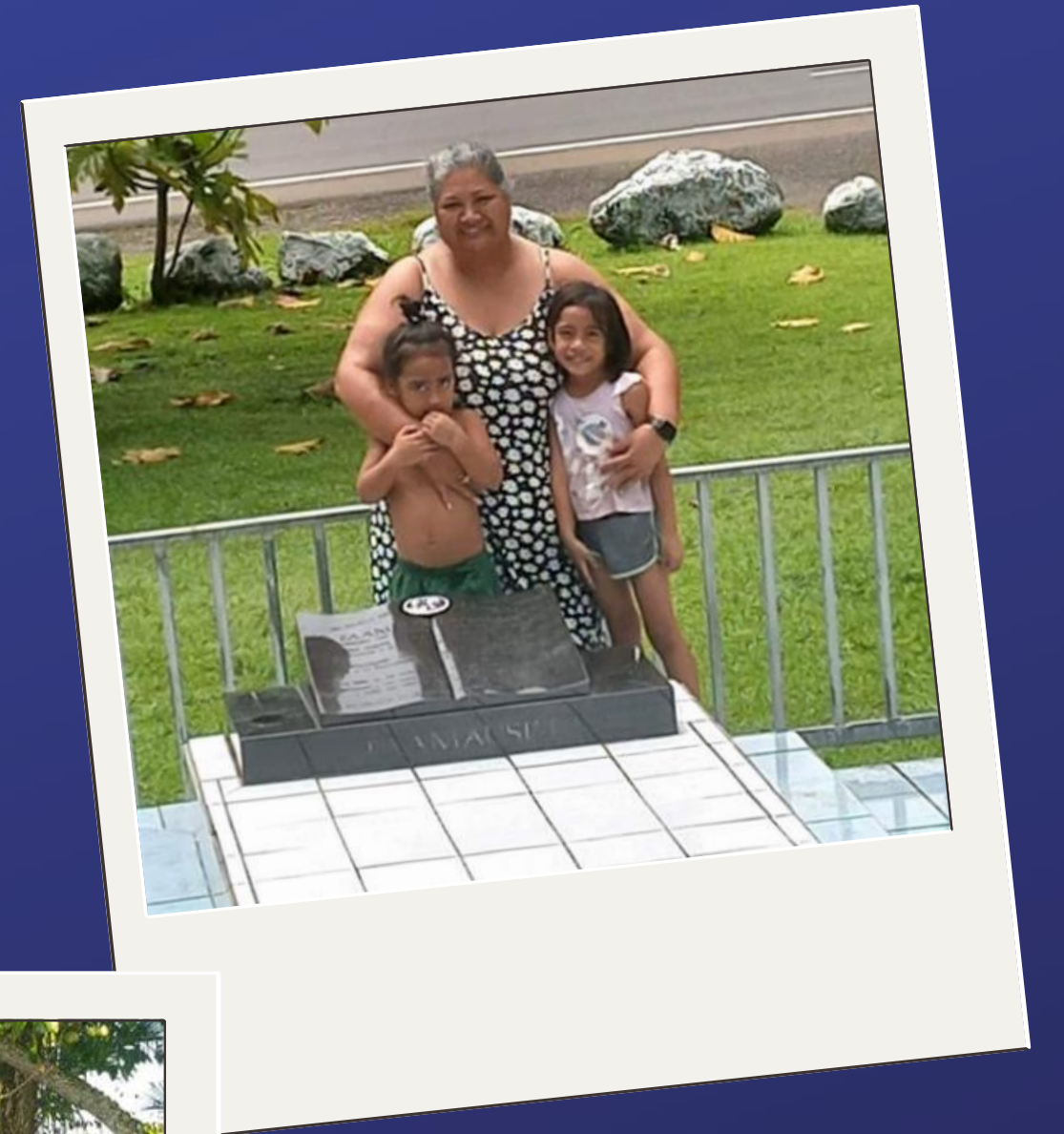


Dad & Mum



Maternal grandparents







FAITH



35mm FILM



1 1A



2 2A

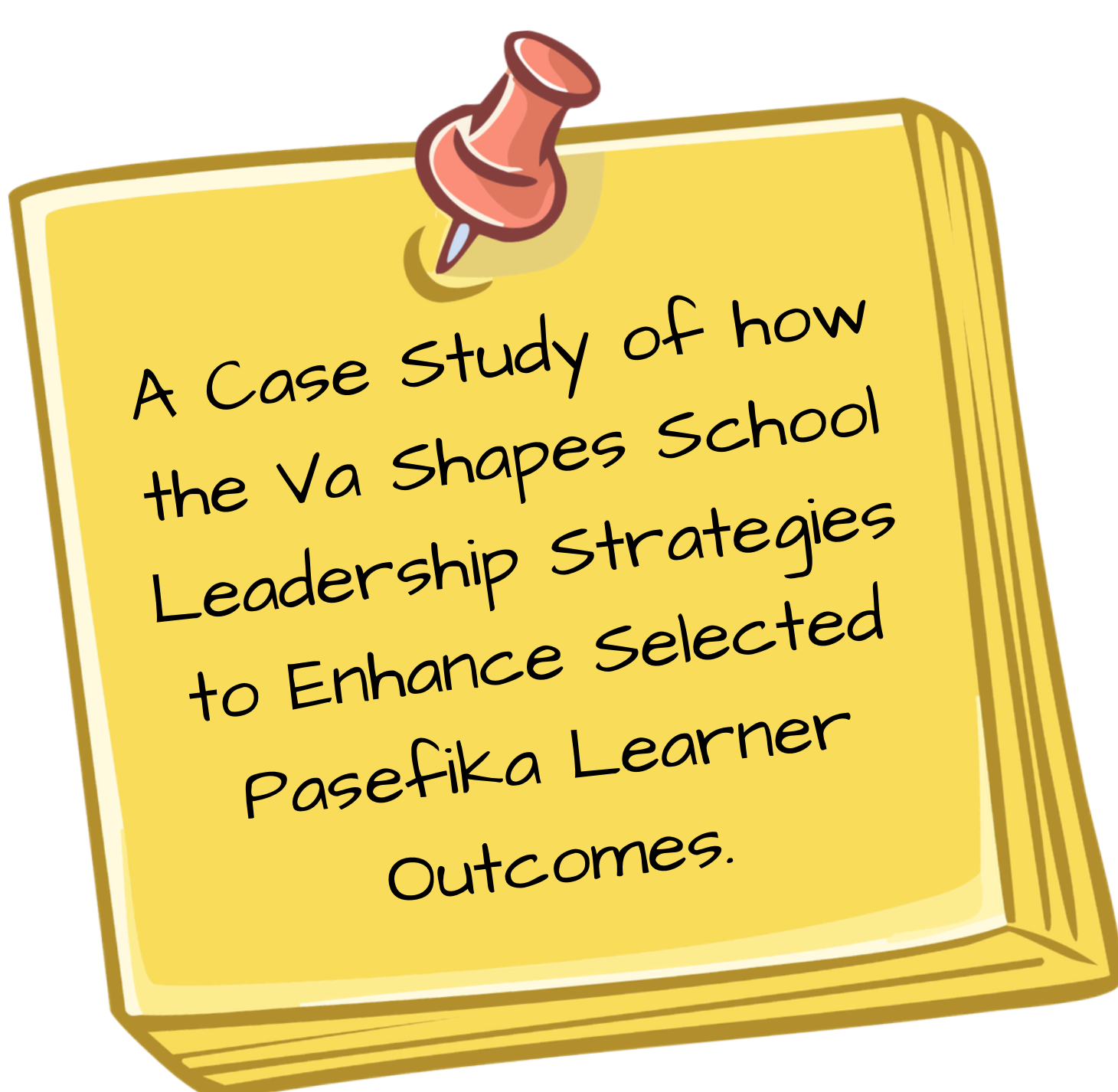


3 3A



Aiga lautele (extended family)





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Key sections

- Pasefika education in NZ
- Purpose of the study
- Teu le Va - what the research says
- Tausi le va
- Findings: Recentering the va
- So why does this research matter?

PASEFIKA EDUCATION IN

PRIORITY LEARNERS

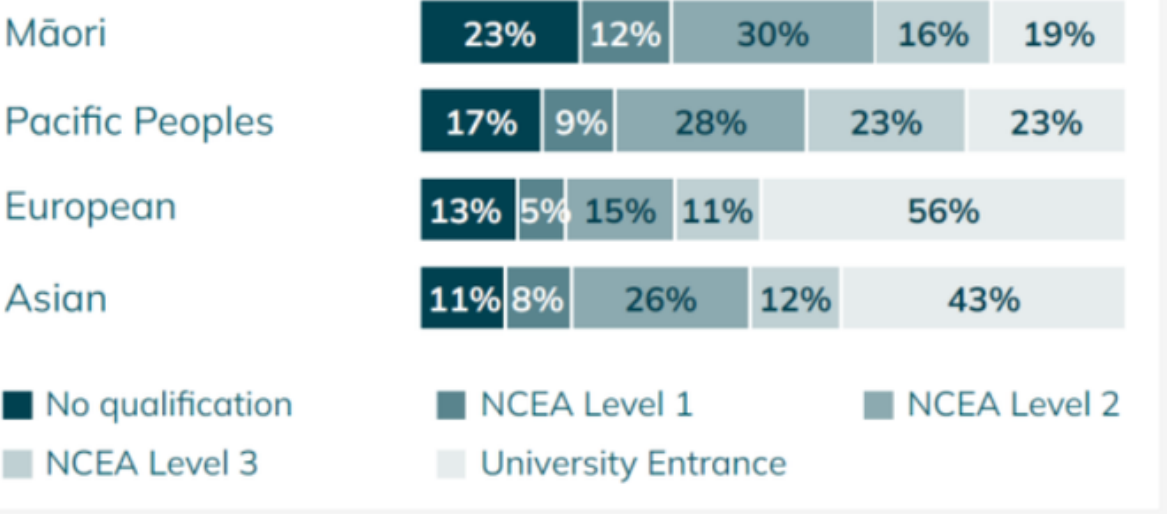
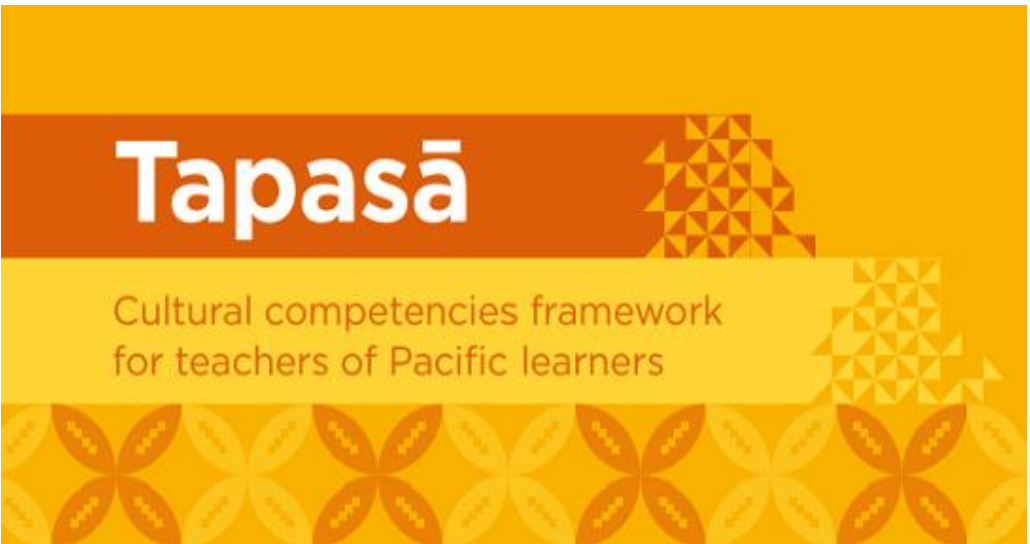
TARGET STUDENTS

TAIL OF ACHIEVEMENT
MOST AT RISK

FAILING

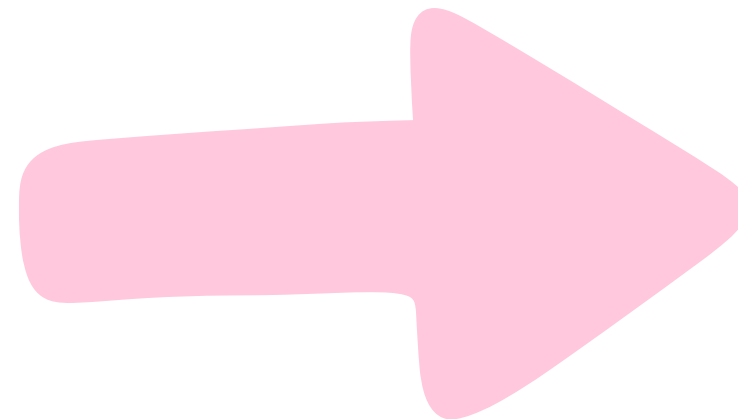


Figure 2: Highest NCEA qualification achievement



Purpose of the study

to look at how the va is enacted by
leadership to support Pasifika learners



Look after, protect,
nurture, honour &
maintain the va or the
space between people
(Anae, 2010)

Va is unseen, yet intuitive space
of how one relates to one
another
(Airini et al., 2010)

symmetry, balance, harmony
(Reynolds, 2017)

Mila-Schaaf (2006) says
that to "focus on our
intentions and conscious
actions that influences the
nature of our relationships
with others" (p. 10) is to
care for the va.



the vā is space, the
betweenness, but it is not an
empty 'space' but one that
connects all things (Wendt,
1999, as cited in Reynolds,
2016).

Relationships at the
centre



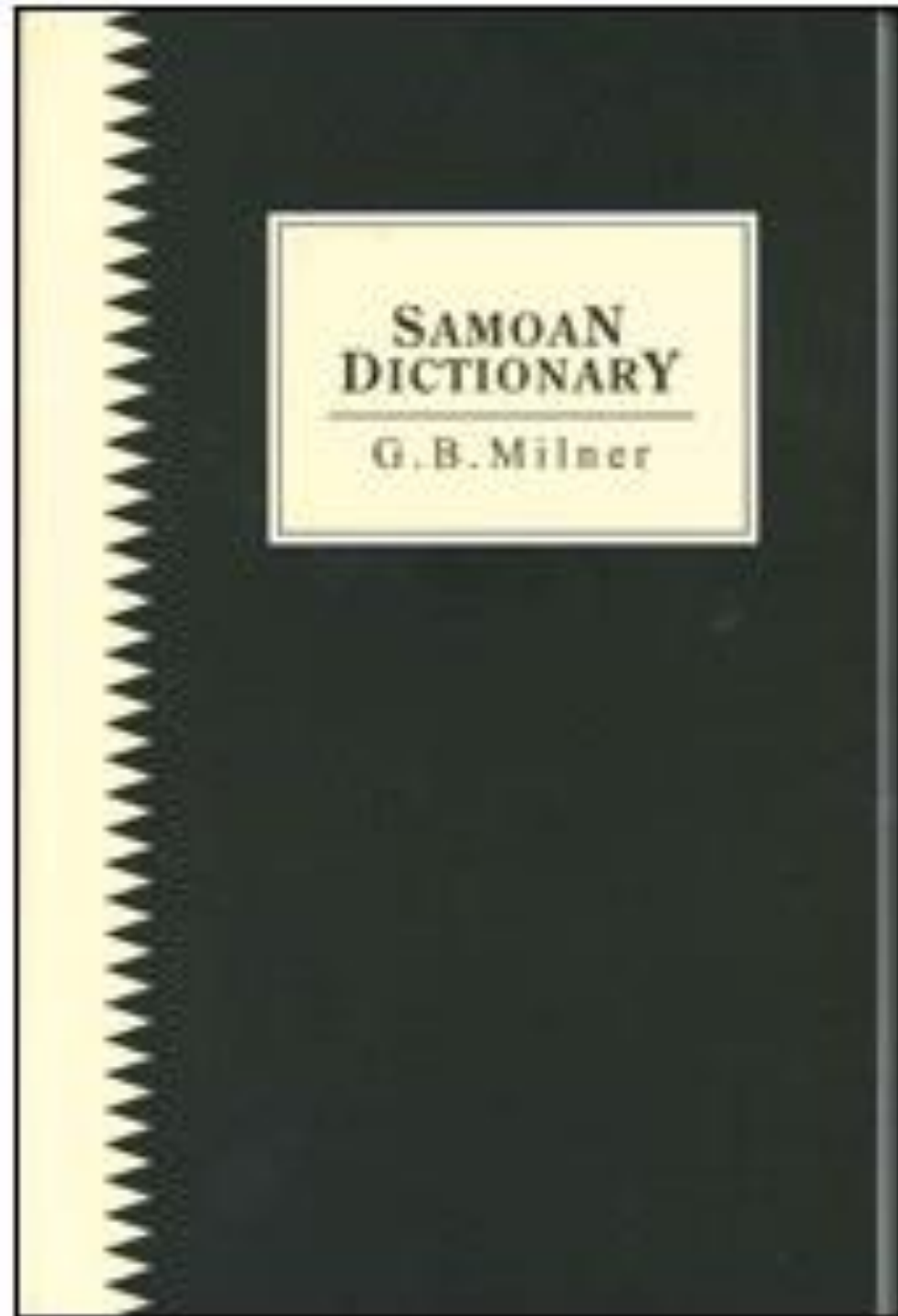
...is the fatu (essence or heart) of
fa'asamoa (Tamasese, 2007)

THE SAMOAN ALPHABET

- 14 letters
- 3 letters added on a later date for English translative purposes
- Therefore = Samoan words often have multiple meanings and its context dependent.

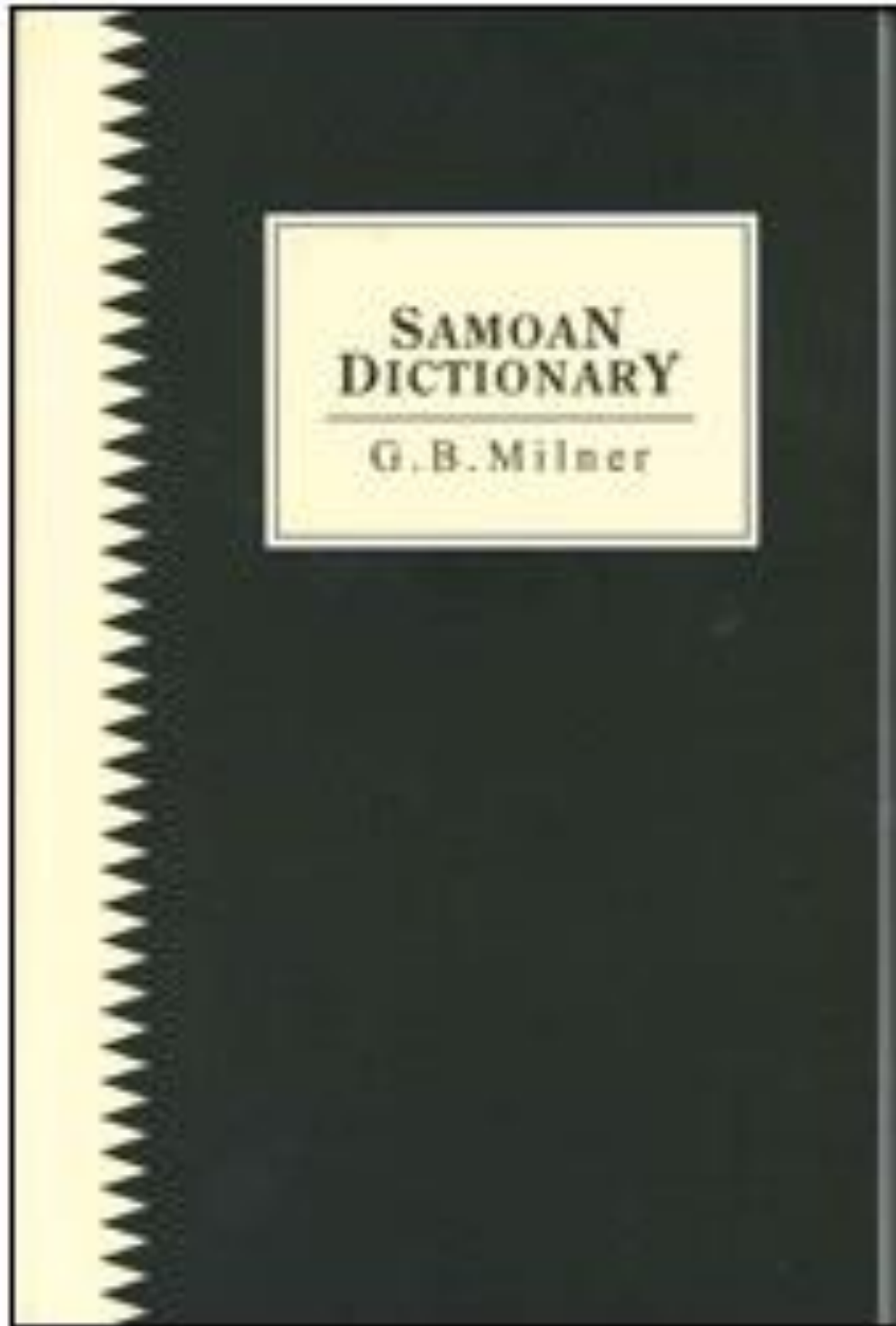
O L E P I T A U T A U			
a 	e 	i 	o 
u 	f 	g 	l 
m 	n 	p 	s 
t 	v 	a i - ai a u - au e i - ei e u - eu i a - ia e a - ea	
h 	k 	r 	

‘TEU’ le vā.



Milner (2001) **TEU** means:

- to look after
- to put away
- to tidy up
- **to nurture**
- to pack
- to store
- to save
- to bury
- to adjust
- to dress
- to decorate
- to welcome guests

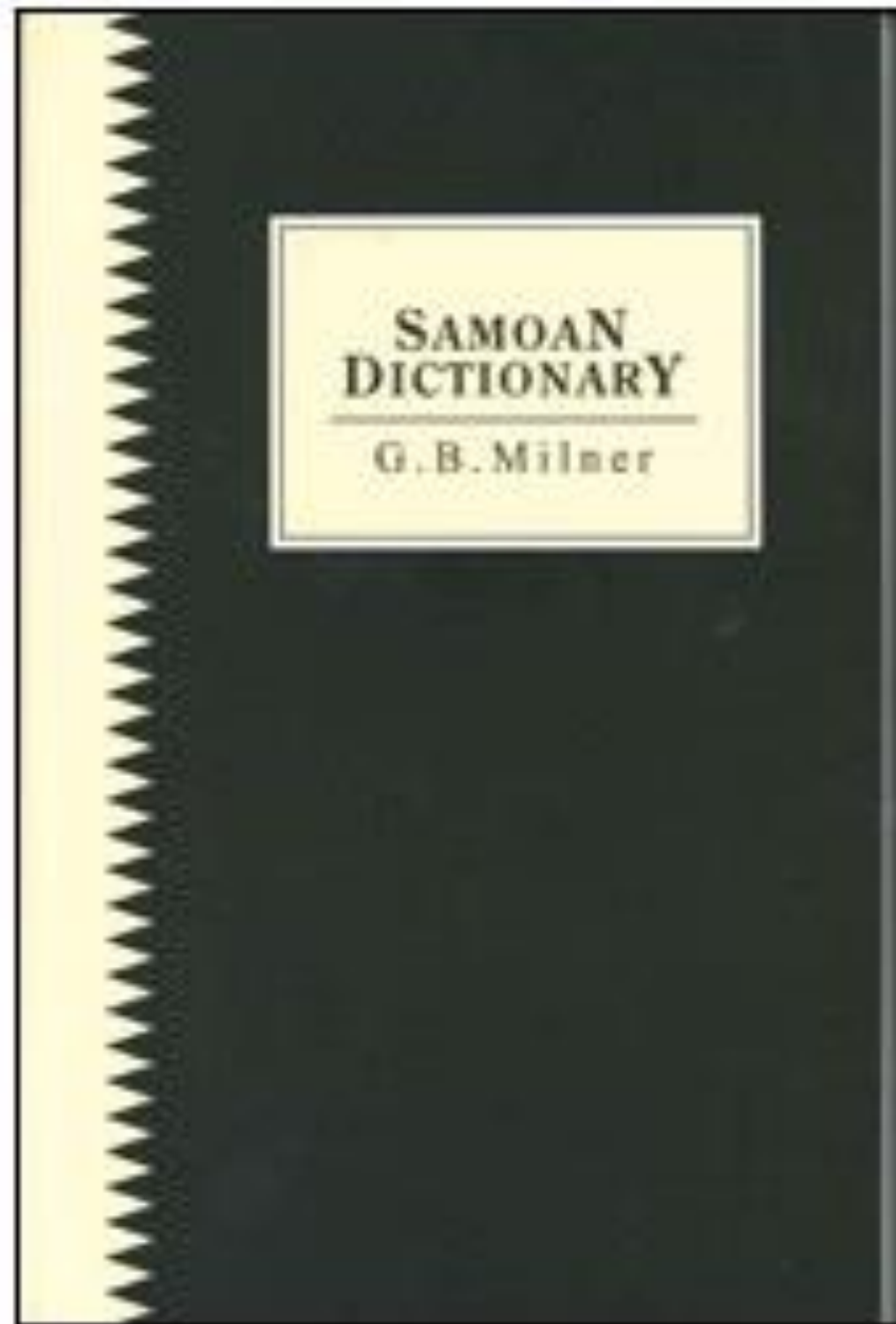


Teu le

‘VĀ’

- divided or separated (physical location)
- bad terms or estranged (tension between people)
- between (in reference to a dispute or quarrel)
- relational space
- relatedness

‘TEU LE VĀ’



- to ‘teu’ is the action of
- tidying up
- to nurture or value the va
- relational space



Tausi le Va



To tausi - is to steward, sustain, maintain, caretake, guide, guard and protect the va.



Stewardship (tausimea) of our treasure (measina).



Family like approach to the classroom is fundamental - as it allows the learner to feel a sense of belonging, valued, loved, culturally validated and the approach supports accelerated learning (Bishops, 2019; Douglas, 2025)

‘quality of education positively influences learner outcomes by up to 59% (Airini et al., 2010)

RELATIONALITY

pillar for improving learning outcomes

leaders who were able to connect deeply with learner's families by acknowledging their diverse cultural identities were linked to improved learner outcomes (Alton-Lee, 2011)

PEDAGOGY OF THE HEART



catalyst for the
success of the
learner.



Shift from
transactional
management to
transformational
leadership

Create a sense
of value,
belongingness
and familial
structure

Establish
relational trust &
collaborative
stewardship

Be proactive
and teu le va -
mow the grass

FOSTERING THE VA

1. Relational Vā

- familial belonging
- spiritual alignment
- intentional relational care
- relational repair - Mowing the grass

2. Leadership as Teu le Vā (Radical Stewardship and Trust-Based Governance)

- Stewardship of Measina - Tausi le va
- High trust governance
- trust based budgeting:
- removing socio-economic barriers

3. Cultural Capital (Ancestral Intelligence and Decolonising Success)

- dismantle deficit labels
- value cultural AI



**KEY
FINDINGS**

WHY THE VA MATTERS in LEADERSHIP

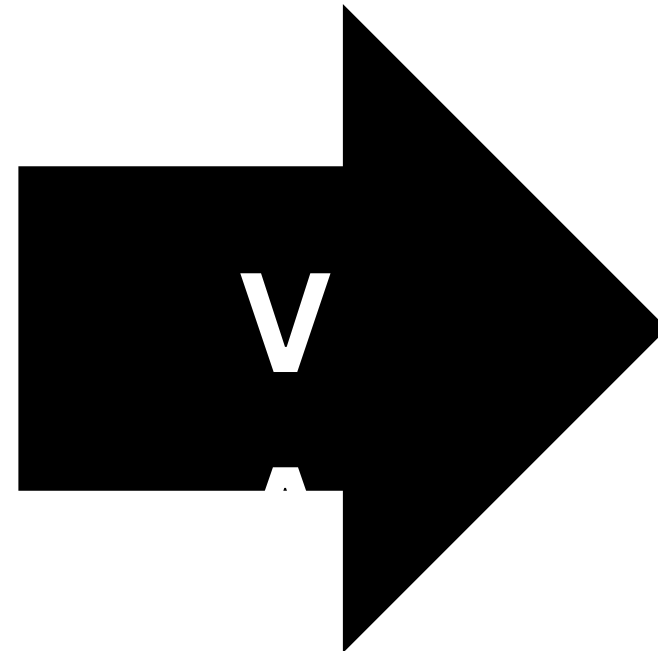
- move away from transactional but transformational
- dismantles deficit based labelling
- High trust model
- vulnerability = strength
- leading from the heart
- intentional practice 'mow the grass'

RE-CENTERING THE

VA

Previous research:

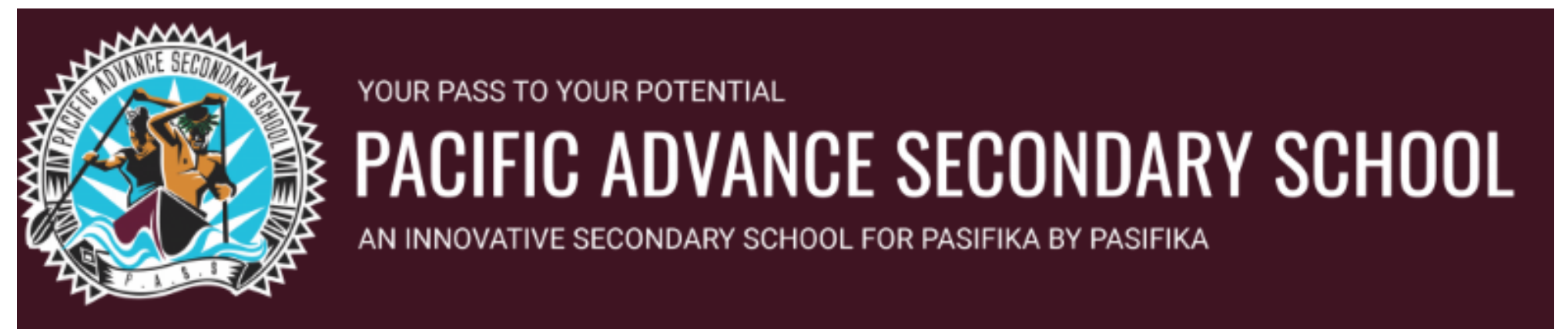
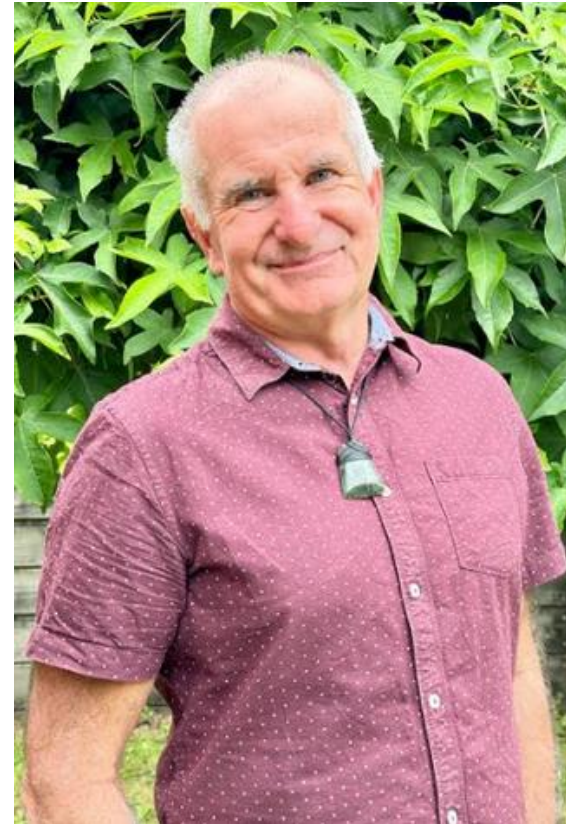
- va is simple in its definition
- stagnant
- silo
- acknowledged



This research:

- va is multifaceted, complex, ever changing
- need for constant nurturing, taking care of and 'mowing the grass' maintenance to uphold its effectiveness
- lived reality - enacted through alofa (love), fa'aaloalo (respect) and tautua (service).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



WHEN LEADERS THRIVE



OUR LEARNERS

