

Peace Education in Oceania: A Multi-Country Review of Frameworks, Policies and Pedagogical Innovations

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Abstract

Peace education is critical in Oceania, a culturally complex and geographically dispersed region facing severe macro-crises in different fields, including climate-induced displacement, colonial legacies, and historical ethnic conflicts. The scholarly landscape regarding K-12 peace education in the Oceania region, or Pacific region, is highly fragmented, often relying on isolated single-country case studies or conflating the region with broader Asia-Pacific analyses. Addressing these challenges, this paper presents a comprehensive multi-country review of peace education frameworks, policies, and pedagogical innovations across sovereign Oceanian nations. By analysing critical peace theory, decolonial pedagogy, and indigenous epistemologies, the study maps explicit and implicit curricular provisions for peace education, exposing a stark dichotomy between advanced settler-colonial educational frameworks and underfunded sub-regional curricula. The paper examines chronic under-resourcing and colonial educational legacies as prime structural barriers, which are counterbalanced by powerful enabling conditions such as dense social capital and indigenous knowledge systems like *kastom* and *fa'asamoa*. Instead of sticking to prescriptive pedagogy, the paper suggests a flexible approach that also values the local ways of knowing traditional academic knowledge. Ultimately, this blueprint provides a culturally responsive foundation for teachers, curriculum designers, and educational researchers to translate global mandates, such as SDG 4.7, into systemic, decolonised peacebuilding praxis.

Keywords: Peace education; Oceania; Indigenous epistemology; Curriculum design; Climate grief; Comparative education policies; Sustainable development goals

1. Introduction

Peace education stands as a foundation for making compassionate individuals and building cohesive, resilient societies. It brings academic growth beyond rote learning, transforming learning into a powerful instrument for empathy, mutual understanding, and sustainable development. This vision carries particular significance in the Oceanian region, encompassing Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia, as well as the settler-colonial nations of Australia and New Zealand, where diverse cultural traditions and histories converge, making peace education both a necessity and an opportunity for lasting harmony.

Oceania represents one of the most culturally complex and geographically dispersed educational environments in the world. Within this context, peace education plays a vital role in fostering dialogue, cultural respect and resilience. The fourteen main countries of the Oceania region, i.e., Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu in Melanesia; Kiribati, Marshall Islands, the

Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, and Palau in Micronesia; Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu in Polynesia; and Australia and New Zealand, each bring unique traditions, challenges, and perspectives that enrich peace education in the region. By integrating indigenous knowledge, promoting environmental stewardship, and addressing colonial legacies, peace education across these nations nurtures cooperation, justice, and sustainable coexistence. It ensures that diverse communities can thrive together despite geographic dispersion and historical complexities. Across roughly eight million square kilometres of Ocean, these fourteen sovereign nations are home to over 1,300 indigenous languages and span vast developmental, political, and demographic gradients. They share a common aspiration inscribed in regional education frameworks, such as the Pacific Framework for the Education of Children and Youth (Pacific Education Framework 2030, 2018), that emphasises the values of peace, justice, and sustainable community life.

Peace education in the region aligns with the UN Secretary-General's 2023 *Our Common Agenda*, which anchors 21st-century multilateralism in education for peace and global citizenship. Grounded in the pedagogical principles of peace education, Oceania's populace has cultivated a sophisticated intercultural literacy that moves social responsibility from an abstract ideal to actionable civic engagement. Consequently, this educated civic body actively mitigates interconnected macro-crises such as climate vulnerability, structural poverty, and socioeconomic inequality, thereby dismantling structural violence and operationalising systemic peace on a global scale.

UNESCO's (2015) Incheon Declaration explicitly frames Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.7, ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, human rights, gender equality, and a culture of peace, as non-negotiable for transformative education. The theoretical case for peace education in K-12 schooling has never been stronger in the Oceanian region. The Pacific context lends additional urgency: Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji each have experienced episodes of armed ethnic conflict; climate-induced displacement is reconfiguring social relations across low-lying atolls; and educational disruption has deepened inequalities that correlate with community tension in the region. Although there is an urgent need for planned peace education in the Pacific region, the scholarly landscape of peace education there is characterised by fragmentation. Studies on peace education in the Pacific tend to focus on single-country cases (e.g., Dinnen, 2001, on Solomon Islands; Peteru, 2008, on Fiji; Thaman, 2009, on Pacific values education), adopt mostly practitioners' approach rather than theoretical lenses, or conflate the region with broader 'Asia-Pacific' analyses that obscure intra-regional heterogeneity. No existing theoretical review encompasses the full breadth of sovereign Oceanian states within a K-12 frame. This paper explores these shortcomings. Its objectives are fourfold:

1. to analyse the major frameworks of critical peace theory, transformative education, decolonial pedagogy, and indigenous epistemology most relevant to the Pacific context;
2. to map peace education policy and curricular provisions across the fourteen sovereign Oceanian nations;
3. to identify the prime structural barriers and key enabling conditions of peace education implementation in the region; and
4. to find the implications of diverse Peace Education models for the promotion of peace education in countries as a heuristic framework for future curriculum design and empirical research in the field.

This paper consolidates the fragmented landscape of peace education research in Oceania by anchoring Oceania's unique geopolitical and cultural realities within a unified regional discourse on K-12 peace education. By weaving together decolonial methodologies, critical pedagogy, and indigenous ways of knowing, the analysis of this study moves beyond localised case studies to reveal

how the fourteen sovereign nations of the Pacific can collectively operationalise global mandates like SDG 4.7 and the Pacific Education Framework 2030. Confronting severe regional disruptions, ranging from historical ethnic friction and post-pandemic learning deficits to the existential threat of climate-induced displacement, this paper documents the systemic obstacles to peace education and the institutional drivers that can dictate its classroom outcomes. The comprehensive heuristic framework developed through this fourfold inquiry does not simply advance academic theory; it provides an adaptable, culturally responsive blueprint for future curriculum designers.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks of Peace Education

Peace education is a multifaceted construct shaped by theory and context. Harris and Morrison (2003, p. 9) define it as a set of teaching strategies for peace, while Reardon (1988) emphasises consciousness-raising across personal, social, and global dimensions. Salomon (2002) highlights differences between conflict and peaceful societies, evident in Oceania's varied contexts, from Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands to New Zealand and Polynesia. In the Pacific, peace education is shaped by two key ideas: the complex history between Indigenous peoples and settlers, which makes it hard to categorise groups neatly, and Galtung's 1969 framework, which shows that violence can be physical, social, or cultural. Together, these perspectives help explain the different ways teachers approach peace education across the region. Table 1 presents the theoretical frameworks for establishing peace education in Oceania.

Table 1. Comparative Theoretical Frameworks for Peace Education in Oceania

Frameworks	Core Principles	Application in Oceania	Outcomes
Galtung's Peace Triangle (Galtung, 1969, 1996)	Positive/negative peace; structural & cultural violence	Addressing colonial legacies, resources, and equity	Reduced structural inequalities
Critical Peace Theory and Transformative Education (Freire, 1970)	Conscientization; praxis; dialogue	Decolonising curricula; learner agency	Empowered civic participation
Trauma-Informed Education (Brunzell et al., 2016)	Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) recognition; relational safety; healing	Post-conflict schooling; diaspora communities	Improved resilience & wellbeing
Eco-Peace Pedagogy (Ehrenzeller, 2025)	Human-nature interconnection; ecological justice	Climate change integration; Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) curricula	Environmental stewardship
Decolonial Pedagogy and Indigenous Epistemology (Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2000)	Coloniality of power	Generate structural violence	Managing conflict, building trust, and sustaining social cohesion
SDG 4.7 Framework (UNESCO, 2016)	Promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence	Integration of climate literacy with peace education	Treat climate justice and peacebuilding as inextricably linked

Johan Galtung's (1969) distinction between negative peace (cessation of direct violence) and positive peace (justice and equity) expanded into a triangle of direct, structural, and cultural violence (Galtung, 1996), which maps Pacific conflicts, where structural harms like colonial land dispossession, underfunded schools, and brain drain intersect with cultural denigration of languages and cosmologies. Effective peace education targets all these three, i.e. direct, structural, and cultural violence, yet demands decolonial tweaks to counter Western universalism, favouring relational Pacific harmony (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Freire's (1970) conscientization, fostering critical awareness through dialogue and praxis, aligns with *Talanoa* and innovations such as Thaman's (2003) *kakala*, and connects to Lederach's (1997) elicitive transformation rooted in local traditions. Trauma-informed education (Brunzell et al., 2016) addresses colonial legacies, conflict traumas, climate grief, and diaspora racism, complementing eco-peace pedagogy that links human-ecological peace through TEK amid rising seas. Grounded in ecological philosophy, climate justice advocacy, and Indigenous environmental epistemologies, eco-peace pedagogy posits that sustainable human peace is inseparable from ecological peace, that violence against the earth is simultaneously violence against communities whose physical, cultural, and spiritual survival depends on healthy ecosystems (Ehrenzeller, 2025). Decolonial tools, as articulated by Mignolo (2011) and Quijano (2000), provide a framework for dismantling Eurocentric epistemologies by integrating emic concepts such as *kerekere* (Fijian reciprocity) and *fa'asamoa* (Samoan way of life), which embody relational ethics and communal resilience. When aligned with SDG 4.7's mandate for peace, global citizenship, and climate consciousness, these indigenous paradigms become vital for addressing Oceania's existential threats, rising seas, displacement, and cultural erosion, through peace education.

Merging Western critical theories with indigenous methodologies like *Talanoa* and *fa'asamoa*, these conceptual frameworks provide Oceania with a localised, decolonial architecture for K-12 peace education. *Talanoa*, rooted in Pacific traditions of open dialogue, and *fa'asamoa*, the Samoan ethos of communal harmony, are vital for peace education in Oceania's K-12 classrooms as they foster empathy, respect, and collective responsibility. By encouraging storytelling, problem-solving, and reciprocity, they nurture intercultural understanding and resilience against challenges like climate change and displacement, embedding indigenous wisdom into curricula and equipping young learners with ethical frameworks essential for sustainable peace. These successfully reframe raw local narratives of historical trauma and climate grief into scalable, structurally resilient educational models that bypass Eurocentric frameworks. Ultimately, these integrated approaches offer curriculum designers a practical framework for translating global mandates into active regional mechanisms for systemic healing, ecological stewardship, and positive peace.

3. Peace Policy Analysis of the Oceania Region

Across Oceania's vast maritime gradients, the educational policies of its fourteen sovereign nations function not as static bureaucratic mandates but as a diverse legislative archipelago where indigenous philosophies and colonial policy frameworks collide to negotiate the statutory boundaries of regional peace.

The analysis in Table 2 structures its examination of Oceanian K-12 peace education by sub-regional groupings, focusing for each country on the formal curriculum frameworks with its peace education provisions, its alignment with international benchmarks like SDG 4.7 and UNESCO (2016; 2018; 2022) guidelines, and scholarly or policy insights into implementation quality and gaps region-wise or country-by-country

Table 2. Overview of Peace Education (PE) Provisions in Oceanian K-12 Curricula

Subregion	Country	Curriculum Frameworks	Peace Education Provisions	Key Gaps/Strengths
Australasia	Australia	Australian Curriculum (ACARA) v9.0 (ACARA, 2022)	Intercultural Understanding; Personal & Social Capability; Civics & Citizenship	Strength: Comprehensive framework. Gap: Minimal indigenous co-design in content
	New Zealand	Te Kura / New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) + Te Ao Māori integration	Social Sciences, Health & PE; Peace & Conflict in NCEA (National Certificate of Educational Achievement)	Strength: Treaty of Waitangi framing Gap: Implementation fidelity varies
Melanesia	Papua New Guinea	National Department of Education (NDOE) National Curriculum (NDOE, 2020)	Values & Attitudes strand; Civic Education	Gap: Post-conflict communities lack trained peace educators; resource deficit
	Solomon Islands	MEHRD Curriculum (2030). Plan (MEHRD, 2016 & 2026)	Citizenship; Social Education; conflict-sensitive education pilots	Gap: Post-RAMSI transition; weak teacher training; language of instruction
	Vanuatu	Vanuatu Education Sector Strategy (VESS) Reform Curriculum (VESS, 2006)	Kastom integration; civic values; gender equity	Strength: Kastom legitimises indigenous peace norms. Gap: English/French divide
	Fiji	Ministry of Education (MOE) Curriculum Framework (2007 & 2013)	Social Education; Values in Action; multicultural content	Strength: Ethnic reconciliation post-coups Gap: Uneven delivery across iTaukei/Indo-Fijian communities
Polynesia	Samoa	National Curriculum Policy Framework (MESC, 2006)	Values strand (Fa'asamoa); Health & Life Skills	Gap: Limited explicit peace terminology; the church dominates values discourse
	Tonga	Ministry of Education and Training (MET) Curriculum	Values education; Social Studies; Christian ethics integration	Gap: Authoritarian cultural norms may constrain critical dialogue

		Framework (2023)		
	Tuvalu	Tuvalu National Curriculum Policy Framework (MEYS, 2013)	Environmental & Climate Education; Life Skills	Gap: Existential displacement anxiety requires trauma-informed peace pedagogy
Micronesia	Palau	MOE Standards Framework (US-aligned) [MOE, 2020]	Health Education; Civic Values; Environmental Stewardship	Strength: Environmental peace framing is strong. Gap: Limited multicultural content
	Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)	State-level curricula (4 states)	Social Studies; Health; Values vary by state	Gap: Extreme fragmentation; no unified peace education framework
	Marshall Islands	Ministry of Education, Sports and Training (US-compact linked) Framework [MEST, 2023]	Social Studies; Civic Education; Nuclear legacy content	Strength: Nuclear testing memory as a peace education resource. Gap: Trauma not pedagogically processed
	Kiribati	MOE National Curriculum and Assessment Framework	Life Skills; Civic Education; climate-linked content	Gap: Teacher shortage critical; climate anxiety unaddressed pedagogically
	Nauru	MOE Basic Education Framework	Social Studies; Values; Environmental Education	Gap: Tiny scale; refugee-related social tension underexplored in curriculum

Note: ACARA = Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority; MEHRD = Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development; RAMSI = Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands; MESC = Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture; MEST = Ministry of Education, Sports and Training

Sources: *MET Curriculum Framework (2023)*; *UNESCO (2016; 2022)*. *UNESCO Country Profiles (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018)*; *Pacific Education Framework 2030 (SPC, 2018)*

Settler-colonial Australia and New Zealand boast advanced infrastructures yet Indigenous tensions, as Australia's ACARA v9.0 prioritizes intercultural understanding and civics but inconsistently integrates aboriginal views, framing peace as order over colonial critique (Moreton-Robinson, 2015), while New Zealand's Treaty of Waitangi biculturalism counters Māori underachievement via Te Kotahitanga's Kaupapa Māori model (Bishop et al., 2009), Key Competencies, and Te Marautanga, embedding treaty truth-telling (Bell, 2014; Bishop & Glynn, 1999) through whanaungatanga and manaakitanga for equitable communities, despite persistent gaps, underachievement, and Chaudron's (2012) caution against cultural essentialism in political-economic contexts.

The sub-region Melanesia encompassing Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji reveals the sharpest clash between urgent peace needs and implementation shortfalls, starting with

Papua New Guinea, where over 800 languages, persistent Highlands inter-tribal ‘payback’ cycles, and swift urbanisation demand well-validated responses, yet the national curriculum offers only values and civic education without a dedicated peace strand rooted in modern conflict transformation theory. This gap persists despite the 2020 National Department of Education (NDOE) revision recognising social cohesion’s importance, as it failed to deliver tailored teacher guidelines or assessments, while church-based schools serving over 60% of primary students infuse values via Christian doctrine, which Dinnen (2001) describes as both aiding and undermining state civic peace efforts amid Highlands tribal wars, the 1988-1998 Bougainville conflict that killed 10,000–20,000, wrecked education infrastructure, and rampant gender-based violence labeled a UN crisis. Bougainville’s post-conflict recovery, marked by community-driven *kastom* practices like weapon-burning ceremonies, traditional land councils, and inter-clan bride-wealth rituals, lays culturally resonant groundwork for educational rebuilding (Collin, 2019), positioning the Bougainville Peace Process as a global case study that educators aim to embed in curricula through ‘tevororo’ peace ceremonies involving elders, compensation, and exchanges, which Boege (2006) elevates from supplements to core frameworks. The UNICEF-backed Bougainville Peacebuilding Schools project advances this through community storytelling, intergenerational talks, and ex-combatant narratives to heal trauma and re-engage 3,400 out-of-school youth (UNICEF, 2020). However, sustainability falters due to reliance on funding and a shortage of trained facilitators, prompting initiatives such as the Strongim Pipol Strongim Nesen (SPSN) programme’s “Peace Education Handbook,” Catholic Education efforts, and university contributions that blend *kastom* with human rights. Transitioning to Solomon Islands, from the 1998 to 2003 ‘Tensions’ and RAMSI intervention, UNICEF and Save the Children pilots promote conflict-sensitive education, but Singh (2000) and Martin (2013) critique their marginal role in core curricula and teachers’ untrained dialogue skills, exacerbated by English-only rural instruction that blocks Thaman’s (2003) culturally sustaining pedagogy, offset somewhat by innovative “peace drama” rooted in storytelling theater for empathy across ethnic lines, hindered by funding impermanence and shallow community reconciliation ties. Vanuatu, with 113 languages among 330,000 people, amplifies linguistic extremes that challenge yet supplement peace education, its bilingual English/French legacy mirroring divisions, countered by *kastom*’s vernacular customs as a vital resource, exemplified in the Framework’s co-educator model of teachers and elders using storytelling, songs, and ceremonies, yielding 92% retention and prosocial gains in pilots (SPC, 2022), though scaling place-based methods proves tough, as Moore (2017) notes chiefly ‘tabu’ rituals informing school justice, demanding systematisation without neocolonial dilution (Smith, 1999). Fiji’s curriculum, forged by post-coup (1987, 2000, 2006) ethnic reconciliation needs, features a 2016 Social Education strand on unity, multiculturalism, and citizenship, Koya (2011) and Nabobo-Baba (2006) highlight clashes between state assimilation and iTaukei/Indo-Fijian cultural pedagogies, bridged by bula vinaka communal wellbeing and Hindu shanti, amid post-2013 identity shifts and merged schools that risk erasing Indigenous narratives, historically deepened by segregated systems and biased content (Koya-Vaka’uta, 2004; Helu-Thaman, 2003), with Dialogue Fiji and talanoa reforms showing promise, backed by Ministry of Education (2025) data on reduced ethnic conflicts, though critiqued for glossing structural inequities in harmony-focused narratives (Bajaj, 2008; Cremin & Bevington, 2017).

Shifting to Polynesia’s Samoa and Tonga, hierarchical chiefly systems, church sway, and family duties bolster and limit peace efforts, as Samoa’s *fa’asamoa* worldview handles conflicts via elder fono mediation and face-saving, reflected in the 2020 MOE values strand but rarely explicit or human-rights linked (Auva’a, 2003), while Tonga’s chiefly *hou’eiki*, Christian ethos, and urban youth dynamics shape social studies, constraining critical dialogue amid respect norms that stifle disagreement (Morton, 1996), emphasising the need to balance cultural deference with transformative consciousness. Tuvalu stands out as a uniquely context-driven case. Its curriculum, administered by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS), prioritises Environmental and Climate Education and Life Skills, a direct reflection of the existential threat that Tuvalu faces from rising sea

levels and potential national displacement. The central gap here is that the profound psychological anxiety tied to climate-induced displacement has not been met with trauma-informed peace pedagogy, leaving students without structured tools to process grief, loss of homeland, and uncertainty about the future.

Micronesia's Palau, FSM, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and Nauru contexts stem from US trusteeships, nuclear scars, and climate perils, with Palau and FSM curricula swayed by US standards' civic focus lacking UNESCO's peace depth. The Marshall Islands' Bikini/Enewetak nuclear tests (1946-1958) displaced communities and inflicted lasting harm, a 'nuclear colonialism' (Barker, 2012), omitted from curricula as epistemic injustice, ripe for peace lessons akin to Holocaust education. Kiribati faces the extraordinary challenge of educating for peace in communities experiencing existential territorial loss due to sea-level rise. The concept of 'climate grief', a form of collective trauma associated with the anticipated loss of homeland, has been documented among Tuvaluan youth (McNamara & Gibson, 2009), suggesting that trauma-informed peace pedagogy is an urgent theoretical and practical priority. Nauru, with a population of under 12,000 and a history shaped by phosphate extraction and offshore refugee detention, presents a unique social tensions context. The presence of the Australian-funded Regional Processing Centre and its periodic social frictions with the local population represent an unaddressed peace education challenge. To the researchers' knowledge, no published curriculum analysis examines how Nauruan schools respond to or contextualise the refugee detention complex in their immediate community.

This comprehensive policy analysis and mapping across Oceania's legislative archipelago reveals a sharp contradiction between advanced, bicultural settler-colonial frameworks in the south and fragmented, underfunded sub-regional curricula grappling with acute localised crises like Melanesian tribal conflict and Micronesian climate displacement. Through exposing how these diverse national strategies often favour assimilationist civic order over critical, trauma-informed peace pedagogies, the analysis stresses the urgent need to formalise indigenous practices, such as Bougainville's weapon-burning ceremonies and Samoa's *fa'asamoa* mediation, into explicit, structurally resilient K-12 educational mandates.

4. Indigenous Pacific Knowledge Systems as Peace Education Foundations in Oceania

Indigenous Pacific knowledge systems do not merely supplement Western peace models; they serve as a living, ancestral strategy that weaponises relational harmony, communal reciprocity, and sacred storytelling to construct peace directly from the soil and sea up.

Western peace education ideas from thinkers like Galtung (Norway), Freire (Brazil), and Reardon (USA) can be useful. However, if these ideas are applied directly in Pacific contexts without respecting local traditions, they may erase or ignore indigenous knowledge. Santos (2016) calls this "*epistemicide*", the loss of local ways of knowing when Northern theories are treated as universal. Thus, a truly Oceanian peace education theory must treat emic indigenous concepts not as mere illustrations of universal principles but as epistemologically coequal resources, as shown in Table 3 for curriculum design.

Table 3. Indigenous Pacific Concepts with Peace Education Relevance

Concepts	Cultural Origin	Meaning	Peace Education Application
Kotahitanga	Māori (NZ)	Unity, collective solidarity	Cooperative learning; conflict resolution through collective responsibility

Manaakitanga	Māori (NZ)	Hospitality, care for others	Foundation for anti-bullying; welcoming difference; restorative practice
Fa'asamoa	Samoan	The Samoan way of communal life, service	Elder-mediation models; communal dialogue (fono) as classroom practice
Kastom	Vanuatu (Melanesia)	Customary law and practice	Restorative justice; land conflict resolution; chiefly mediation models
Kerekere	Fijian	Communal reciprocity, mutual aid	Cross-ethnic cooperation; resource-sharing as a peace practice
Wantok	PNG / Melanesia	Community solidarity (language group)	In-group trust building; theoretical tension with broader civic peace
Vaka-Tautua	Polynesian	Service leadership	Student leadership for peace; community engagement pedagogy
Bula Vinaka	Fijian	The good/flourishing life	Wellbeing-centred peace education; positive peace orientation
Au	Polynesian	Collective identity and belonging	Identity-affirming pedagogy; belonging as violence prevention
Ripirip	Marshallese	Nuclear memory, trauma legacy	Historical consciousness; nuclear peace education; generational healing

Source: *Adapted from Bishop et al. (2009); Puaina et al. (2007); Pacific Community (SPC), (2022); Koya (2011); Nanau (2018); Nabobo-Baba (2006); Thaman (2009); Barker (2012)*

These concepts prove invaluable because they are inherently relational, positioning the person as a node in webs of obligations, reciprocities, and ancestral ties rather than an autonomous rights-bearer, and thus aligning more closely with Ginty's (2021) 'relational ontology' of everyday peace than with liberal individualist human rights curricula. Moreover, these are contextually embedded, drawing meaning from lived practices such as the fono, chiefly ceremonies, and community feasts rather than from abstract universals, making them immediately accessible through cultural experience and helping overcome the challenge of rendering peace education 'real' rather than theoretical. Additionally, these harbour internal tensions that enhance pedagogical productivity beyond affirmation; for instance, Wantok solidarity fosters in-group cohesion yet breeds exclusionary inter-group dynamics, while kerekere risks inequity across gender or class lines, inviting critical analysis that builds Salomon's (2002) essential peacebuilding capacities. Lederach's (1997) elicitive conflict transformation model bridges the integration into K-12 Oceanian classrooms by treating communities as the curriculum, where prescriptive 'packages' give way to facilitation: teachers guide learners to articulate, analyse, and evaluate familiar concepts like *kerekere*, *kastom*, and *fa'asamoa*, their strengths, limitations, and then connect them outward to regional and global peace frameworks.

Grounding Pacific pedagogy in Indigenous knowledge systems actively challenges the risk of epistemicide inherent in universally applied Western frameworks, ensuring local epistemologies function as foundational, coequal academic resources. Beyond liberal-individualist paradigms, this approach shapes the region's relational ontology, transforming lived cultural practices and communal obligations into the very substance of classroom learning. Furthermore, navigating the inherent tensions within concepts such as wantok solidarity and kerekere equips learners with the critical, self-reflexive analytical skills necessary for genuine conflict transformation. Ultimately, utilising an elicitive model reframes local communities as living textbooks, providing a transformative roadmap that seamlessly links ancestral, land- and sea-based wisdom with macro-level regional and global peacebuilding frameworks.

5. Structural Barriers and Enabling Conditions of Peace Education

Peace education dismantles systemic barriers like institutionalised discrimination and militarised curricula by transforming individual mindsets. Its ultimate impact depends on enabling conditions such as policy support, community engagement, and well-resourced schools to translate local mindsets into lasting structural peace. The structural barriers and enabling conditions for integrating peacebuilding into the curriculum are as follows:

5.1 Prime Structural Barriers

Chronic under-resourcing forms the most pervasive structural barrier to peace education in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), as UNESCO's (2022) report reveals that many spend under 4% of GDP on education, which is below the 4.7% global average, with remote island teacher vacancy rates exceeding 30%. Figure 1 shows the prime structural barriers to establishing peace education in the curriculum.

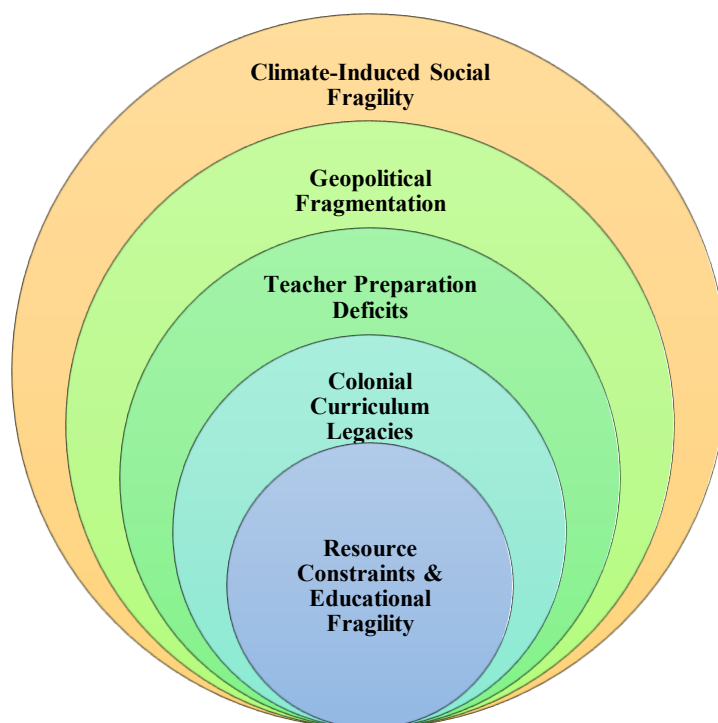


Figure 1. Structural Barriers for Peacebuilding in Curriculum

The educational fragility interlinks with colonial curriculum legacies, where British, French, and American influences persist in subject-centred designs, exam-driven academic priorities over social-emotional learning, and devaluation of vernacular languages for English or French, all undermining culturally sustaining, dialogic pedagogies essential for peace education, as Smith's (1999) decolonising methodologies urge for betterment of both curriculum and research. Compounding this, teacher preparation deficits loom large, since none of Oceania's fourteen nations offers pre-service programmes with dedicated peace education components, according to the published literature, unlike post-conflict Northern Ireland, Colombia, or Rwanda, leaving teachers to deliver values and citizenship education without grounding in conflict transformation, restorative practices, or critical

facilitation. Geopolitical fragmentation further hinders progress, as fourteen sovereign countries' oversight lacks a unified authority for standards, despite coordination by the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and despite the 2018 Pacific Framework's vision, with implementation varying according to national ministries' capacities, will, and resources. Uniquely, climate-induced fragility destabilises peace, per Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) projections of sea-level rise, cyclones, coral bleaching, and scarcity displacing islanders, sparking Morrissey's (2012) 'environmental conflict,' identity loss, and tensions that challenge educators in Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands to theorise responses to unprecedented national dissolution without established curricula.

5.2 Key Enabling Conditions

Across Oceanian societies, extended family networks, church communities, and chiefly systems weave dense social trust, serving as a foundational enabler of peace education and embodying Putnam's (2000) bonding social capital within groups. Figure 2 depicts the essential enabling factors for advancing peace education in the region.

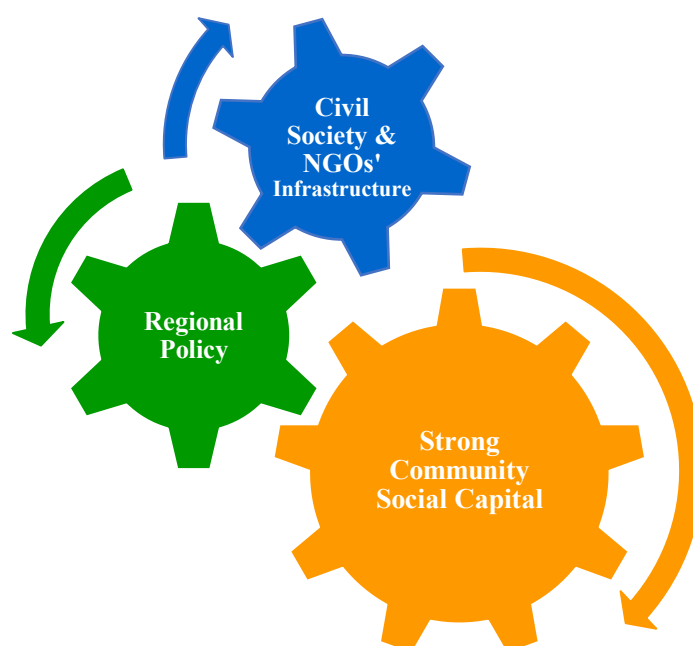


Figure 2. Key Enabling Conditions for Peace Education

Peace education does not flourish in isolation; rather, it grows through the combined strength of several interconnected enabling conditions. At the heart of the framework is strong community social capital, which fosters trust, cooperation, and mutual understanding among individuals and groups. This foundation is reinforced by regional policy support, which provides direction, resources, and institutional commitment for integrating peace-oriented values into educational systems. The Pacific Framework for the Education of Children and Youth (2018-2030), co-developed by island nations and regional bodies, endorses values education, social cohesion, and SDG 4.7, legitimising curriculum integration. Complementing it, the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) provides technical assistance to disseminate evidence-based models. Equally important is the role of civil society organisations and NGOs, like the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), UNICEF Pacific, Save the Children, and Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), which advance conflict-sensitive, climate-resilient, and child protection programs (Tetzlaff, 2010),

forming scalable building blocks when linked to formal curricula for coherent peace education. Together, these elements function like the pillars of a bridge: community relationships create the foundation, policies provide structural support, and civil society contributes the connecting pathways. When these conditions work in harmony, they create a sustainable environment in which peace education can effectively nurture tolerance, social cohesion, conflict resolution skills, and a culture of peaceful coexistence.

While severe structural obstacles such as chronic under-resourcing, colonial curriculum legacies, and climate-induced environmental conflict historically paralyse peace pedagogy across Oceania's scrappy landscapes, they are actively countered by the region's intense social capital. By leveraging dense networks of familial trust, traditional chiefly systems, and the institutional backing of regional blueprints such as the PacREF, educational frameworks can effectively translate localised micro-mindsets into an integrated, macro-level infrastructure for lasting K-12 positive peace.

6. Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

Peace education has never been spoken with a single voice. Nowhere is it more diverse than in Oceania, a region whose extraordinary cultural plurality, colonial legacies, climate vulnerability, and unresolved Indigenous land and sovereignty questions resist any one-size-fits-all pedagogical prescription.

Existing theoretical models like Galtung's (1969 & 1996) structural peace education, Freire's (1970), and Bajaj & Brantmeier's (2011) critical peace pedagogy approach, Smith (2012), Nabobo-Baba's (2006) indigenous relational frameworks, Wessells (2026), and CASEL's (2020) social-emotional trauma-informed models offer strong foundations for peace education in Oceania's nations where community belongingness, resource inequality, intergenerational trauma, and the structural violence of climate change remain live and urgent concerns.

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Peace Education Models and Their Implications for Oceanian Curriculum Design and Empirical Research

Dimensions	Structural Peace Education (Galtung, 1969; 1996)	Critical Peace Pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011)	Indigenous & Relational Frameworks (Smith, 2012; Nabobo-Baba, 2006)	Social-Emotional / Trauma-Informed Models (Wessells, 2006; CASEL, 2020)
Primary Locus of Peace	Social structures and institutions	Consciousness and political agency	Relationships, land, and community belonging	Individual psyche and relational safety
Diagnosis of Violence	Structural and systemic inequality; direct and cultural violence	Ideological oppression and epistemic silencing	Disruption of relational, ecological, and spiritual balance	Trauma, dysregulation, and breakdown of emotional safety
Pedagogical Priority	Critical structural literacy; power analysis	Dialogic inquiry; conscientisation; voice	Community-led process; epistemic humility; relational ethics	Emotional regulation; trust-building; narrative healing

Relevance for Oceania	High: colonial dispossession, resource inequity, climate injustice	High: histories of cultural erasure through schooling; community voice imperatives	Very High: living Indigenous traditions of reconciliation; epistemological sovereignty	High: intergenerational trauma, climate grief, family violence
Key Limitation in Context	Risk of overlooking Indigenous agency and cultural resilience	Can underestimate the depth of trauma without structural grounding	Risk of appropriation; requires genuine partnership and community authority	Risk of pathologising communities rather than unjust systems
Curriculum Design Implication	Embed systemic and historical analysis; connect local inequalities to global structures.	Co-design with communities; centre learner voice; interrogate silences	Develop under Indigenous authority; do not reduce living traditions to modules	Prioritise relational safety; integrate trauma awareness before critical engagement
Empirical Research Priority	Longitudinal evaluation of structural literacy outcomes: policy link studies	Participatory action research; community co-produced outcome measures	Ethnographic documentation of Indigenous peace practices; intellectual sovereignty protocols	Culturally adapted psychosocial instruments; climate grief and resilience studies

Note. CASEL = Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. The framework is intended as heuristic, not prescriptive; curriculum designers are encouraged to work across all four traditions in response to specific community contexts.

Table 4 functions less as a static comparison chart and more as an interpretive map of how “peace” itself is variously conceived, diagnosed, and pedagogically enacted across four influential traditions, and its real contribution lies in the way it refuses to let any single tradition claim definitional authority over the field. Reading across the rows rather than down the columns reveals a layered argument: Galtung’s (1969 & 1996) structural framework anchors peace in institutions and systemic equity, Freire (1970) and Bajaj & Brantmeier (2011) inspired critical pedagogy relocates it in consciousness, voice, and the dismantling of epistemic silence, Indigenous and relational frameworks (drawing on Smith and Nabobo-Baba, 2006) ground it in land, kinship, and cosmological balance, while trauma-informed and social-emotional models (Wessells, 2006; CASEL, 2020) situate it within the regulated nervous system and the relational safety of the individual learner that placed side by side, expose both what each tradition illuminates and what it risks obscuring when applied alone to the Oceanian context. The table’s “Relevance for Oceania” and “Key Limitation” rows are doing the heaviest theoretical work here, since they transform an abstract typology into a regionally situated argument: colonial dispossession and climate injustice demand structural literacy, but structural critique alone can flatten Indigenous agency; trauma-informed approaches honour intergenerational harm, but isolated from structural analysis risk pathologising communities rather than the systems that wounded them. By extending the comparison into curriculum design and empirical research priorities, the table moves from description to a genuinely actionable synthesis, signalling to curriculum designers and researchers that robust peace education in Pacific contexts is not a matter of choosing the “correct” model but of holding these frameworks in deliberate, community-accountable tension, with Indigenous epistemological authority functioning as the integrating ground rather than one input among equals.

The spectrum of Indigenous Pacific concepts from Kotahitanga's collective Māori solidarity and Fa'asamoa's communal Samoan way of life to Kastom's customary Melanesian justice and Ripirip's Marshallese legacy of nuclear trauma reveals not a mosaic of local customs but a coherent, place-anchored epistemology of peace that dominant Western frameworks have persistently underestimated. Their Oceanian plurality and symbiosis, these concepts construct peace as an inherently relational practice: one that flows through communal reciprocity (*Kerekere*), service leadership (*Vaka-Tautua*), restorative hospitality (*Manaakitanga*), and a flourishing life (*Bula Vinaka*) sustained by collective identity and belonging (*Au*) a vision that neither mirrors nor merely supplements, but genuinely challenges and enriches global peace education discourse precisely when UNESCO's SDG 4.7 agenda demands culturally authentic, values-driven pedagogies. The global relevance of this symbiosis is not rhetorical but structural, as international peace education scholarship confronts the epistemic violence of decontextualised curricula. These indigenous Pacific architectures offer theoretically integrative yet empirically underexplored counter-frameworks that are urgently suited for Oceanian curriculum design not as ornamental additions, but as epistemological anchors positioning *fono*-based communal dialogue, elder-mediation, and identity-affirming pedagogies as foundational instruments of peace; for empirical research, this demands indigenous-led, participatory, and mixed-methods inquiry across Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia to generate the contextually grounded evidence that will enable Pacific peace education to speak credibly, distinctively, and powerfully to the world.

Demonstrating that no single tradition can independently resolve Oceania's complex matrix of colonial, environmental, and structural vulnerabilities, this analysis establishes that the inherent friction between Western critical frameworks and Indigenous epistemologies serves as the most fertile ground for creative curriculum design. Consequently, the proposed heuristic model rejects prescriptive pedagogical models in favour of an adaptable, interrogative blueprint that challenges future empirical researchers to co-develop culturally responsive, longitudinal studies on climate grief, teacher readiness, and authentic decolonial justice across the Pacific.

7. Conclusion: Toward an Oceanian Architecture for Transformative Peace

Peace education has become a pressing global necessity amid intensifying social divisions, environmental challenges, and geopolitical tensions. Across the expansive maritime gradients of Oceania, peace education is fundamentally shifting from an abstract, transnationally imposed ideal into a highly localised, decolonial praxis. This paper has integrated a fragmented scholarly landscape by anchoring the geopolitical and cultural realities of fourteen sovereign nations into a unified discourse on K-12 peace education.

Ultimately, peace education in Oceania cannot be treated as a universally imported commodity; it must be cultivated directly from the region's own soil and sea. This multi-country review reveals that while the fourteen sovereign nations of the Pacific share a unified aspiration toward sustainable peace under the Pacific Framework for the Education of Children and Youth, their educational landscapes remain fractured by deep systemic barriers. From the raw, post-conflict recovery efforts in Melanesia to the existential threat of climate-induced displacement across Micronesia, chronic under-resourcing and the lingering grip of colonial curriculum legacies continue to stifle transformative learning. The region's profound social capital, intricately woven through extended family networks, traditional chiefly systems, and living ancestral practices, provides a remarkably resilient counter-narrative. Indigenous paradigms such as *fa'asamoa*, *kastom*, and *kotahitanga* are far more than cultural artefacts; they are dynamic, coequal epistemological resources capable of dismantling structural violence when thoughtfully integrated with decolonial and trauma-informed pedagogies.

Furthermore, the paper rejects the pursuit of a singular, one-size-fits-all pedagogical prescription. Instead, it advocates for an adaptable, heuristic framework that deliberately embraces the productive friction between Western critical theories and Indigenous intellectual sovereignty. It establishes a comprehensive framework that illustrates how the Pacific can operationalise global mandates, such as SDG Target 4.7, amid intense regional macroeconomic crises. For curriculum designers and policymakers, this demands a courageous shift from assimilationist civic education toward a genuinely transformative praxis that centres local community authority and directly addresses modern urgencies, including the profound psychological weight of climate grief. Furthermore, future empirical research must pivot away from imported evaluation metrics toward participatory, longitudinal studies co-developed with the communities themselves. Exploring how living Indigenous peace practices and enhanced teacher readiness can navigate Oceania's complex vulnerabilities, researchers can honour the epistemologies of the South. In doing so, peace education in the Pacific will transcend abstract global mandates, evolving into a culturally responsive, living blueprint for systemic healing, ecological stewardship, and deeply rooted positive peace.

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