



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

School of Education

Te Kura Toi Tangata

Waikato Journal of Education

Te Hautaka Mātauranga o Waikato

Volume 12: 2006

Special Issue on Pacific Education: Research and Practice

WAIKATO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

Editors:

Toni Bruce
Rosemary De Luca

Editorial Board:

Miles Barker
Margaret Carr
Pat Day
Deborah Fraser
Alan Hall
Clive McGee
Judy Moreland
Clive Pope

Waikato Journal of Education is a refereed journal, published annually, based in the School of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. It publishes articles in the broad field of education. For further information visit the WJE website <http://www.soe.waikato.ac.nz/wje/>

Correspondence should be addressed to: Rosemary De Luca and Toni Bruce, Editors, School of Education, Private Bag 3105, The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. Email: deluca@waikato.ac.nz and/or tbruce@waikato.ac.nz

Books for review should be sent to the Editors.

Business correspondence: Orders, subscription payments and other enquiries should be sent to the Business Manager, *Waikato Journal of Education*, Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research, School of Education, The University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand.

Subscriptions: Within NZ \$35; Overseas NZ \$45

Copyright: © School of Education, The University of Waikato

Publisher: School of Education, The University of Waikato

Cover design: Donn Ratana

Printed by: Waikato Print

Layout: Leevani Raman

CALL FOR PAPERS

SPECIAL SECTION 2007: *Creative Research in the Arts*

Submission Deadline: April 5, 2007 (or negotiated with Editor)

This special section focuses on creative research in the arts, opening the door to multiple ways of representing research in the area of creative arts in education. In order to celebrate the creativity that is an inherent part of the creative arts field, the journal welcomes submissions in non-traditional formats such as personal narratives, short stories, poetry, images and cartoons, as well as more traditional manuscripts such as reviews of knowledge in the field, theoretical approaches to research, analyses of recent curriculum developments, pedagogical innovations or issues and recent research findings. Depending upon the submissions accepted for this special issue, a CD may also be published for submissions such as photographs, illustrations, moving images, etc. Researchers are welcome to contact the Special Section Editor regarding ideas for specific submissions.

Please note that the *Waikato Journal of Education* publishes material of general interest to a range of academics and teachers in the field of Education. Manuscripts should follow APA (fifth edition) for referencing, not normally exceed 6,000 words (although shorter texts are welcome) and be submitted electronically to the Special Section Editor: Dr Karen Barbour (karenb@waikato.ac.nz) or by mail to: Editors, the *Waikato Journal of Education*, School of Education, The University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand.

ISSN1173-6135

WAIKATO JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

TE HAUTAKA MĀTAURANGA O WAIKATO

VOLUME 12, 2006

Editorial: Pacific Education: Research and Practice JANE STRACHAN	3
Sharing, Listening, Learning and Developing Understandings of Kaupapa Māori Research by Engaging With Two Māori Communities in Education FRED KANA AND KARAITIANA TAMATEA	9
Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position on Pacific Research TIMOTE M. VAIOLETI	21
The ‘Pasifika Umbrella’ and Quality Teaching: Understanding and Responding to the Diverse Realities Within TANYA WENDT SAMU	35
‘FetuiakiMālie, Talking Together’: Pasifika in Mainstream Education MERE KĒPA AND LINITĀ MANU’ATU	51
Crossing the Road From Home to Secondary School: A Conversation With Samoan Parents FRAN CAHILL	57
Samoan Language and Cultural Continuity at an Early Childhood Centre of Innovation VAL PODMORE, ENE TAPUSOA AND JAN TAOUMA	73
How do Pasifika Students Reason About Probability? Some Findings From Fiji SASHI SHARMA	87
Enhancing the Mathematics Achievement of Pasifika Students: Performance and Progress on the Numeracy Development Project JENNY YOUNG-LOVERIDGE	101
Education Journey: Tere Api’i Ki Aotearoa ROBBIE ATATOA	117

**Life, The Crocodile, the Pisikoa and the Wind: Representations of Teaching
in The Writings of Three Pacific Authors**

NESTA DEVINE 123

Epilogue

TIMOTE M. VAIOLETI 135

CROSSING THE ROAD FROM HOME TO SECONDARY SCHOOL: A CONVERSATION WITH SAMOAN PARENTS¹

FRAN CAHILL

Avondale College, Auckland

ABSTRACT *This article reports on key findings that resulted from qualitative research with a small group of Samoan parents. The project was completed in 2004 as part of a Master of Counselling degree at the University of Waikato. It presents the rationale that first ignited the collaboration between parents and author and the search for a methodology that was respectful, consultative and culturally appropriate. In place of the more usual presentation of data, data collected is “re-presented” by privileging the voices of participants, their views and experiences over meanings arrived at via the author’s interpretation and/or collation. The concerns raised challenge taken-for-granted assumptions that leave Samoan children disadvantaged within the New Zealand school system and highlight the need for consultative relationships between schools and the communities they serve.*

KEYWORDS

Samoan education, Pacific Island education, Samoan parents, Secondary education, Cross-cultural education

RATIONALE

Though I did not always know it, the topic of this research has been an integral part of both my personal and professional journeys over many years. It belongs with, yet is distinct from, that part of myself that I value as my Samoan heritage. It is a project that, because of the educational and experiential opportunities that have come my way in life, I believed I was in a unique position to attempt. In doing so, I recognise that I was invited to enter the cultural world of my parentage on Samoan terms, to be instructed and guided by a community and its leaders, to take my place among those to be taught, to be open, to listen and to learn.

My mother was born in Apia, Western Samoa, the twelfth child of a half-Samoan and half-English mother and a Danish father. Like so many at that time, she was sent away to New Zealand when aged about fourteen to live for a year with relatives in Auckland in order to learn shorthand typing. Having met my Irish father in Apia she again left her homeland, this time to marry and settle in New Zealand. Neither of my parents ever spoke to us as children of their homelands or families but what we learned and the way we were taught it I later came to recognise, largely through hearing the stories of my clients, as being consistent with elements of Samoan family values and practice. Then, as now, a strong belief in the God-given authority of the Church provided the sanction for such practices, just as it does today for every committed Samoan family. According to *Pacific profiles* (Statistics

New Zealand, 2001), 90% of Samoan people reported an affiliation with a Christian religion.

As a school guidance counsellor, I have worked for more than twelve years in two, decile one state schools in South Auckland. In the last school, almost 70% of the student body was of Pacific Island origin, some 60% of these being Samoan. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, in its Web document *Pacific peoples in New Zealand* (2003), estimates that by 2010 the Pacific population, which currently makes up 6% of the total population of New Zealand, will have increased by 41.4% to 301,400. Samoans make up 50% of that Pacific population, 62.5% of whom live in greater Auckland.

It was while working in a professional capacity with Samoan adolescents that I watched their struggle to live by the learned cultural values of home while witnessing a confusing mixture of competing, sometimes appealing and often contrary values around them at school. Out of this mixture they had eventually to reframe and re-constitute themselves as Samoan New Zealanders. What do parents know of this precarious journey, I asked myself. What of parents' knowing, thinking or experience enables them to trust that their children will not only survive but also achieve in this world of learning, where traditional Samoan values are neither acknowledged nor understood, let alone taken into account in formal learning contexts?

At the same time as Samoan young people straddle these competing value systems – crossing the road, as it were, on a daily basis, from the socialisation of their Samoan homes to enter the school with its Western value system – teaching staff have exactly the same expectations of them as learners as they hold of every young person occupying a desk in front of them. These expectations assume and include the encouragement of individualised effort and the possession, arising from years of individual affirmation, of a personal internalised self that enables students to give voice to and substantiate individual opinions.

Mageo (1998), in her book *Theorizing self in Samoa*, describes Samoan society as “sociocentric”. By this she means that in Samoa, as in many non-Western cultures, understandings of the self accentuate the social roles that people play rather than emphasise the feelings, thoughts and perceptions of the individual. The Samoan cultural value system stands in total opposition to the Western influenced values of New Zealand societal institutions, including schools. This polarity has far reaching consequences when one thinks of the normalised educative processes of teaching and learning. In both societies, the possibilities for meaning and for definition of central discourses are pre-empted through the power and control exercised by those in positions of authority within societal institutions. Difficulties arise for Samoan children because the practices and modes of language taken for granted in daily use reproduce not only the dominant values of our Westernised culture but a set of power relations by which roles and positions attached to the task of learning are constituted for them. In the everyday classroom experience, Samoan students are positioned precariously by these practices as subjects of two worlds, neither of which provides the skills to allow interpretation of the other.

According to Mageo (1998), within Samoan society cultural discourses, especially of the socialisation of children, are aimed at preparing them to play their

role in a hierarchical and socially oriented society. “The absolute reliance we (Westerners) place in our mothers Samoans place in their families” (p. 46). She describes the Samoan character as relational and performative. Respect, humility and service are the virtues by which relationships between role and performance, on the one hand, and status and hierarchy, on the other, are maintained. Statistics New Zealand’s Web document *Pacific profiles 2001* confirms this family-centred, giving orientation. It reports that 85% of Samoan adults are involved in some form of unpaid or voluntary activity either inside or outside the home.

However, it is not these activities per se but the cultural consciousness that informs their meaning and purpose within Samoan society that leaves Samoan adolescents no other option, if they are to succeed at school, than to do their best between two different worlds at once, switching constantly and daily between the conflicting expectations of both.

Mageo (1998) offers a potential and, in my view, necessary bridge of understanding between the values which Samoan people hold within their own culture as normal and assumed, and what occurs when they are confronted by a different culture where Samoan beliefs, roles and positions are neither understood nor privileged. An understanding of Mageo’s ideas offers a platform for respectful consultation that could bring home and school together in collaborative support of New Zealand-born Samoan school students.

METHODOLOGY

Tamasese, Peteru and Waldegrave (1997) state “critical to the undertaking of any research interview with Samoan speaking participants are four factors. The first is fluency of language. Another is an ability to understand what is being conveyed in the context of that world view. The third is the ability to respond to that world view. The fourth consideration is the ability to bridge the two world views without compromising the first” (p. 14). Building on these foundations, Mulitalo-Lauta (2000) speaks specifically about how research projects involving the Samoan community might be managed in the best interests of the parties involved: “The Samoan group, as partners, should be involved at every step of the research process: the design of the project, the research questions, the selection of key informants, the conduct of interviews, the management of the research project, involvement in the pilot study, the analysis of data and information and production of the final report” (p. 120). Mulitalo-Lauta (2000) also advises the use of a reliable Samoan broker who has credibility in the eyes of the Samoan community to do the groundwork. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2003), on its website, endorses the importance of a relational way of working together: “Good consultation amongst Pacific peoples involves the creation and the maintenance of relationships. It involves a significant investment at the outset because consultation amongst Pacific people is time consuming. But the return on your investment is high indeed and lasts for a very long time – repaid many times over” (p. 1).

Tamasese et al. (1997) emphasise the central importance of the use of Samoan language: “For all people, the language which best interprets and explains the realities of their world view can be said to be their first language, their language of

identity and belonging ... Though in one sense they centre on words, in another sense they involve more than words” (p. 13). Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) is even more explicit: “Each language embodies values, knowledge and understandings that give meaning, structure and purpose to the social life of its users. Within each Pacific culture, processes and contexts are also available within which these values, knowledge and understandings are enacted and confirmed” (p. 198).

My primary concern in embarking on this research was to heighten the voices of participant parents with the intention of enabling them to be heard and accurately represented, not in a two-way binary involving the sharing of an idea or opinion but in a three-way relation. Gadamer (1989) describes this relation as one person coming to an understanding with another about something which they then both understand. However, I was, from the start, fully aware that the greatest limitation of the work lay in the fact that I neither speak nor understand Samoan language. Despite this major omission, I believed I had something to offer in relation to each of the remaining three critical factors put forward by Tamasese et al. (1997).

On account of the cross-cultural nature of the research, getting to an agreed research question with the University’s Ethics Committee posed an unexpected quandary. Though in total agreement with the stance of the Committee in upholding a rigorous, ethical, moral and accountable purpose and process prior to embarking on human research, I nevertheless remained confused as to how research driven by approved, pre-prepared questions privileging my Palagi² interpretation of participants’ possible experience could make available and encourage their own yet unspoken questions. The university’s process appeared pre-emptive, aimed at attaining certain information necessary to the researcher’s purpose *before* any contact was had with participants and *prior*, therefore, to establishing whether or not such questions represented participants’ foremost concerns on the issue. In acknowledgement of my position, the Committee agreed that I could go ahead with the first meeting once five or six key questions that I might call upon as back-up, if required, had been submitted. This modification worked well in practice but also in theory since it acknowledged the different nature of cross-cultural research while upholding the principles safeguarding human research.

Because I hoped to gather possible participants from among the Samoan community with whom I met for Sunday worship, informal discussion with some of them led to their unanimous agreement that the leader of our community would be an acceptable broker. He was held in very high esteem, had lived in Samoa for many years and spoke Samoan fluently. He agreed to act in the role, saying that the Samoan people were anxious for their children to do well educationally and would be interested in anything that would help them. At a formal meeting conducted entirely in Samoan, he raised the idea of my research with the community’s leader and it was agreed that at their next meeting I would speak to my proposal. Having been briefly introduced by my broker in Samoan, I spoke in English. My request was placed on the agenda for general business and we left the meeting. Approval and interest in assisting with the research were conveyed back to me via the broker, along with the information that the community had arranged for a general meeting on the following Sunday morning. Invitations to this had already been extended to anyone interested.

By dint of turning up, the members of this meeting then became constituted as focus group participants. The group consisted of 12 adults (8 females and 4 males) ranging in age from around twenty-five to mid-fifties. All were Samoan-born and educated, all with children attending some primary but mostly secondary schools and one with adult children who had completed university. The meeting opened with a prayer, after which ethical considerations set down by the University Committee and the formal rights and agreement of participants were addressed, although no one seemed particularly interested. I then stated my professional position and explained how, increasingly, I had watched Samoan children struggling to make sense of the school system and to settle down to work there, as their mates appeared able to do. To demonstrate the effects on educational achievement of these concerns, I used charts of information taken from the Pasifika Strategic Framework, a sub-section of the Ministry of Education's *Statement of intent* (Ministry of Education, 2003). The charts showed that 73% of all Pasifika students lived in the Northern region and of these students, 68% attended decile 1-3 schools, leaving 32% scattered among decile 4-10 schools. A 2001 graph that compared the academic achievement of Pasifika and non-Pasifika school leavers was also shown to participants. I next outlined how hearing the voices of Samoan parents through their participation in the research project might enable something to be done to improve achievement levels. Participants were asked if they were similarly concerned and, if so, why. Once the topic was raised, participants were more than willing to put forward their points of view, ask questions and share experiences.

Because this first meeting was prematurely shortened by the early arrival of the children from Samoan Sunday school, an agreement was reached for those interested to meet again. Four such delightfully frank and friendly sessions, each with different group members, were held. A point-by-point summary of the main ideas put forward by them at the first meeting was used as the catalyst for these extensions of it.

The process of distilling the data was a strangely disquieting one for me. Once separated from the persons who gave it birth, something "died". Perhaps, removed from the people themselves and denuded, therefore, of cultural and gendered context, the words became deprived of "life". I became keenly aware that it was precisely this context that had informed and enlivened the stories participants had shared which risked remaining unaccounted for, unless a way could be found that allowed them to be heard within their own, rather than the researcher's, categories of meaning. Somehow the integrity of the stories required protection from that form of interpretation that necessarily occurs when any form of language translation is undertaken, let alone when that translation takes place across differing cultural divides.

A statement made by Ochs (1997), when discussing narrative as a form of language, brought forward a possibility that had the potential to preserve the cultural integrity of the participant authors' voices while, at the same time, providing an effective framework for presenting the data. Ochs states that this "fundamental genre organises the ways in which we think and interact with one another ... The most basic and universal form of narrative may be not the product of

muse, but of ordinary conversation” (p. 85). So instead of re-interpreting the data on behalf of participants, I chose to re-present it as far as I could using their own voices. This became a re-presentation because I (re)-arranged the data so that the narrative flows in a way that is suitable for thematic presentation. I have deliberately chosen to write the results in participants’ voices, in support of their right to narrate their own experiences and understanding. While my voice is silenced throughout this re-presentation section, I have added words in square brackets to facilitate understanding. In a further effort to authenticate the voices of participants, I elected to leave in the text evidence of their unfamiliarity with English as a vehicle for conveying their thoughts and experience. Hence hesitations, grammatical errors and misuse of plurals are all recorded as they were spoken.

RE-PRESENTATION OF (SELECTED) DATA

Please note that the only voices heard in this section are those of participants. Their contributions can be read here as a narrative because I have reworked the order of them and inserted precise headings. I have deliberately chosen to leave in the text evidence of participants’ unfamiliarity with English, their second language, and their hesitancy in using it to convey their thoughts and experience adequately. Square brackets indicate my attempts to clarify for readers their intended meanings.

SAMOAN PARENTS WANT THEIR NEW ZEALAND-BORN CHILDREN TO GAIN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS THAN THEY THEMSELVES WERE ABLE TO ACHIEVE

We want them to get qualifications and get good jobs and secure themselves for their futures. We want them to get higher qualifications – educational qualifications – and ... uh ... get good jobs instead of what we are doing, because ... uh ... we haven’t been educated well.

I think most parents do have a very high expectations of their children when they attend school because of the qualifications that the parents never had. They did have qualifications but comparing to the children in other countries it’s quite ridiculous. I think that’s [how it is] for most of the parents that were educated in Samoa. I don’t mean them getting the degree, but basic schooling. Here their children attend school. That’s the reason for the expectations that the childrens [that] were [born] here get higher education than them [parents], which was my aim too for my boys.

They [children] also carry on what their parents ... um ... expects of them to be at school. It’s something that our people thinking of. Parents, they so relying on bringing their kids in school, and they’re expecting of learning.

PARENTS’ EXPERIENCE OF HOW THE LIMITS OF THEIR OWN EDUCATION INFLUENCE THEIR EXPECTATIONS FOR THEIR NEW ZEALAND-BORN CHILDREN

In those days it was different when I was at school in Samoa. In those days it was different from now days. [When] I was at school we were taught by [group of

teachers]. Talk about discipline, corporal punishment! But I think that's for most of the parents that were educated in Samoa. Over there they finish ... and I finished the school already [early] too. I finished Form Two then I went to help my parents and support, pay for, the others. By that time my sister was living in New Zealand so she sent [for me to come] here. While I was working over here I went into night school and learned from it. So um ... learning English was the very important thing. Without language you can't just go look for job. And then I went and applied for nursing school and that's what I went into.

That [was] the only problem with Samoan school – that [there's] not so much of learning English. Maths, Science, Social Studies but not so much of English. I don't know so much about it now but I've heard that they're pushing it now. They've got a university over there now. It wasn't there in my time. We didn't have seventh form. You go up to sixth form and then you go to one of the polytech ... but now you can go to university if your marks make it up there, but it wasn't there in our time. We were taught in Samoan and we learned English like a subject. We do learn how to put a sentence together, and pronouncing words; what's a verb and what's a noun, but not so bad. We don't do much reading, not like what they [pointing to her children] do, you know ... come home with the reading book. That's really up to you if you want to go to the library. They've only got one library for the whole island you know, in Apia. I can't go without anybody to go with me 'cause they're [parents] thinking I'm going somewhere else. So you know, there's no small space for us – just being home. So if Mum and Dad can't help me with my English work, I can't do it. I have to go to the picture and work it out from there. The reason I started on my own learning how to speak English was because of the New Zealand [born] kids. They come over to Samoa to stay for a while and I always go hooked up to them.

In the Island my kids can't reach Form Three if they don't pass the national exams [at the end of Form Two]. So they put in the effort – more, with the goal of reaching the college. [In] Form One and Two we start having afternoon school so that we can catch up with the homeworks before we go home.

WHAT SAMOAN PARENTS EXPECT OF TEACHERS

The teacher has to talk to the childrens, talk to them how they feel about their education and what they wanted in the future. And there's another thing that they can talk to the children about, seeing the parents are not there to talk to the children. Then the teachers should spend time to talk to the childrens and let them express how they feel and what they wanted to achieve and how to achieve their goals when they go on to the other levels. Because some parents, they know what they expect from their children but that's not what the children want ... completely different place altogether.

I accept their ways of teaching my son and they must accept the ways I want them to teach him.

TEACHERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING UP THE CHILDREN'S MOTIVATION WHILE THEY ARE AT SCHOOL: THEY OUGHT TO BE APPROACHABLE AND PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT WHEN STUDENTS ARE STRUGGLING

They [children] turn to the teachers but the system just ignores them. That's where they get their lack of motivation. I think the children will lose their self-esteem, lose his motivation if they're not getting the attention that the teachers supposed to give them like parents.

I always remember when my son ... when he was preparing for school certificate. He comes home very frustrated. And to me I really didn't have that high qualification to help him with that. So I said to him, "Go and ask the teacher how to explain it to you" because he didn't understand. He comes home and he said he asked the teachers but the teachers couldn't find the time to spend with him. And ... um ... he was frustrated – and so was I at the time. And I rang my cousin who was teaching English at [Auckland secondary school] and asked if she would help him, and she was glad. She took him in for three times a week and he did succeed with his school certificate and he was happy. He got two As and three Bs and he was so happy.

I'd probably ask that options is available for my son because my son is no good at all at school. What can we do? We need to do something you know, at least something.

TEACHERS SHOULD DELIVER TO STUDENTS ON PROMISES MADE TO PARENTS

My second son he's not shy. He walked straight up to the teacher and he said, "You tell us a different story. My parents come to the interview. If I need help I can always come to you. I'm asking you for help and you're not giving it to me but why did you tell my parents if I need help I can come to you?" So it's a different story than what we get from the parents' interview. It's just when we get there the [teacher says], "He can always come to me if he needs help, if he's struggling, if he doesn't understand something" but when they [the boys] turn up to them [teachers] all they said was, "Oh, can you come back some other time because I don't have the time", and that's really put them off.

[Boy's name] ... was another. He wanted to succeed and he didn't know how because his ... the education that he was looking for – he wants to go higher and learn more and that's what's the encouragement from his parents to go and learn to get the education.

It's their [the teachers] job to teach them with the parents' encouragement at home, which the parents should encourage their children as well, not just leaving it to the teacher. But it's when they come home that's their [parents'] job to make the childrens fit into their homework and that sort of thing.

PARENTS UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF TEACHING TO BE AN EXTENSION INTO THE EDUCATIONAL ARENA OF THE KIND OF CARE AND ATTENTION THEY THEMSELVES GIVE THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME

They're not getting the attention that the teachers supposed to give them like the parents.

We can understand the parents. They might have two or three children but there are always things that the teachers should be aware of [in] children's background, but that the parents can't be always there for them. But they [teachers] are there for them during the day. It's up to them [teachers] to build the motivation, build the self-esteem within the classes.

PARENTS BELIEVE TEACHERS ARE RACIST AND DISCRIMINATORY IN THEIR TREATMENT OF SAMOAN STUDENTS

And another thing is that I want to bring out [is] to do with discrimination and racism in the [education] system which the teachers ... They look at the children and think, "Oh they're Polynesian children, who cares?" and they don't pay any attention to them. But they [the children] are the ones who need help. They turn to the teachers but the system just ignores them. That's where they get their lack of motivation.

It's about racism. You see us parents, we have low income and we can't support our children to be in that high level, high class but it's too expensive, lack of resources, you know what I mean. But in higher-class people you see, they easily achieve because they go home and they got all the resources to be educated but not us. I think something that we should look at especially is [for the] system to give our children the financial ... you know ... in order to have good education. [Most Samoan children come from working class families whose parents cannot afford to send them to private or high decile schools, pay for extra tutoring or, in some cases, even purchase a computer].

My understanding [is] that most of the children are not educated or taught at the same levels as the other ones. When [teachers] are looking at the childrens some of the childrens are not so bright and some of the childrens are brighter than the others. Um ... so what I'm thinking of the education is that more than one is not higher on the other levels than the other one from the Islands. They [teachers] pay more attention to the higher levels than the low levels of the average children. But I think the system should be changed to [meet] the expectations of the low average ones for something that's applied to them and will understand them [be at the level of their understanding]. Help them set their own goals for the future, instead of saying, "You do this or you do that". And the way I see the system [working] was last year's college students from the low average ones were left out except for [in favour of] the high level above average ones. But I think the system should be changed so that the average ones will have something to look forward to into the future for themselves even though the parents couldn't get the expectations from

their children – what they expect of their children. But at least there is something that motivates them to work on something for themselves.

You might say ... ah ... treat every student equally. Assist them according to what works they done. Find out what they good with and what they can't do and then [having set about to teach those ones appropriately] forget about them and carry on with the good ones to achieve what they can, depending on what they good at.

I'd have to say for the parents to be there for their children when they needed them and when they ask for support, because ... um ... when the children entering third form which is the adolescence time which is pretty hard, and the parents should be there to support them in the culture. I think the communications is very important to [with] the parents and teachers.

PARENTS BELIEVE THAT THE PRACTICE BY SOME SCHOOLS OF SENDING PACIFIC ISLAND STUDENTS OUT ON WORK EXPERIENCE UNFAIRLY DEPRIVES THEIR CHILDREN OF THE POTENTIAL OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The reasons why I think ... another thing the Ministry of Education policy to send students to ... ah ... work experiences and finding works while they are still on their fifth level at secondary school. That is what happens at [secondary school]. They sends, especially the Pacific Island students, they send them to work experience. It starts from the fifth form level and right up to the seventh form while other students, like the Palagi students, are still learning at school.

Our Samoan students are sent out to working experience but they [teachers] didn't still have enough time to getting that message through to them [students], 'cause they thought the working experience was just to go and learn about this and learn about that. But I don't think the children were exactly told they were sent out to working experience because if they don't succeed in getting an education, they could go to work. So I don't think it was properly laid out from the school.

The other reason is that I think, if they looked at the achievement of the children right from the third form up till they are fifth form, that they can't achieve any more than what they think of, that's why they decided to send them to work experience – to find the level each child can achieve to.

PARENTS BELIEVE TEACHERS ARE INSENSITIVE TO, AND EITHER IGNORANT OR DISMISSIVE OF, SAMOAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS

I also want to complain about the teachers how they approach the children, 'cause I'm thinking of my own son – the way I discipline my children. You know it doesn't matter the way you give order to them, but I see the Palagi way. They expect the child to look straight to your eye, which is how I know from my son.

For me sometimes, his behaviour is part of [his] sense of humour to me, you know.

ONE PARENT'S COMPARISON OF TEACHING STYLES IN SAMOA AND NEW ZEALAND

In Samoa the teachers for the subject on [at that time] explain oral reading, everything. If you talking to someone and you playing around [teacher says], Stop it! They talk to you until you finish and then come back to the beginning, explain it again. Find someone else playing around, stop the class. The teacher's never tired of going back and re-starting from the beginning. In New Zealand, the Palagi teachers they don't care. If you listen, if you want to come, you sit down listen carefully. So while he [teacher] explained everything he [student] still doing ... maybe he's doing a drawing or writing letters and things ... they [teachers] don't bother you know stopping them, because of the wasting of time and they killing the subject. And the other kids they half-way through something so they can't stop and go back to the beginning. And so [this is] what's happening here [in New Zealand]. I told [daughter in Form Five], "You sit. The time is very important in New Zealand. Once ... subject ... every single subject you learn from school. Once they start talking about something, don't miss it. It [is] the only time. They can't go back unless it's a revision. And a revision is just a revision. You must understand the whole lots been going through. So there. But revision is just a refreshment of your mind but you already understand [what it is]. If you don't listen in the beginning what you gonna revise at the end?"

DISCUSSION

It is abundantly clear that the concerns expressed by parents reflect beliefs and assumptions fully consonant with their Samoan upbringing and pride in their cultural heritage. However, lessons learned from the experiences associated with adapting to life in New Zealand and what life here may mean for their children's futures also provide strong motivation to push for change.

Parents' lack of experience of the New Zealand education system and how it works compounds their difficulties in understanding and engaging positively with it. Theirs is an interpreted knowledge acquired second-hand from their children. These children are one generation removed from their parents, are New Zealand-born and raised (as opposed to Samoan-born and raised) and the products of not just one (as their parents assume) but of two major cultural influences.

Even more fundamental to this discussion is the difference between the philosophies that underpin educational processes and practice in Samoan and New Zealand school systems. The former, conforming and convergent, appears to emphasise the primacy of teachers performing their role in such a way that all students gain knowledge of core information that is then progressively built upon at successive levels. In New Zealand, on the other hand, teachers, by working through prescribed curriculum content, provide context, means and opportunity for all students to engage with them in a complementary and co-operative process of learning that is both divergent and independent. Nor is it these philosophical differences themselves that matter most. Rather, it is the framework of meaning that informs each that makes the crucial difference. The one endorses and makes

transparent in practice key values of a Westernised, developed, free society where competition, independence, initiative, self-management and self-discipline are integral to the lifestyle of individuals. The other, non-Western, socio-centric, hierarchical and community focused, structures its society via the dictates associated with role, status and rank, along with attendant rights and duties. In the one, the individual, in the other, the *pui'aiga* or local kin group, is the basic unit of society.

The divide which these children cross in order to enter the environment of New Zealand secondary schools is perhaps less a road than a perilous, uncharted ravine. No wonder some Samoan families give up – “don’t really care what is going on with the kids ... just pay the bill, pay the school fees” – and hope for the best.

In voicing the expectation that children achieve well at school, parents also intimate a certain fear that their previously unchallenged parental authority in relation to all facets of their children’s lives is somehow being subtly undermined or eroded by what goes on in the classroom. Because they themselves lack the language, curriculum knowledge and expertise to support the job of educating their children in ways that reflect their own experience, Samoan parents have no other option than to relinquish to others the teacher aspect of their traditional parenting role. Reluctantly, they have had to release this critical responsibility into the hands of teachers whom, contrary to the experience of their own parents in the “Island”, they neither know nor trust. While from the data it is fair to deduce that Samoan parents would readily acknowledge the academic competence that teachers bring to their role, what is meant by “teaching” and the responsibilities it entails are very differently interpreted by them. However, in the exchange of control over knowledge, parents face the risk that their own cultural knowing may be seen (certainly by many of their own children if not also by teachers) as inferior to that obtainable through a Palagi education. In the process the data suggests, they appear to have lost some control over those of their children’s activities associated with school. As one parent poignantly and pointedly put it, “Every single subject you learn from school.”

Parents are acutely aware of the downside of this loss of control and consequent loss of influence over their young people, who become “just happy going like this ‘cause no one pushing them”. But, while parents “know what they expect from their children” and want their children to “be good at school first and party later”, they are also aware of other extraneous influences on their children within the New Zealand context because “that’s not what the children want – completely different place altogether”. They see their kids manipulating their traditional authority by lying, thus keeping school issues to themselves. In fact, from the perspective of the children and in the current two-world context of their lives, a major skill in managing the different worlds of school and home – once grasped – appears to involve keeping the events and activities of both out of reach of each other. No wonder, then, that parents are so often surprised and hurt when, on being called into school because things have gone really wrong, they realise they have known nothing about any difficulties.

For communication between parents and school to be effective, deference must be paid to Samoan etiquette, customs and values which privilege respectful

consultation over reporting and sharing of information. School administrators cannot assume the ability of parents to read and understand written English, or their confidence to express their thoughts accurately in what is, for Samoan-born parents, a second language. Sufficient time and opportunity need to be made available for parents to speak and ask questions in their first language. Unless schools take more seriously their responsibility to build links with their communities, parents will continue to be disempowered by a system meant to act in their support. As well, school managers will continue to spend even more unproductive time dealing with the effects of the problem – disillusioned, frustrated and bored students and classroom disciplinary problems – while the central issue of recognition and accommodation of the different needs of Samoan students continues to be ignored.

Therefore, it is easy to see why parents believe that New Zealand teachers are “discriminatory” and “racist” toward Samoan children. Since teachers generally lack knowledge of their world view, Samoan students, by omission on the part of schools, are daily left to stretch across the cultural divide to hear, see and participate on Western terms. Sadly, parents are right, I believe, in that few New Zealand teachers, who increasingly include in their ranks teachers from overseas, have an in-depth knowledge of the values inherent in Samoan society and culture. Neither does the New Zealand secondary school system endorse the belief that teachers act in loco parentis. However, teachers and the education system in general do share a duty to educate. Therefore, parents’ request that all students be treated equally and taught according to their different abilities, in my view, falls fairly and squarely within the parameters of that daily duty.

Parents have right on their side, also, when they plead that teachers encourage and speak to their children. The effects of lack of motivation, so easily misconstrued as an inability to learn, more often than not reflect a lack of interest in learning. It is in this regard, surely, that the accusation of racism arises. The reality posited by Mageo (1998) of a different lens out of which to see and experience life by no means equates with inferior intellectual capacity. What it does do is make identification with learning processes and methods viewed through a different lens more difficult for Samoan children to grasp, while posing an added challenge to classroom educators. Certainly, against such odds it is much more difficult for Samoan children to excel at school since, to do so, involves mastering the Palagi system while at the same time remaining connected with and committed to one’s Pacific roots via language, church and cultural practice. Neville-Tisdall and Milne (2002) are uncompromising in their denunciation of inherent institutional racism in schools, citing shortcomings within education systems and management processes, little or limited dialogue between school and community and poor parent-teacher communication. Teachers, who, particularly in Auckland, are increasingly challenged by the growing multi-cultural nature of classroom communities, need to be trained as inclusive communicators, culturally aware, genuinely relational in their attitude to students, and enthusiastic, flexible and creative practitioners.

Because teachers do not share a similar authority ‘over’ Samoan children to that expected by their parents, nor have the right to demand of them unquestioning obedience, an understanding of how the children are disciplined in the home has the potential to help to motivate positive engagement in learning as well as minimise

wayward behaviour. I believe that this is what one participant parent was asking for when she commented: "I accept their ways of teaching my son and they [teachers] must accept the ways I want them to teach him"; that is, with understanding and due acknowledgement of his cultural socialisation. Tiatia (1998) and Singh (1999) believe that Samoan children are likely to enter school at a disadvantage because of having been socialised into the submissively respectful communicative practices of fa'a Samoa, the Samoan way. At school, however, these children must somehow recognise and negotiate the disjuncture between the communicative dispositions expected of "Samoan" children at home and the positions and expectations made available to them in relation to classroom management and control by their teachers. Helu-Thaman (1996) goes to the heart of the matter. In speaking of the inevitable tensions between members of the dominant school culture and the Pacific groups who bring to it their own unique, culturally specific world view, she contends that where "programmes are not informed by an understanding of the socialisation practices of their students, problems with teaching and learning will result" (p. 13). By way of supporting students to take ownership of and change disruptive behaviour, some New Zealand secondary schools have found the use of classroom and/or school-wide restorative justice practices helpful in building a more positive and co-operative classroom learning environment. Samoan children, especially boys at junior high school level, respond well to praise and encouragement in making the change from unquestioning obedience at home to interested and co-operative participation at school. However, this is a learned, self-management skill that needs to be taught rather than assumed.

Finally, and within a longer view, perhaps some of the parents' concerns speak to changes that are an inevitable part of any transitional process. Notwithstanding that their concerns cannot be rectified without change in the New Zealand education system, Samoan parents themselves may need to find ways of being assertive in approaching school personnel with their needs if the education of their New Zealand-born children is not to be further compromised. Further, Taule'ale'ausumai (1997) believes that, in aspiring to bring up their New Zealand-born children in the fa'a Samoa while at the same time taking advantage of the economic, educational, religious, social and political institutions of the Western world, Samoan parents are implicitly sanctioning the inevitability of the "infiltration" of fa'a Samoa by Western ideas. Alongside that of their children, theirs too is an evolving identity.

REFERENCES

- Gadamer, H., (1989). *Truth and method*. (2nd Rev. ed.). (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Translator's Preface (pp. xi-xix). New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
- Helu-Thaman, K. (1996, February). Reclaiming an education: Culture, teaching and learning. *Proceedings of the National Symposium Pacific Islands Learning: The Answers are Within Us* (pp. 9-21). Wellington: Education and Training Support Agency.
- Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, G. (2001). Pasifika languages and Pasifika identities: Contemporary and future challenges. In C. Macpherson, P. Spoonley & M.

- Anae (Eds.), *Tangata O Te Moana Nui: The evolving identities of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 196-211). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Mageo, J. (1998). *Theorizing self in Samoa*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Ministry of Education. (2003). *Statement of Intent – 2003 to 2008*. Retrieved July 17, 2003, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/print>
- Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (n.d.). *Pacific Peoples in New Zealand*. Retrieved March 16, 2003 from <http://www.minpac.govt.nz/publications/reports/people>
- Mulitalo-Lauta, P. (2000). *Fa'asamoa and social work within the New Zealand context*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Printing Company.
- Neville-Tisdall, M., & Milne, A. (2002, August). One size fits few: The case study of a school that has defied the constraints of a European education system for Polynesian students. Paper presented at TEFANZ Conference, Wellington.
- Ochs, E. (1997). Narrative. In T. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as structure and process* (pp. 185-207). London: Sage.
- Singh, P. (1999). *Pedagogic work, social class and cultural difference*. Paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Melbourne. Retrieved January 27, 2003 from <http://acer.com.au>
- Statistics New Zealand (2001). *Pacific profiles 2001*. Retrieved February 25, 2003 from <http://stats.govt.nz>
- Tamasese, K., Peteru, C., & Waldegrave, C. (1997). *O le Taaeo Afua: The new morning: A qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services*. Wellington: Family Centre.
- Taule'ale'ausumai, F. (1997). Pastoral care: A Samoan perspective. In P. Culbertson (Ed.), *Counselling issues and South Pacific communities* (pp. 215-237). Auckland: Accent Publications.
- Tiatia, J. (1998). Caught between cultures: A New Zealand-born Pacific Island perspective. Auckland: Christian Research Association.

¹ I wish to thank all those who participated in this research. Without them this article would not have been written. I also thank Wendy Drewery, who supervised my thesis for the Master of Counselling degree.

² Palagi: Samoan word for New Zealanders of European origin.