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O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana, Faitautusi ma le Tusitusi i le A'oga a le Faifeau: Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS)

Literacy Education, Language, Reading and Writing in the Pastor's School: Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS)

Lonise Sera Tanielu (nee Sapolu)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of Auckland.
2004
Abstract

This study is about an educational experience, which encompasses a range of educational knowledge and skills. It is an experience that is relatively unknown in educational research terms. It is also a comparatively 'secular' educational experience within a 'religious' institution, the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS). The Pastor's School (A'oga a le Faifeau) system teaches children to read and write, employing both Palagi and Fa'a Samoa frameworks. The study is also a positive response to the critical and sometimes negative historical treatment of the church and the Fa'a Samoa, especially in their role in the Samoan child's critical literacy experiences. In the light of the underachievement of Samoan children (especially in literacy-reading and writing), this thesis makes two arguments. They are: i) The Pastors' Schools are an important educational system that have escaped attention but which have profoundly significant educational content and impacts. ii) There is a literacy problem in New Zealand that the A'oga a le Faifeau could address for the reported underachieving Samoan children. The content of the A'oga a le Faifeau syllabus for example, includes the teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, religious and general knowledge, and the Fa'a Samoa. This knowledge forms part of the semantic resources, and literacy skills and expertise, which could prepare children for school because some of those knowledge and skills have spans to school-based literacies. One of the A'oga a le Faifeau's most significant educational impacts is the maintenance and retention of the Samoan language.
Acknowledgements

E. mauauluga pea le viiga ma le faafetai i le Atua aua o lona alofa, o lona posto ma lona mataisau ua manumia ai lenei faamoemoe. Ia tuma le viiga ia te ia e faavavau. E le gafatauimaina e sa'u upu vaivai, e le lalaum foi i se faafetai faaleauna le mauauluga o le alofa, faanuso ia Keriso, faaaoaoga, faaiga ma faa le ekalesia.

Faafetai tele i lau Afioga i le Taitaifono a le Au Toeaina o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS), Lau Susuga Hini Tofilau Stanley, aua na e uluai faamanniua mai mo lenei faamoemoe, ma tuuina mai le faatafaga ia iafai la'u suesuega i A'oga a Faifeau a la tatou Ekalesia i Samoa ma Niul Sila. E faafetai tele i susiga e tooainia, faafeagaiga ma faletua ona o a outou fesoasocii tanga, o a outou galuega, o finagalo faaalia e talanoaga ma tusitusiga. E faatauvaa ma vaivai le tagata ae na outou italiia lelei la'u savali. Ia faamanniua tele atu le Atua.

O la'u faafetai faapitoa mo le ekalesia pele, EFKS i Grey Lynn i ona tulaga faalupe, Susuga i aoao, le afioga i le tiakono toeaina ma le faletua, o tiakono, faletua ma tausi, o tama ma tina. Faafetai mo la ou tou tatalo ma lo ou ou alofa faatinio i auula eseese sa maua ai le malosi e taumafai ai pea. Faafetai tele i faaioga o le A'oga a le Faifeau, le A'oga Asa Sa, le A'oga Faataitai, aemaise o le aulavaun latui ma tamaiti, o le fautu o le galuega faafiaoga. O le faafetai faapitoa I le Mafutaga a Tina i la outhou tatalo ma le pa'i mai faauso. Malo tapuai. E le mafai ona tusia uma o outou suafa a na silafiia e le Atua lo outhou alofa le faautaioa. Ia faamanniua tele atu le Atua.

I have benefited in this study from the support, help and cooperation of many people, too many to acknowledge by name but I thank you most sincerely.

I acknowledge with sincere gratitude the great assistance and instructional obligation of my supervisors and mentors, Professor Stuart McNaughton and Associate Professor Alison Jones. I am much indebted to them for their academic wisdom and expertise, patience, encouragement and support which made it possible for me to complete this study. Your generous support cannot be acknowledged adequately. Your untiring and genuine interest in my study extended to visiting the ‘contextual locations’ of my research. I am most grateful for Alison’s visit to Samoa during the initial stages of my research there especially as I had problems with respect to focus and perspectives then, and I thank Stuart for visiting our Aoga a le Faifeau at Grey Lynn CCCS. Faafetai tele lava. Ia faamanniua atu le Atua!

I thank all the pastors and wives who helped in one way or another by providing the much needed information I was seeking for this study. In particular, Rev Elder Hini and Mrs Alofisa Stanley, the late Rev Elder Faigame and Mrs Iolesina Tagoilelagi, Rev Elder Talalelei and Mrs Maria Poasa, Rev Elder Seuga and Mrs Suitupe Pula, the late Rev Elder Setoga and Mrs Fiafiiva Setoga, Rev Talia and Mrs Feiloaiga Tapaleao, Rev Elekosi and Mrs Lila Viliamu, Rev Tafesilafai and Mrs Miriama Lavasi, the late Rev Toma and Mrs Taumua Toma, the late Rev Eti and Mrs Sauiolego Vaesil, Rev Nove and Mrs Penina Vailaua, Rev Lucky and Mrs Terrl Slade, Rev Professor Otele Perelini, Rev Dr Paulo Koria, Rev Dr Danny Ioka, Rev Dr Peni and Mrs Rosa Vai. I would like to thank Mr Semau Tepa Maiava for making church documents available for my research especially the demographic aspects of the more recent surveys of the Pastors’ Schools in Samoa. Mr Taulapapa Mu Talataina has followed my study very closely, thank you Douglas for your constant words of encouragement and support.
I acknowledge the financial assistance given by the University of Auckland Maori and Pacific Island Graduate Scholarship.

**Faafetai tele,** to the members of the Research Unit for *Pasifika* Education (RUPE) for your support, in particular Dr Eve Coxon, Tanya Wendt-Samu, Dr Linita Manuatu, Dr Melani Anae, Sailau Suaiii.

I acknowledge the support of colleagues and friends, Professor Tupeni Baba, Yvonne Culbreath, Lita Foliaki, Dr Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Maina Field, Barbara Grant, Professor Konai Helu-Thaman, Dr Margie Hohepa, Dr Kuni Jenkins, Dr Mere Kepa, Anastasia Laban, Faasaulala Leota, Professor Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, Dr Linda Mead, Dr Leonie Pihama, Professor Graham Smith, Dr Elia Taase, Pauline Te Kare, Lavinia Turoa, Professor Albert Wendt, Nuhi Williams, Emma Wolfgram.

I sincerely thank the pastors and wives of our Waitemata Pulega, Rev Maligi and Mrs Faauuga Evile, Rev Fiatepa and Mrs Penina Faafau, Rev Josefa and Mrs Lagi Rimoni and Rev Vagatai and Mrs Lusia Vaaelu. Thank you for your prayers and encouragement. *Faafetai tele mo la outou tatalo ma faamamuiaga.*

My spiritual family, the Grey Lynn CCCS supported me continuously throughout the years of my study. I thank you most sincerely for your prayers, encouragement and love. I owe you a debt of gratitude.

I remember with gratitude my parents, the late Rev Elder Theodore Mila and Mrs Faailoa-le-Talalelei Sapolu. Their passion for teaching phonics and orthography in their *Aoga a le Faifeau* influenced me in a big way. I would like to thank my brothers and sisters Enesi and Merina, Tapu and the late Moe, Rev Elder Mila and Florita, Paapa and Katie, Simoe and Rev Elder Masalosalo Sopoaga, my aunt Vala Aiaiga, nephews, nieces and all my relatives, many thanks for your prayers and moral support. *Malo le tapua'i. Faafetai mo la outou tatalo.*

I also acknowledge the support of the Tanielu family, my other mother, brothers and sisters. Thank you for your prayers and encouragement. I remember especially with gratitude my father in law, the late Rev Ioata Tanielu who bound and kept *Sulu Samoa (Samoan Torch)* issues that provided much needed information for my study. *Faafetai tele Tama.*

I am indebted to my children Helen and husband Paulo, Loana, Sosefina, Veraina and Laau, for their constant support, encouragement, patience and love. You taught me computer skills that made it possible for me to ‘think on the screen’, and finish this study much earlier than if I had kept tapping away faithfully on my portable typewriter. Thank you for your confidence in me, allowing my mother to pursue her studies. Thank you Loana for ordering me to stop adding and hand the thing in, Veraina for being my sounding board and for being a good listener, Sosefina for attending to my domestic duties, Laau for teaching me computer tricks and Helen for doing the final close edit of my thesis. I could not ask for a better copy editor. I also acknowledge the support of my other daughter Sinapi who is looking after our mother in Samoa. I thank Paulo Stowers and Seti Talamaivao for their moral support.
Ioritana, the faiféau would dedicate the success of any undertaking to divine Providence, as any man of religion would do. I thank the Lord for my husband, friend, critic, and most ardent supporter. The times we spent in the microfiche rooms of the University of Auckland library, and the Turnbull library in Wellington, searching for data have certainly paid off. Faafetai tele!

This study is dedicated to Rev Elder Laau I Tanielu, our children, and our long awaited mokopuna (grandchild) Larafina.
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This thesis focuses on one site – the Pastor’s School – where two distinct education systems, the Faa Samoa (Samoan culture) and Faa Palagi (Western education or formal education) merge. The reader may be challenged by the unusual organization of the argument – but it has a conscious rationale. The way the text is organised is a departure from the traditional structure of the academic thesis where the more usual format is a systematic development of an argument through an ordered sequence of an introduction, literature review, a particular methodology, findings and results, analysis to the conclusion. My thesis has nine chapters and includes all the above elements although they are organised in a somewhat different order, similar to the logic and structure of a Samoan oratorical speech. This logic has enabled me to more clearly easily express the organic connections between the Faa Samoa and the Faa Palagi in the unique educational setting of Samoan Pastors’ Schools.

I indicate that the Faa Samoa was incorporated into the relatively new form of education introduced by the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries and vice versa, with few confrontational issues or major difficulties to mar the initial fusion of the old with the new.¹

My writing reflects a similar (and I hope similarly unproblematic) merging – of an academic research tradition, and a Samoan approach to communication. Hence the elliptical structural logic in the ordering and writing of the thesis – a logic I would refer to as the Paepae rationale. The paepae is the foundation of stones² that surrounds a fale Samoa (Samoan house). Before entering a fale, one walks over this foundation of smooth stones scattered and spread out in such a way that it is relatively easy to walk on. Used as a verb, the word paepae means to spread out or to smooth out. Arranging a paepae maa (stone foundation) requires care and much time so that

¹ The old refers to the Faa Samoa, that is what was there before the new (the Faa Palagi) was introduced.
² The paepae of many Samoan houses includes a much wider ‘pavement’ of stones spread out before one comes to the actual foundation which is often a raised platform of rock and soil covered with the smooth stones or pebbles.
people walking on it do not hurt their feet. So the paepae welcomes the visitor even before he or she enters the fale.³

Addressing an audience in a special occasion, a Samoan orator engages in this initial 'smoothing out', which is often also referred to as an act of 'warming to' or acknowledging people or the gods. The orator for example may praise the creator of the earth for making such a beautiful day for the occasion, as well as the dignitaries present at the occasion. He or she would make appropriate connections here and there by referring to a common genealogy or something similar or habitual or citing important historical events (taeo faiatulia) that the audience can connect to. Most importantly there is linkage to the main plot, which the good orator only delves into after he or she has paved the way by making the proper introductions, addresses and connections.⁴

The first four chapters essentially do this 'smoothing' out. In those chapters I theorise about the 'old' and the 'new' in various ways to set a perceptual focus for the actual research carried out with the Pastors' Schools discussed in Chapters Six to Eight. Those schools tell the story of the merging of the Faa Samoa and the Faa Palagi, the lived experiences of the children and the teachers engaged in the Pastors' Schools. Chapter Five explains the eclectic methodology used in the thesis. The last four chapters (6-9) contain the findings, the interpretations and the analysis, samples of children's work and copies of the syllabuses and the conclusion.

³ These smooth stones are not found in every village so people acquire them from relatives or friends in the villages that have them through reciprocal giving. Today the 'user pays' rule applies.
⁴ An orator that speaks later would often say, Ua uma ona paepae ulufanua lo tatou aso, meaning that the first orator had already made the introductions, addresses and connections and so on so he or she (the later speaker) would go straight to the main plot of his or her own speech.
Chapter One

A General Introduction

About my Topic: Its Significance

'O le A'oa'oina o le Gagana, Faitautusi ma le Tusitusi i le A'oga a le Faifeau: Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa (EFKS), 'Literacy Education, language, reading and writing, in the Pastor's School of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS).' The main thrust of this study is an investigation into the 'secular role' of the CCCS church, which its Pastor's School carries out. This role has a background that is steeped in the history of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa, formerly known (before 1961) as the London Missionary Society (LMS) church. The study documents the past as well as the contemporary work of the Pastor's School in Samoa and New Zealand. The Samoan translation of the Pastor's School is A'oga a le Faifeau, which literally means school (a'oga) of the (a le) pastor (faifeau).

The Pastor's School is an educational institution which is not widely known outside the CCCS or outside Samoa, but it moved at a steady and continuous pace the education of many Samoans, despite difficulties and setbacks that have continually confronted it since its inception.

An Enigmatic Topic

The topic I have chosen is an enigma to a lot of people who have asked about and wondered what it is, what it means and why I am writing about this particular topic. I have also gone to great pains especially in proffering oral explanations about my topic for the very reason that many people do not know what an A'oga a le Faifeau is. It is the relative lack of attention in the literature (let alone the church documents) of the A'oga a le Faifeau that prompted me to write on this topic. Except for some A'oga a le Faifeau syllabuses published in O le Sulu Samoa (The Samoan Torch), the official journal of the
CCC$,¹ it is a relatively unknown phenomenon. The $A'oga a le Faifeau$ had forged and made major inroads (and still does) in the educational development of many Samoans. Because of its name, the ‘Pastor’s School’, most people would probably associate it with an exclusively religious or biblical instruction. The $A'oga a le Faifeau$, though, has provided a relatively holistic (social, intellectual and spiritual) type of education to many Samoans for years.

**How the Pastor’s School Started: In Brief**

Education systems do not exist in a vacuum. Ideally, the aims and objectives of every education system should be determined by and should reflect the social and economic conditions of the type of society in which it exists. This was not the case with the $Aoga a le Faifeau$ system, the aims of which were determined in Britain and reflected the culture and needs of the ‘literate’ (able to read and write) British society. It is an introduced education system that was welcomed with open arms by a ‘pre-literate’ Samoan society eager for novel ways and practices. While the histories of missionary encounters with many other ‘pre-literate’ societies are marred by stories of violence and non-acceptance, this was definitely not the case in Samoa.

Every education system has a history, which tells of its origins thus I am briefly introducing the history of the $A'oga a le Faifeau$ here to put in perspective how it all began. Chapter Four gives a more detailed historical background.

“The history of Samoa is the history of the London Missionary Society”

This statement, according to Goodall² (a member of the LMS secretariat in India and the South Pacific in the 1940s), was made by a New Zealand government official in 1915 and which he (Goodall) himself claimed as having a sound basis because little was known in Europe of Samoa prior to the first visit of the LMS missionary John Williams in 1830. Roqueveen, a Dutch explorer, ‘discovered’ the Manu’a Islands, the Eastern most part of the Samoa Islands in 1722. The French navigator, De Bougainville, ‘discovered’ the

¹ The *Sulu Samoa* (Samoan Torch) was first published in 1839 in London by the LMS Press. 
islands in 1768. La Perouse, another French explorer, landed on Tutuila Island (today, the main island of American Samoa) in 1788. Apart from an altercation between La Perouse’s crew and some Samoans that resulted in the death of eleven people, those explorers as well as whalers, beachcombers, escaped convicts, boat deserters and traders who had also made contact with some islanders, did not leave any lasting or significant influence on the lives of Samoan people. The first real outside influence that impacted greatly on the Samoans was the LMS missionaries.4

The London Missionary Society (LMS)5, that pioneered the introduction of Christianity, also introduced formal education to the Samoans.6 The first LMS missionaries, John Williams and Charles Barff7, arrived in Samoa in August 1830 with eight ‘native’8 teachers and their families from Tahiti and Rarotonga. Williams and Barff left the native teachers after two months with the paramount chief Malietoa who welcomed and accepted the new religion in Samoa. It was the responsibility of those teachers to spread their knowledge and understanding of Christianity amongst the Samoans and thus prepare the ground for white missionaries to follow later on. Williams visited them briefly in 1832 and in 1834 Barff and another missionary, based in Rarotonga, also paid a brief visit. In 1836 the first permanent LMS missionaries (five married and one single) arrived from Britain.9

The LMS missionaries initially engaged the help of Samoans willing to undertake teaching duties. These first Samoan teachers had little training and limited knowledge to impart ‘but without them missionary work would have been seriously impeded for many years since the missionaries were few in number and the Samoan people lived in many

5 The LMS church in Samoa became independent from the LMS in London in 1961. The church in Samoa wanted to affiliate with a denomination rather than a society. It became known as the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa. The preposition ‘of’ is often used instead of ‘in’ in this title. In my thesis I use the former (of) to distinguish the CCC of Samoa in Samoa from the CCC of Samoa in New Zealand, rather than the CCC in Samoa in Samoa or the CCC in Samoa in New Zealand which can be quite confusing.
7 Williams and Barth were known in Samoa by their respective Samoan names Villiamu (Williams) and Papi (Barth).
8 The word ‘native’ is used here to refer to indigenous people.
villages scattered throughout several islands. Those were the ‘humble beginnings’ of the Pastor’s School. It is called the Pastor’s School (A’oga a le Faifeau) because the pastor (with the help of his wife) runs and teaches the school. The school is in their sole charge.

After 14 years in Samoa the LMS missionaries set up the Samoan Missionary Seminary (SMS, later renamed the Malua Theological College, MTC) in 1844 which trained a ‘native’ ministry to give the trainees an education designed to make them not only evangelists but also teachers. Eventually every village was given its trained native pastor cum teacher to spread the gospel and to teach Samoans print literacy (reading and writing) in the vernacular. A syllabus for the year was printed and circulated by the missionaries throughout Samoa. The Pastors’ Schools pupils were examined at the end of the school year in oral and written Samoan Grammar, arithmetic and scripture. Other subjects like Geography, World History and General Science (after their texts were translated to Samoan) were added to the syllabus later on.

The CCCS has no written history of its own, except for a short historical narrative in Samoan by Faletosea and a PhD thesis by Taase, a former Malua Theological College lecturer. This latter work is the most comprehensive as well as a more complete history of the CCCS to date. It has made a significant contribution to my own study especially as it is the only writing that gives an historical account of the institution of the faifeau Samoa (Samoan pastor) from whence sprang the A’oga a le Faifeau. The work of Samoan linguist and educationist Professor Aiono Fanaafi on the Samoan language

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12 Rev Oka Fauleto, a former Chairman of the CCCS, is at present writing a history for the church.
13 This short history was compiled by Rev Faletosee, K T, 1959, O le Tala Fa’asolopito o le Ekaesia Samoa (LMS) (A history of the Samoan Church (LMS), Malua Printing Press, Western Samoa.
15 The Malua Theological College is a tertiary institution that trains pastors for the CCCS ministry. The LMS set it up in 1844, and was then called the Samoan Mission Seminary (SMS). It was then also not only a theological but also a teacher training institution.
16 Aiono Dr Fanaafi Le Tagaloa (Aiono is her chiefly title) was the first Samoan PhD who graduated from the University of London in 1960. She was Professor of Samoan studies at the National University of Samoa. She was also Director of Education and former Principal of the Western Samoa Teachers Training College. She is a scholar and an intellectual with wide experience in education and linguistics.
and LMS documents for her PhD in London, also documents a brief history of the LMS in Samoa. Her references to the 'creation' and development of the Samoan alphabet and written language by the LMS are invaluable because this information is of great relevance and importance to the study. Carson’s MA thesis, ‘The Samoan Mission Seminary 1844-1884’, a study of furnishing teachers in Samoa for educational and religious outreach by London missionary Society members in the nineteenth century, also contributed very useful information. She summed up in the following quote the ‘educational mission’ of the LMS:

Education is an indispensable part of missionary activity since the people to whom the word of God is brought need to not only hear the Gospel but must also understand its implications. In Samoa the British missionaries came not just to convert the Samoans to Christianity but also to establish a church that would be a self-supporting self-governing, self-propagating Christian community. The two earliest forms of formal teaching were the ‘instruction’ and ‘catechizing’ of interested Samoans. The ready response of the Samoans to the missionaries' evangelization efforts led rapidly to the establishment of schools and classes. These not only provided further opportunities to impart religious knowledge en masse but were places where the Samoans could also be taught some of the useful arts enjoyed by 'more advanced civilizations' such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Though the secular aspects of this education were viewed as subordinate to the spiritual they were inseparable especially since teaching the people to read the Bible in their own language was of paramount importance in promoting spiritual advancement.17

My study investigates those secular aspects that Carson mentions above, which provided many Samoans with an education, not only in religious matters but also in those ‘useful arts enjoyed by supposedly ‘more advanced civilizations’ such as reading, writing and arithmetic.’ Those secular elements were inseparable and indispensable in the missionaries’ evangelising work. They could not carry out their work efficiently and effectively if the converts were not reading and writing competently. The Pastor’s School carried out this important function. It was a means to disseminate Christian dogma more rapidly amongst the Samoans in order to fulfil their purposes. On the other hand for the Samoans, it was the key to the arts and the knowledge of the Palagi. The missionary schools that later became known as the Pastors’ Schools, especially when ‘trained’ pastors were assigned to village parishes after graduating from the Samoan Mission Seminary in the late 1840s, (with schools later set up by other missions like the Catholics and Methodists), were the only formal schools in Samoa until the official takeover by

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New Zealand of Western Samoan primary education from the missionaries in the 1920s. While the A'oga Palagi (English Schools), as the New Zealand run-schools were known, took the children for the first half of the day, the pastors carried on their schools in the afternoon. The Pastors’ Schools consequently became known as the A'oga Samoa (Samoan Schools), Samoan language immersion schools as distinct from the A'oga Palagi that also have English instruction. The syllabus of the Pastor’s School then also included English instruction in the basics.

The following brief summary of a report by Rev Newell and his wife, LMS missionaries in Samoa during the 1880’s, provides insight into the work of the Pastors’ Schools and the provision of education - especially prior to the era of formal colonisation that began in 1899 with German rule of the Western Samoa Islands and the United States’ takeover of the Eastern Samoa Islands.  

A handwritten letter by Rev Newell to the LMS authorities includes a report of the schools of the Matautu District (also known as the Ituotane District) in Savaii. It was written in January 1888 for the information of the LMS Conference. According to the report, Rev and Mrs Newell visited every village in the Matautu District during the months of June and July in 1887. During these visits they conducted school examinations.

The progress report of the schools was an assessment and evaluation of the thirty Pastors’ Schools in the Matautu district. Newell in his letter complimented the schools for the promising examination results and good progress made since 1886. Fourteen schools had achieved 1st Division (see below) in 1887 compared to six schools the previous year. He was also mindful of the fact that the pastors (teachers) were working under the pressure of social and political disabilities and hindrances. It was at this time when British, German and USA war ships were constantly visiting the Samoa Islands. Locally there was civil rivalry among the paramount chiefs as those great world powers were

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[18] While the LMS work was carried out in the two Samoas, the study pays particular attention to Western Samoa (renamed Samoa in 1995), with which I am more familiar and of which I am a citizen. Plus, the Eastern Samoa branch of the CCCS broke away in 1970 and became independent and has been known since then as the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa (CCCAS).

competing to find favours with the respective rival chiefs. Educational resources were poor and the Matautu District in Savaii was the furthest away from Apia Harbour, the first port of call in Samoa where ships unloaded their supplies before distribution, meaning that the Matautu district always got its materials last. The difficulties however did not deter the pastors and missionaries from their educational pursuits in faithfully teaching and continually assessing and evaluating their schools respectively. Concerning the results of those examinations Newell reported:

It is impossible to speak with entire satisfaction of the schools, but it is encouraging to be able to find positive evidence of advance in school efficiency. As compared with last year (1886) there is progress and that is all it is possible to say. The standard which I have laid down as easily attainable with diligent attention to the schools even in view of present disabilities and hindrances (social and political) is the one I have for several years called the 1st Division. In that rank I place as the result of Examinations and Observations - 14 Schools. Last year I could only put 6 schools into this Class. The tabulated results are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of schools ranked as 1st Division</th>
<th>14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No 2nd</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No 3rd</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No inefficient Not classed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is right to remark that as the standard of Examination has been raised these results represent a really better education than the children have obtained in past years.

The report signifies that the Pastors' Schools were well and truly in operation then and were making good progress before the onset of formal colonisation 11 years later in 1899, when the islands were thrown into upheaval when they were split between Germany and the United States. While this political 'wrangling' was going on, the pastors carried on with their schools. When the Germans took over Western Samoa in 1899 they left (well alone) the education of Samoans to the missionaries and Samoan pastors, and built only a few schools in Apia for their own children. The Germans even allowed the missionaries to carry on with their English instruction. Some German instruction was given on request from some church schools in Apia. By then the Methodists and Catholics were carrying on their own respective schools following the LMS tradition.
What This Study is About

My study is based on in-depth and participant research with contemporary Pastors’ Schools in Samoa. I am also a product of this education system, and an educator in one of these schools in New Zealand, and bring my own experiences into the study. I play a dual role primarily and more importantly as an outsider looking in, and secondarily as an insider ‘fitting’ in.

The study raises issues about the literacy experiences of Samoan children in the Pastor’s School. It is an in-depth and detailed investigation into the practices of the Pastor’s School system, which has somehow been ‘overlooked’ and paid very rare attention.

The primary purpose of the study is to argue, and show, that the Pastor’s School played and still plays a significant role in the education, socialisation and enculturation of those Samoan children in the CCCS in Samoa and New Zealand. The study demonstrates how the Pastor’s School literacy sets up resonances with Samoan children, Samoan family, Samoan community and conventional school literacy. The thesis maps and describes the Pastors’ Schools and their current place in Samoan society especially with regard to Samoan language skills and the maintenance and retention of the language. Two main arguments are followed through in the thesis about the work and ‘worth’ of the A’oga a le Faifeau. These are introduced below in the present chapter but the rest of the thesis is testing and supporting these arguments through an analysis of research data.

Argument One: The Pastor’s School has Profoundly Significant Educational Content and Impacts.

The Pastors’ Schools are an important educational system that has escaped research attention but which has profoundly significant educational content and impacts. The content of the syllabus of the A’oga a le Faifeau includes the teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, religious and general knowledge and the Fa’a Samoa. The Pastors’ Schools are a powerful socialisation force for the Fa’a Samoa.
One of the most significant educational impacts of the A‘oga a le Faifeau is maintaining and retaining the Samoan language. The missionaries, although they had their own religious agenda, carried out their work predominantly and officially in the Samoan language. One of the first major tasks the LMS missionaries carried out was learning the Samoan language. They were ‘instructed’ to learn the indigenous languages first and to use them in their ‘evangelising’ and ‘civilising’ work. Aiono found this instruction below, given by the LMS Board of Directors to the missionaries, as most significant and impressive:

La vave ona outou aoa le gagana a tagata, ma vave ona outou lauga ai, ma fai ai a outou galuega ma fesootaiga. (Learn the indigenous language fast; use it immediately in your sermons, in your work and communications.)

The A‘oga a le Faifeau became a repository and a ‘melting pot’ of knowledge where Christian religion, ‘civilization’ and the Fa’a Samoa were expressed interdependently and ‘intersupportively’ and at times in contradiction with one another.

A very important part and one of great impact is the ‘values education’ the A‘oga a le Faifeau provides. Although the study is predominantly about the literacy skills that children learn in the A‘oga a le Faifeau, the child’s ‘moral and affective’ welfare is also very important in his or her education. A child’s safety and security needs have to be satisfied in order for effective learning of those literacy skills to take place. A child who learns for example, to respect, to have courage, to grow up in a fair, caring, compassionate and non-racist environment will demonstrate those values. I elaborate on this impact of the A‘oga a le Faifeau later on.

Despite such good impacts of the church, many still see the church in a negative light. My study investigates and analyses the educational experiences inside those large and ornate buildings that many outside are so critical of.

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20 The missionaries used the indigenous languages wherever they went. In contexts where local languages were almost lost this tended to be because of indigenous populations becoming minorities in their own countries as in Aotearoa and Hawaii.

21 Aiono, Dr Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, 1996, O La Ta Gagana. (Our Language) Lamepa Press, Apia, pp. 30-31
The Paradox of Mission Education

There is a paradox about the historical role of the church in Samoan life. On one hand it has been seen as a colonising force. For example, the role of the church in its intensive involvement and support in the Samoan language nest movement is seen in terms of the colonial process and as a powerful and oppressive institution. As Utumapu commented in her study of Samoan language nests, of which she found that more than half were church operated, "It is argued that Samoan church’s attitude towards literacy within the mandate of ministry work is motivated by perceived needs to remain powerful and that the early European missionaries colonised Samoa through literacy, by producing a written language." New Zealand educationists Mara, Foliaki and Coxon argued that the curriculum of the missionary schools came to represent the knowledge that was considered to be important and that during this period (early nineteenth century) we could see the beginning of the undervaluing of indigenous knowledge and skills. In Hoare’s investigation of the state of Samoan and English languages in twenty Samoan families in Auckland, he concluded that although most of the families in his study were most supportive of the church’s efforts at the maintenance of the Samoan language, the family was probably the best agency as far as language reinforcement was concerned.

Jemaima Tiatia, a graduate student of the University of Auckland suggested in her book, Caught Between Cultures, that one solution to prevent Pacific Island youths from leaving the church, their cultures and families is for the church to hold language classes both in English and the indigenous languages, to break down the language barriers between native and non-native speakers. The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa in New Zealand (CCCS) A'oga a le Faifeau syllabus has an intensive program of Samoan

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language and Fa’a Samoa instruction, which involves all children in the church, and elders who teach them. An important role of the CCCS church is nurturing the Samoan language in all its various activities, leaving the teaching of English to the schools.

Tiatia’s suggested solution initially seems a reasonable one, but for some churches it could defeat the purpose of keeping their identity as a ‘Samoan’ church if English classes are held as well. This is why the CCCS church for example has an A’oga a le Faifeau (Pastor’s School) separate from an A’oga Aso Sa (Sunday School) because the former has a specific role in teaching the Samoan language and Fa’a Samoa to the church children. On the other hand some youths leave for a ‘time out’, such time as needed by all, to reflect. Later, some young people would actually go back into the ‘fold’.

The dramatic growth of Samoan language nests in the last ten years (more than half of which are run by Samoan churches) is partly a response to the problem (among others) that Tiatia is concerned about. Samoan children need to be fluent Samoan speakers especially in their formative years for educational reasons that this thesis addresses. One of the main reasons is the fact that Samoan children who learn to speak their first language from their parents most of whom are very good speakers and writers in the Samoan language could transfer the skills and knowledge of learning their first language to learning new languages.

It has been said that the LMS missionaries aimed at total societal change and ‘imposed’ Christianity and their ‘civilised’ ways.

The LMS mission was a civilising one. The missionaries believed that they not only knew the one and only true God but also that they possessed a civilization that was superior to any other. It was not conceivable to the missionaries that a people could be Christian without being ‘civilised’ in the same manner as themselves.

Much of the early writing of the missionaries and colonisers ‘talked down’ to the Samoans, branding them as ‘uncivilised’ and barbaric ‘heathens’ and atheists that needed

26 I discuss the concept of ‘imposition’ in Chapter 3 especially with reference to the initial contact between Samoans and the missionaries.
to be Christianised and ‘civilised’. That meant using every chance offered to fulfil their civilising objectives and in the process doing away with any customs and traditions that might interfere with their fulfilment. Through a print literacy education they ‘colonised’ the Samoan mind more quickly and more effectively to accept the new ways and practices.

The Samoan people on the other hand were most eager to learn to read and write. The literacy skills of the Palagi were very much associated with the superior technological knowledge that they were seen to possess. The Samoans envisaged benefits for themselves in the missionaries’ Christianising and ‘civilising’ agenda. They were not ‘absolutely overwhelmed’. There were also important reasons (referred to in Chapter Four) that accelerated the acceptance and expansion of the LMS missionaries’ agenda. The attraction to literacy as a novel practice was one reason for the Samoans’ expression of the desire to gain access to this ‘superior’ knowledge.

In considering these introduced processes and their effects, it has been argued that ‘we should abandon the mistaken assumption that Pacific Islands people and their social (including their educational) institutions were totally overwhelmed by the missionaries.’

When the LMS missionaries first came to Samoa, the paramount chief Malietoa accepted them with grace and favour for several reasons. For example, the chief thought that this was the head of his government from heaven, as predicted by the Samoan war goddess Nafanua. I elaborate on this and other reasons in Chapter Four.

Despite the largely negative view of the church’s role, as argued above (and such views may have truthful elements), on the other hand the church may also be seen as an institution that has done much good service to the Samoan people. For example, apart from its spiritual aspects, the church promotes sovereignty through the maintenance of literacy in the Samoan language. This is one of its most important and far reaching services. It also provides a values education. In the CCCS especially, these are exercised in the work of its A’oga a le Faifeau. The A’oga a le Faifeau thus became a most important agent of socialization and change.

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29 Mara et al, (Ibid), p.181
The LMS made it possible

The LMS in its ‘civilising’ mission also initiated the tradition of writing, which enabled Samoan stories and histories to be documented and read widely. In referring to this great contribution by the missionaries to the Samoan language Aiono explained:

Ua maua nei la le Pi Faitau o la ta gagana, ma o se maatua tautele lea na foai mai e Europa i la ta gagana. O le Pi Faitau e mafai ai ona tautala mai anamua ma le tala Fa‘asolopito, a e le tuu tasi ai le aumai/avatu i le tuutuufogafaga. (We now have an alphabet for our language and it was a most valuable treasure given to the Samoan language by the Europeans. The Samoan Alphabet (Pi Faitau) provided an important means by which our prehistory and history can 'talk' to us without depending solely on handing them down by word of mouth from generation to generation).  

I make much of this obvious and inevitable issue of the print literacy here because it is of utmost significance. Most importantly, it has provided another tool, apart from an oral tradition, that children can use in furthering their learning capacities and potentialities. It has also made the documentation of the Samoan language possible and enabled Samoan researchers to write back, to challenge and contest colonial issues for example, as well as to document results and findings. The recording and documentation of the activities of the A‘oga a le Faifeau has been made possible because of the print literacy. As well, it has enabled the wide dissemination of the ways in which the pastors’ stories form a genre that depict incidents from the realities of their interactions with the students and the curriculum of the A‘oga a le Faifeau.

An interesting point made by American folklorist Stahl, in her study of personal narratives, has relevance here especially with reference to Aiono’s advocacy of the great value of the print literacy. Stahl argues that when oral narratives are committed to print, they are not usually perpetuated in tradition much past the lifetime of the stories’ main character. Stories, which rely on oral telling, therefore eventually fade, for much of their colour comes from the animating voice of the person who had the experience.  

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30 Aiono, (Ibid), p. 36.
31 Stahl, S D, 1989, Literary Folkloristics and the Personal Narrative, Indiana University, Indiana, p.15.
argue that the introduced process of recording and documenting those stories gives them another ‘life’ beyond an oral tradition (handing down by word of mouth). It is inevitable that naturally something has to ‘give’ when an orally told story is written down, but the story does not necessarily have to fade. The animating voice may fade from the written story but its diction lives on to inform generations to come. The print literacy has a very significant and positive role in preserving and conserving the essence of an orally told story for future narration.

The skills of reading and writing are nurtured and fostered within the Pastor’s School. Importantly, Samoan children need to have those literacy skills in order to succeed in school. In New Zealand some CCCS families are prevented from providing those literacy skills needed to reinforce language maintenance in the home because of circumstances, such as working parents, beyond their control. They would find in the A’oga a le Faifeau a support system to fulfil this need of their children. If families do encourage literacy practices in Samoan in the home, the Pastor’s School would extend their good work. Pastors’ Schools provide this support for many children in CCCS parishes in New Zealand. (See Chapter Seven).

There is a strong argument in favour of the important role of the church in the strengthening and maintenance of literacy in the Samoan language, not only in Samoa but especially so in New Zealand where the Samoan language is only taught in a few schools where bilingual classes are run, and in Samoan language nests. Utumapu,32 who did a study of Samoan language nests in Auckland for her PhD wrote that, when she started in 1992, over half of the nests were affiliated to Samoan churches. She also maintained that the most active ‘body’ behind the growth of Pacific Island language nests has been seen to be the church.

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In support of this view that the church contributes most significantly to the maintenance of the Samoan language, Fetui and Malaki-Williams claimed that:

The greatest promoters of Samoan language were (and still are) the Samoan ethnic churches. Services, Bible studies, Sunday schools and youth programmes were conducted in Samoan. The churches became meeting places for the Samoan communities and learning institutions for young New Zealand Samoans.

The omission of the Pastor's School by the authors in the quote above adds evidence to my argument that the Pastor's School has been 'overlooked'. Most Pastors' Schools in New Zealand are held on Sundays especially for those parishes whose children have far to travel to church during the week (as done in Samoa). I am arguing here though that the A'oga a le Faifeau has its own distinctive place in church activities. In the CCCS with 34.7% of the Samoan population as members, it is in the A'oga a le Faifeau that the Samoan language is taught as a subject. It is within the Pastor's School that children are engaged more intensively with the 'actual learning' of the Samoan language, than in any other church programme. Children in the CCCS for example first learn to read and write in the Pastor's School. It is their engagement with the Pastor's School syllabus that prepares them for participation in other church activities such as Bible studies, Sunday schools or youth programmes, which Fetui and Malaki-Williams write about.

It is important to make the distinction between the Sunday School and the Pastor's School here. In the CCCS the two have different syllabuses. In the Sunday School the syllabus is exclusively 'religious' and the children are grouped into four grades; the beginners, infants, teens and seniors. In the Pastor's School the syllabus also includes religious instruction as well as secular subjects that emphasize instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic, general knowledge and Samoan language, its colloquial form and language of respect. The latter includes the inculcation of Samoan values and protocol. Much of the teaching and learning of the latter is oral and spontaneous. In Samoa, the


34 When we were with the Porirua (Wellington) parish (1981-1988), our A'oga were held during the week after school hours because most children lived within walking distance of the church.

Pastor’s School syllabus also includes sewing for girls. In its early days, carpentry was also part of the syllabus for boys. There are usually eight classes in the A’oga a le Faifeau, from the Preschool Class and Classes 1 to 7, similar to conventional primary and secondary school grades.

The study of emergent literacy by Professor Stuart McNaughton, an educational psychologist at the University of Auckland revealed that Samoan children develop expertise in reading and writing before being formally instructed in school and that much of this expertise in the case of many Samoan children would have been acquired in the church. As he wrote:

Explicit systems for maintaining Fa’a Samoa (cultural practices which constitute ‘the Samoan way’) have operated in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A major agency has been the church, and many families continue the daily practice of family devotions, which include Bible reading (Lotu). Recently, Samoan preschools have developed influenced by the struggle and successes of Maori sovereignty and language revitalization, which have included the establishment of preschool ‘language nests’. Samoan language nests (over half of which are affiliated to Samoan churches) can be seen as amplifiers of cultural practices (McNaughton 1994), which for Samoan families, further contribute to sustaining Fa’a Samoa in New Zealand.  

For those children that belong to the CCCS, they would have developed much of this expertise in the A’oga a le Faifeau which ‘schools’ the Samoan child not only in the Christian faith but also in reading, writing, arithmetic, general knowledge and Samoan culture. The preschool class in the A’oga a le Faifeau is called Vasega Faitau Pi (literally translated the ‘Alphabet Reading Class’). The preschool child for example learns how to read the alphabet as well as counting numbers 1 to 10 as well as answering simple questions and reciting a verse from the Bible in Samoan. This knowledge and the skills learned to acquire such knowledge would form part of the semantic resources this child would take to his or her new entrants class at primary school. As children go through the A’oga a le Faifeau they develop skills and knowledge of literacy in the Samoan language. Often in the A’oga a le Faifeau, children are not promoted to the next class until they have mastered with some competence, the reading and writing of the prescribed syllabus for their respective classes.  

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37 It is not uncommon in our own A’oga a le Faifeau (Grey Lynn CCCS) for example to have much older children in classes normally designated for younger children. Children do not seem to be bothered by
The high competitiveness and stigma that were often associated with children repeating classes or coming last is not really an issue today. These feelings were very much 'rife' in the 1950’s and early 1960’s (during our A’oga a le Faifeau days) because all schools in each subdistrict (pulega) in those days sat a common exam. The candidates from Preschoolers to Class Six from all schools (4 or 5) came together in one centre to sit their respective common exams. The exams were marked on the same day and results were called out before the students went back to their respective villages. Today the norm is for children in each respective school to sit their own exams with examiners from another school, as we also do here in New Zealand.

The acquisition of skills and competence in reading, writing and arithmetic by the Samoan child in the A’oga a le Faifeau is not just a cognitive achievement on his or her part. It is also participation in socially and culturally defined structures of knowledge and communication. It means achieving membership in a church culture and that of his or her Fa’a Samoa.

The Pastors’ Schools impact greatly on those children who are members of the CCCS. It is compulsory for all CCCS pastors to run these schools and a significant number of children attend. By religious denomination, in Samoa, the CCCS church has the most members. A large number of Samoan children also attend these schools in New Zealand where there are at least 51 CCCS parishes. Chapters Four to Six discuss these impacts on the Samoans with the actual research carried out which reveal the training and philosophy of some of the teachers (pastors) and the literacy and numeracy learning they have imparted to Samoan children through their teaching, assessment and evaluation procedures.

A very important impact of the Pastor’s School is its contribution to the learning of the Fa’a Samoa and consequently its maintenance and retention. Retaining the Fa’a Samoa, language and values, is given high priority in the Pastor’s School. The Samoan language

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this and they keep coming year after year. We have, for example 18 and 19 year olds in our graduating class that had repeated once or twice. Most children would have repeated.

has two forms, the colloquial everyday Samoan, and the language of respect. The two forms have to be systematically learned in order for children to be fully conversant in them. Instruction in the latter form carries more than just the mechanics of learning the Samoan language (the language of respect especially). It goes with the socialization of children and the inculcation of Samoan values, in particular the value of respect, which drives the whole Fa'a Samoa. The value of respect is manifest in their behaviour to their elders and to other people. Knowing how to stand, sit, walk, speak and act in the presence of Samoan people has a humbling and moralising effect. The essence of being Samoan, is knowing how to show respect by behaving ‘respectfully’. The language of respect is inseparable from everyday language in the teaching of the Samoan language. In the A'oga a le Faifeau children learn, practise and perform this.

A ‘values education’ is a very important component of the A'oga a le Faifeau, as mentioned briefly earlier in the chapter. In this day and age of dramatic technological changes, multi-ideological mentalities and a tendency towards individualization, the church provides a relatively stable and secure environment. When I interviewed one of the secondary school principals for the Achievement In Multi Cultural High Schools (AIMHI) project in 1995, he made a very significant comment about the problem students in his school, “It's not the students that go to church that are the problem, it’s the ones that don’t”. His school was predominantly Pacific Island, with mostly Tongan, Samoan and Maori students.39

An important argument supported by several educationists points to the global process of individualization as closely related to the destabilization of traditional social networks and of social control. Beck pointed out that,

The double face of individualization on the one hand (is) the liberation from traditional ties that raises expectations for a life of one’s own, free from industrial and administrative interference in the personal sphere, and on the other hand, the individual increasingly becomes dependent on the labour market and on the standardized ways of life that support its operation, such as education, consumption and product offers.40

Handy, an influential writer on organizational cultures, argued that

Centralized power structures, such as governments, political parties, churches and unions, appear to be less and less able to keep the multiplicity of social influences under control and to guarantee security and stability. The social units, which have to find their own strategies to cope with complexity, appear to become smaller and smaller, down to the smallest possible social unit, the individual.  

Porsch in agreement traced the process of individualization to changes in the structure and function of families. As he posited:

Authority relations in families have been changing in the past few decades. What is allowed and not allowed is less an authoritative parental decision and more negotiated. An increasing number of children even grow up in a laissez-faire situation and do not experience any leadership from their parents. The individualization process is also related to a shift from an ethic of personal obligation and responsibility to an ethic of personal development. It has promoted tendencies to seek short-term satisfaction of needs and to instrumentalize other persons. Children and young people have become more independent and more difficult at the same time, because rules from adults are less and less accepted without question. Activities that are not experienced immediately as meaningful will be opposed by many children. Increasingly schools are expected to deal with the meaning of learning and its connection with the personal life situation and future perspectives of the young, and to cope constructively with the conflict between the ethic of self-fulfilment and an ethic of responsibility.

This trend has enormous implications for schools, according to Porsch, who further argued that if social control and structures of responsibility outside school were to lose stability and legitimisation, and if the young were no longer embedded in seemingly self-evident social relationships, those structures would have to be actively constructed and schools were to be increasingly expected to provide the necessary social continuity.

According to the October 2002 issue of Auckland Harbour News, the Australian Council for Educational Research and the National Foundation for Educational Research in England reported that "values need more emphasis in New Zealand schools, (and that) we should teach values right across the curriculum rather than in isolation." Patterson reported that about 25% of the country's primary schools were using values education

programmes, but fewer secondary schools were using them. Dr Rosalind Hursthouse, head of the philosophy department at the University of Auckland said that there are virtues, common to all cultures, which include honesty, truth, courage, justice and temperance. She argued that, "if you don’t start training them early it becomes incredibly difficult to pick it up later. It’s no use trying to teach people rules and regulations if their attitude hasn’t been shaped early on."  

The values and moral education provided by the A’oga a le Faifeau and the church is not necessarily to suppress or imprison people as some persons may think, but in the face of increasing violence and burglaries, with the news ‘flashing’ Polynesian faces as the perpetrators of those crimes, it is an appropriate response. As Pat Lynch, deputy director of the National Commission for UNESCO said, “Some schools have been reluctant to teach values in the past. There’s a real readiness now, which wasn’t there three to four years ago. I think that’s because of what we’ve seen on the streets. People are saying we’ve got to do something about it.” The values, as mentioned above by Hursthouse as being common to all cultures, are also the same values among others that the A’oga a le Faifeau teaches. The main aim of the literacy education that it offers is so children could read and write in order to understand those values, which are also central to Christian dogma.

These out-of-school experiences could be continuous with any values education in conventional schools. Those values are taught in the A’oga a le Faifeau right from the preschool class. The children throughout the school are engaged in analysing bible stories that teach those values, in oral and written comprehension. Added to that is the Fa’a Samoa part of the A’oga a le Faifeau syllabus which also teaches the value of respect, respectful behaviour and the language of respect.

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Argument Two: The A'oga a le Faifeau could address the so-called literacy problems of Samoan children who are reported to underachieve in New Zealand schools

The A'oga a le Faifeau, a Preschool and Out-of-School Educational Experience could connect with School Experience in a more Positive Way to Facilitate Learning for the underachieving Pasifika Children. A Ministry of Education report in 1999, on the compulsory schools sector in New Zealand showed achievement disparities between Pacific and non-Pacific students at both primary and secondary schools. According to the report, "The reasons for Pacific students' lower achievement are wide-ranging and complex. A variety of factors impact on the situation, socio-economic status, language barriers and a lack of responsiveness by the education system to Pacific culture and values."47 (See Chapter Two for tables that support this.)

The point made above, about the lack of responsiveness of the New Zealand education system to Pacific culture and values, is central to my second argument. Samoans make up the largest number of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand. They also belong in an ethnic minority group. Many Samoan children in New Zealand are bilingual. In matters of education, ethnicity (relating to matters of cultural practices, values and preferences) may be important over and above socio-economic factors since it bears particularly on children's upbringing, attitude to school, achievement orientation, motivation and first language learning.48 Children enter school with different levels of achievement in different aspects of performance. Therefore the criteria of engagement in conventional school literacy cannot be a particular set of achievements. Just as children have varied cultural backgrounds, their degrees of readiness for reading for example would vary also depending on the types of literacy skills they would have and the ways and means by which they would have acquired those before starting school.49

Critical thought has become a much talked about concept in relation to Samoan children. Some Samoan children could be slipping through the system because they are constantly

reminded that they have to speak up all the time and if they do not, then they become ignored. Sometimes the emphasis placed on a student’s ability to demonstrate critical thought more explicitly through open expression and ‘outspokenness’, at the expense of the assessment and evaluation of what students actually know, can be too overwhelming especially for a child that is just starting school. Expectations put on him or her to perform may alienate the child from new learning. While open discussion in class is a necessary pedagogy, its ‘obsessive’ and ‘over ambitious’ use tends to leave out students who are more comfortable with writing down their answers and thinking about them in private. Samoan students who are socialized at home and the church not to speak out of turn would find an open brainstorming session an intimidating, threatening and alienating exercise.

The relative passive and quiet approach to learning is a function of an upbringing that teaches Samoan (and Pasifika) children to respect and to obey the teacher. Their passivity and quietness in conventional school though should not be taken for granted as a sign of a lack of interest or ‘dumbness’. A Samoan child in such a situation may well say that:

I may be silent
But I am thinking
I may not talk
But don’t mistake me for a wall

The passive child at this transition period has a tendency to be ignored as teachers focus attention on more active participants in class. The study by Associate Professor Alison Jones, an educational sociologist at the University of Auckland, of Pacific Islands and Pakeha students in a girls’ school in Auckland, highlights the notion that teachers are more inclined to favour the active Pakeha students over the relatively more passive Pasifika students for the reason that Pakeha students are more active participants in class discussion. The study addresses this ‘lack of attention’ as a serious concern.

The more practical and situational Fa’a Samoa pedagogy is closely associated with the phonetic and orographical relatively formal teaching styles. Any educational curriculum

has components which require formal teacher initiated teaching and learning as well as attention to detail and explicitness in order for children to be able to learn. These could link with the more abstract teaching/learning style in school as the latter could build on the former.

In the A'oga a le Faifeau, children are also taught to take turns rather than rushing in all at once. Discussions and debates also do go on for example, of biblical and Samoan literature and cultural issues. Pupils discuss topics before essay writing, and do comprehension based on bible stories. In the case of everyday language (gagana o aso uma) and the language of respect (gagana Fa’aaloalo), the latter is essentially a genre analysis that promotes meta-linguistic skills. Children are engaged in the A’oga a le Faifeau in this, in a relatively more systematic way than the conventional school brainstorming exercise. Children come from different families and how they address their parents and relatives, peers and other people would vary also. This knowledge is important and children learn how to make these distinctions in their A’oga a le Faifeau education. This could not be more important in New Zealand where Samoan children rarely speak those languages outside their homes. The A’oga a le Faifeau includes the study of those ‘languages’ in its syllabus. There may be up to six different ways for example to ask the question, ‘Where are you going?’ in Samoan, depending on the status of the person one is addressing.52

For many Samoan children, the formal shaping of the possibilities of literacy begins in the home and the church. There is not just one dimension that this competence may address for a Samoan child. Whether the child is in Samoa or New Zealand, the recognition of his or her prior knowledge, skills and ‘affections’ within the school as a starting point for learning is of utmost importance. Many Samoan children are lost at this transition period because their previous learning is not often linked to their school learning. It is a period when the child is still most emotionally attached to parents, especially the mothers, and the child brings to school not only the literacy skills acquired outside school but also his or her affective and moral values. According to Wood it is also a time when “shifts in developmental tasks in the roles of teachers, students and

families and in the goals of socialization are compressed into a short period of time. The transition is potentially fraught because all children face contrasts in tasks, and for some they are marked."33 Turoa, Wolfgramm, Tanielu and McNaughton recognised this in their own study of Maori and Pasifika family literacy practices. Taking the argument further they said that under optimal conditions the refocus in socialization was associated with the rapid emergence of new forms of expertise but that in less than optimal conditions children struggle and socialisation agents had to work to provide additional supports for the new forms of learning.34 They also pointed out that despite international comparisons which show generally effective literacy instruction in the early years, beginning instruction in New Zealand is not as effective for some groups35 such as Maori and Pacific Islands children in low 'decile'36 schools.

The syllabus of the A'oga a le Faifeau includes the teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, religious and general knowledge and the Fa’a Samoa. The knowledge and the skills acquired in learning such knowledge are preschool and out-of-school educational experiences. These are important to equip the Samoan child starting school with skills that could link with school-based literacy.

The competence in Samoan literacy, acquired within the church culture provides the A'oga a le Faifeau children with literacy skills that they could transfer into learning other literacies in school.

The points of entrance at primary school are crucial for those children who bring with them literacies acquired in the home and other learning institutions such as the A'oga a le Faifeau. The most crucial point is that when these children are confronted with the tasks

36 Schools in New Zealand receive a rank from 1 to 10 according to indicators of employment and income levels of the local communities and proportions in the school of Maori children (from the indigenous culture) and Pacific Islands children (from first or later generation migrant families from Pacific Islands such as Samoa and Tonga). Decile 1 schools have high proportions of Maori children and/or high proportions of children from Pacific Islands and have communities with the lowest income and employment levels.” In Turoa et al, 2001, (Ibid), p.5.
of learning to read in school, they will have skills to bring to the process. The process involved in this transfer of skills is a complex cognitive one. Reference to this process is in order and a brief discussion ensues of how cognitive scientists and psychologists explain the process. It is significant to do this as it embodies the notion of how an A'oga a le Faifeau and Fa'a Samoa education could make connections with relatively new learning in the Palagi School.

The process involved in this transfer of skills is a complex cognitive one. This transfer process is described by McNaughton as making connections, "by building on the familiar—a kind of transfer of learning, as expertise and activities found in one setting are incorporated into another." McNaughton's theories about this connection process have significant implications for the second argument. In his book titled Meeting of the Minds, he argues, "the transfer of learning depends on the bridges that are made between the learner's existing activities, knowledge, and expertise and the activities, knowledge and expertise that are of high educational value." An important point he makes about this transfer concerns the 'probability that incorporating out-of-school knowledge and expertise in itself, might not guarantee learning those literacy and language uses, that are at the core of school curricula because those uses could be markedly different from out-of-school ones in purposes, participation structures and rules.' To solve this problem, McNaughton suggests a process that could further enhance these connections. He refers to it as a 'kind of discrimination learning,' a process by which children can come to be aware of how their out-of-school knowledge and expertise are aligned with the instructional activities that they experience at school. McNaughton also cites the example of 'recitation' as an out-of-school experience of the Pacific Island child for example, that could be incorporated into a Pacific Island child's learning in school.

McNaughton's approach is a 'problem solving' one as it responds to the literacy problems faced by children in New Zealand, and it addresses this study's major concerns about the underachievement of Samoan children. It suggests ways in which "other" relatively 'problematic' educational experiences could be made less or non-problematic by incorporating them into children's school experiences. Recitation is one of the

58 McNaughton, 2002, (Ibid), p. 28
educational experiences of children in the CCCS Pastor’s School and there are others that the research findings reveal in Chapter Seven, which may be part of these “out-of-school knowledge and expertise,” that McNaughton argues, “could be ‘aligned’ with the instructional activities that children experience at school.”

Emergent Literacy and the Pastor’s School

In his study of processes of development and transition in education, McNaughton developed a socialisation model of emergent literacy, which is a useful framework with which to conceptualise the relationship between the Pastor’s School and Fa’a Samoa, and the conventional school. The Fa’a Samoa and A’oga a le Faifeau are a part of family practices in the model. Relationships with other settings include links with the schools and government agencies like the Ministry of Education and so on. Children learn in a formal as well as a spontaneous and simultaneous manner through personal, joint and ambient activities.

Figure 1: The socialisation model of Emergent Literacy and the Pastor’s School

As I show in this thesis, the pastors and their wives as teachers select, arrange and deploy particular activities that reflect the socialisation practices of the Pastor’s School.

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59 McNaughton, 2002, (Ibid)
60 McNaughton, 1995, (Ibid), p. 20
Development and learning take place in joint, personal and ambient activities. The expertise is situated in these activities. The professional roles of the pastors and wives (the agents) and their use of particular tools, such as the A'oga a le Faifeau syllabus (the phonics and orthographic pedagogy, the bible stories, values and moral instruction, and Fa'a Samoa practices) set constraints and conditions, for what children learn and what develops which may seem discontinuous with and vastly different to other educational settings, like the conventional school educational practices. McNaughton though says that, "despite the presence of different instructional approaches, literacy and language events share commonalities across many types of schools."61

Beals'62 study of the conceptions of the development of re-appropriating schema posited by various psychologists and cognitive scientists, in particular Bartlett, a British psychologist, is also of relevance to this discussion. Bartlett characterized schema as the network of past experiences in the mind, constantly rearranging and reconstructing itself as old experiences and perspectives confront new ones. He claimed that those connections were active dynamic arrangements of the meaningful material. This material, the content of the mind he said gained new meanings as these connections were formed.63 Cognitive scientists like Mandler, Minsky and Abelson among others define schemata as "information processing concepts."64 Rumelhart another cognitive scientist defines schema as "a data structure for representing generic concepts stored in memory." Of particular significance are the four analogies below that Rumelhart used to outline the form and function of schemata.65

First, a schema is like a play having characters played by different actors following a script. This play consists of what normally happens in a particular situation from which participants can predict how others will act and can make decisions about how to act. Second, a schema is like a theory allowing for interpretation of a situation, event or text. It is a world view, a way of understanding how the world works. Third, a schema is like a

62 Beals, D E, 1997, 'Re-appropriating Schema: Conceptions of Development,' In Bartlett and Bakhtin, Mind, Culture, and Activity, Washington University, St Louis, pp. 1-41
64 Beals (Ibid) p.15
65 Rumelhart, D E, 1980, 'Schemata: The Building Blocks of cognition', In R Spiro, B Bruce & W Brewer (Eds.), Theoretical Issues in Reading Comprehension, p. 33-58
procedure or a computer program. This computer program sifts through patterns of observation to allow us to identify things we perceive. And fourth, a schema is like a parser or a device, which tells us to read and make sense of sentences or mathematical equations.66

Rumelhart’s analogies of the form and function of schemata, plus definitions of schemata by the above psychologists and cognitive scientists, have implications for the process in which Samoan children, with a literacy education acquired in the A’oga a le Faifeau and the Fa’a Samoa, make connections with the A’oga Palagi literacy. My belief is that children from the A’oga a le Faifeau have the necessary ‘schemata’, created and developed in those preschool and out of school learning experiences, that school literacy could connect with and vice versa. At entrance to school they potentially have the knowledge and skills in reading, writing and numeracy that enables them to act and make decisions about how to act when confronted with learning reading and writing in English. They have the schemata not only to do the above but also to interpret the new situation and to identify the sounds, letters, words, sentences and maths equations.

A child schooled in the A’oga a le Faifeau and the Fa’a Samoa would have a ‘mental computer’ programmed to interpret and potentially adapt to the new literacy and numeracy learning in school. This ‘computer’ (Rumelhart’s third analogy) would have the Samoan alphabet and sounds and numeracy skills for example that the child in the A’oga a le Faifeau has systematically learned. The phonetic and phonemic awareness and counting skills of this child would have been logged on to the memory of this computer (schema). Learning the English alphabet and the new maths in school is building on this knowledge. That is the most crucial ‘link point’ that McNaughton argues above as “making connections by building on the familiar,” a process he terms “incorporation”67, which Turoa et al reaffirm as a most significant educational prerogative.

The above psychologists also say that children are better able to engage and continue to engage in classroom instruction, and hence learn from classroom instruction, because

66 Rumelhart (Ibid) pp.40-41
67 McNaughton, 2002 (Ibid) pp. 26-27
they have entry skills-expertise, which is immediately functional for the activity. It is likely that children who learn in the Vasega Pi (Preschool Class) of the A'oga a le Faifeau, to count and do simple additions and subtractions (using fingers and toes) as well as learning the 2 and 3 times tables in Class I respectively, would 'latch' on quickly to learning those in English. This is because their out-of-school literacy experiences are at least to some extent continuous with their in-school educational experiences. The success of this process on the other hand depends on 'prerequisites' like the teacher's knowledge of what the new entrant's prior educational experiences are.

Bartlett on the other hand contended (quite rightly) that the process of learning is not merely a question of relating the newly presented material to old acquirements of knowledge. He said that primarily it depended upon the active bias, or special reaction tendencies that were awakened in the observer by the new material and it was these tendencies, which then set the new into relation with the old. Moreover, he argued that the formulation of schema is an active organisation of past reactions or of past experiences fundamentally linked to each other by a 'common interest' or theme or topic such as philosophy, science, art or sports. Those experiences, Bartlett said, must be regarded as constituents of living, momentary settings belonging to the organism, and not as a number of individual events somehow strung together and stored within the mechanism. He further said that both their contents and the connections in the mind are alive, shifting, growing.

Bartlett's arguments were based on the results of a study he carried out employing a method he called 'repeated reproduction' using the repeated retelling of a Native American folk story. In this method a subject was given a story or passage of argumentative prose to study. After fifteen minutes the subject was asked to reproduce the material; this reproduction was recorded. Then at varying and increasing intervals up to two years, the subject retold it again. Bartlett used a number of different passages for this method. He was looking for transformations of the text that the subjects made in their retellings. His experiments in remembering led him to believe that we do not recall

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69 Beals (Ibid) p. 33 According to Beals, Bartlett also used pictures or graphic representations in the repeated reproduction method. The results of these experiments point to similar kinds of reconstruction that he found with the stories and argumentative prose.
events as static images or movie clips but that we reconstruct past events in our minds. Bartlett also believed that the application of schema could be extended to the organization of higher psychological functions like remembering. And that what gave these psychological schema more power than biological schema was a person’s ability to “turn round upon one’s own schema”, to rework it, to reconstruct it.\(^\text{70}\)

Bartlett also referred to these schemata as “apperception\(^\text{71}\) systems.” He also argued that it was one’s culture that determined many of these “pre-formed tendencies and bias” for interpreting incoming material and reconstructing schema. He suggested that this interpretation and reconstruction in the face of cultural assumptions is not a neutral, value-free process but one that can be conflict-laden. After describing the ways in which his English subjects reinterpreted “The War of the Ghosts” (the Native American folk tale), he commented, “Before long the story tends to be robbed of all its surprising, jerky and apparently inconsequential form, and reduced to an orderly narration. It is denuded of all the elements that left the reader puzzled and uneasy.”\(^\text{72}\)

Beals posits that reconstruction can have a flattening effect on material that does not fit into already established schemata. The indigenous American ‘folk tale’ did not fit the storytelling style expected by English people hearing the story so in their recall of the story, they made the story fit conventional Western narrative form and thus the resulting stories were “robbed”, “reduced”, and “denuded” of its original style.\(^\text{73}\)

Jones’ study of Pacific Islands girls and Pakeha girls in an Auckland high school also has parallels with Beals’ argument. The economics lesson for example that Jones observed shows a reluctance by the teacher to acknowledge or make an attempt to relate the answers given by the Pacific Island girls, by using ‘everyday’ or concrete examples that the girls are familiar with.

\(^\text{70}\) Beals (Ibid)

\(^\text{71}\)Hanks, P, Long, T H, (Eds.)1985, Collins English Dictionary, William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., Glasgow, p.68 (Apperception means; conscious awareness of the act and significance of perception, focused perception especially when selective of certain sensory data)

\(^\text{72}\) Bartlett (Ibid) p. 201

\(^\text{73}\) Beals (Ibid) p. 13
As Jones argued:

The (Pacific Islands) girls' reality was ignored by the teacher in favour of her own — or at least, that contained in the curriculum. According to the curricular notion of sex role stereotyping, girls are expected to be 'dainty'. The students' conception of girls as 'fighters' and 'sluts' is not congruent with the framework, which the teacher uses.²⁴

The Dilemma of some Samoan Children in New Zealand Schools

This is the dilemma that bilingual, minority group children such as many Samoan children, also face in New Zealand. Connecting what is new with what is already known is not a simple association because the new material triggers a number of applicable schemata, all of which must be sorted and adjusted in relation to each other. McNaughton also expressed a similar concern about this issue that I reiterate here, that there is a probability that incorporating out-of-school knowledge and expertise in itself might not guarantee learning those literacy and language uses that are at the core of school curricula because those uses could be markedly different from out-of-school ones in purposes, participation structures and rules.²⁵ There has to be a 'common denominator', which could provide the necessary link in this case, but educators have to be prepared to look for it. On the other hand a mutual understanding of differences has to be fostered in the case where this is impossible.

There is also another major concern associated with this issue. While on one hand Samoan children with a background in phonetics and other literacy skills from the A'oga a le Faifeau and Fa'a Samoa may make links with Palagi School literacy, there are other important related issues that have to be addressed in order for any 'incorporation' of new knowledge. One is to do with the inflexible attitude of conventional school (Western) literacies towards incorporating out-of-school experiences of those children. This attitude has been identified in New Zealand by the Ministry of Education, who

²⁵ McNaughton, 2002, (Ibid)
reported that there was a ‘lack of responsiveness of the (New Zealand) education system to Pacific culture and values.’

Another related issue is to do with the assessment of children’s out-of-school knowledge and skills in their own respective language. School teachers for example may not be predisposed to accept ‘unconventional’ knowledge and skills, even ones of value for children’s learning. This has to do with an ‘ethnocentric’ view of assessing how ‘rational or irrational’ an educational experience or story is according to a conventional Western experience or narrative form. The tendency to ‘Westernize and conventionalize’ makes incorporation difficult of potentially valuable and relevant out of school educational experiences. I refer to this again later in the discussion.

Bartlett refers to this type of pedagogical ‘problem’ as ‘conventionalisation’ and he gives an example that takes place in L’s retelling. L transformed the wounded Indian’s thought, “Oh, they are ghosts,” a quoted pronouncement to himself, to “he thought he saw ghosts around him,” a statement that suggests that the Indian did not have his wits about him. L ‘conventionalised’ the presence of ghosts (a Native American version) to imagined presences of ghosts (an English version).77

Research on reading in New Zealand by Clay and Watson78 and Nash, Harker and Charters,79 has identified differences in reading performance for those groups whose culture differs from the dominant school culture. A study of Maori, Samoan and Pakeha children, predicted (on the basis of successful older siblings) to be high progress readers by McNaughton, Ka’ai, Chun and Taogaga,80 confirmed the significance of home literacy practices at the preschool level.
The researchers considered congruence between practices in the home and practices at school to be a significant factor in how well children handled the transition between home and school and the process of learning to read.

This research, along with that of others, according to Wagemaker suggests that the ecology of the family in association with the larger social fabric is a central component of the literacy environment and is likely to have a powerful influence on learning to read.81 Professor Nicholson, an educational psychologist at the University of Auckland, supports this saying that, children learning to read discover the link between print and meaning in different ways.82 Children could learn to read through either one, a combination of two or the combination of the following three teaching methods - phonetic, look and say, and whole language.

Research by Tabors and Snow who studied the early literacy development of young bilingual children in the USA claims that children with a strong foundation in their home language and continuing support for that language through home activities such as book reading develop skills that will transfer to learning English later.83

My study demonstrates the ways in which the Pastor’s School provides children, beginning with preschoolers, with those necessary skills in reading and writing in their own Samoan language, which could assist in their learning of another language and in school. (See Chapter Six).

Tabors and Snow found that there was a lack of assessment of those ‘out of school’ literacy skills especially to do with first language learning, and they pose a most important question about literacy development of bilingual children: “Given that there are many questions still remaining to be answered by research, what can educators do in the

meantime in developing programs for young bilingual children?” In reply to the question they gave a three-fold answer of particular relevance to the study. As they said:

First, it would clearly be useful if educators would encourage parents to maintain their first language at home and use it—if they are comfortable doing so—for literacy activities. Educators know how important early-childhood interactions are but may not understand that it is the quality of the interaction, not the language that it is carried on in, that is the critical factor. Second, educators need to find out much more about the language and literacy background of the bilingual children. Detailed language histories could reveal just what types of language exposure a child has had since birth. Asking some simple questions about home literacy experiences and the language associated with them could provide further critical information. Finally, educators need to have creative ways of assessing young bilingual children’s abilities. Knowing what a child knows—and in what language—is necessary before any informed placement or program decisions can be made. Often, however, assessment—if it occurs at all only occurs in English, providing no information about possible early literacy strengths that have been developed in the child’s first language.84

A vital point raised that I have underlined in the quote is the notion that it is the quality of the interaction, and not only the language that it is carried on in, that is the critical factor. How the children engage with language, that is how they learn it, with whom and with what perhaps is what Tabors and Snow are driving at. While the language is important, the skills, expertise, and competencies acquired in learning that language, would contribute more to children’s literacy development, as those are what they can transfer and use to assist in their learning of another language. This is why the recognition of prior learning of Samoan children is important. What these children learn in the A’oga a le Faifeau could equip them with those literacy skills and could give them a head start in school.

Although the study by Tabors and Snow is about the early literacy development of young bilingual children in the United States, it is of great relevance to what my thesis is about, in particular to my second argument. An unfortunate situation though, according to Tabors and Snow is the fact that assessment tools for young bilingual children that take into account their abilities in both languages (first language and English) are only just beginning to become available or are still being developed. They suggest that in lieu of normed tests, more informal methods could be used. They also strongly recommend that educators need to know what those skills are and how to take advantage of them, so that the process of literacy acquisition can be optimised for all young bilingual children.

84 Tabors & Snow, (Ibid), p. 175.
The situation for bilingual children in New Zealand is very similar to that in the United States. Very little has been done towards this end in New Zealand education for bilingual children such as Pacific Islanders. A few studies carried out on early literacy activities in reading and writing in minority language settings (Maori, Tongan and Samoan) revealed the varied ways in which those respective children acquire literacy skills before starting school. As far as formal assessment of those skills is concerned, extremely little has been done. A first, perhaps, is a batch of tests devised by Stuart McNaughton and carried out in 1999 and 2000, which was piloted in South Auckland primary schools at new entrance classes. As a Samoan assessor in the program, I tested Samoan children in three of those schools on alphabet and word recognition in Samoan. I believe that so far this is the only assessment available in Samoan.

With the existence of the A'oga a le Faifeau and the mushrooming growth of Samoan language nests in the last ten years, the need for those assessment tools to be in place has not been more urgent as these children are acquiring literacy skills within those language nests in a more systematic and organised learning environment at a very young age. Preschoolers in the Pastor's School concentrate on learning to read the alphabet, counting numbers 1 to 10, recite simple and short Bible verses as well as hearing stories being read and told to them. For those Pastors' School children that also attend Samoan language nests, those skills are reinforced and extended.

My study of the literacy experiences of children in the CCCS Pastors' Schools in Samoa and to a lesser extent in New Zealand demonstrates examples of ways in which a significant segment of Samoan children in Samoa and New Zealand discover the link between print and meaning. Children as young as one year old are brought to the alphabet reading class (Vasega Faitau Pi or preschool) of the Pastor's School. As well as a

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regular orthography (spelling) and phonetic writing system, story writing in Samoan, arithmetic and Samoan language are some of the compulsory subjects in the Pastor’s School.

The Pastor’s School encourages a ‘phonetic, phonemic and orthographical pedagogy’, a cog in the wheel of educational teaching and learning styles that has been examined and investigated from various (and often contradictory and controversial) theoretical approaches by educators and academics for years in their quest to improve the teaching and learning process. Despite the introduction of more advanced and supposedly better pedagogies, such as the whole language approach, there are still many children who are slipping through the system with poor literacy skills. Many of them are Samoan.

The Reasons behind my Choice of Topic

The study has eventuated for both educational and personal reasons. Four major reasons feature strongly in my choice of topic.

Firstly, I have personal interests, which emanate from my direct involvement as a former student and teacher of the A’oga a le Faifeau, and today as a teacher and coordinator of its programme in our parish, the CCCS in Grey Lynn, Auckland, New Zealand. I am a product of the A’oga a le Faifeau. I learned to read and write in the A’oga a le Faifeau in Samoan, my first language. It was in the A’oga a le Faifeau that my very first engagement with print literacy occurred. My parents who were pastors were ‘passionate’ about their A’oga a le Faifeau. Even in their early seventies, just before retirement, they were still very active teaching their A’oga a le Faifeau mostly by themselves. During his time as an elder pastor, my father strongly encouraged the younger ministers of the church to carry out their A’oga a le Faifeau tasks and duties with care and perseverance. He believed in the values of an A’oga a le Faifeau education. He used to say to the pastors, ‘Toaga e fai lau A’oga a le faifeau. O le galuega patino lava lena a le faifeau ma lona toalua. Aua le tuulafoaia i tama ma teine o le nuu.’ (Persevere with your A’oga a le Faifeau. It is the direct responsibility of the minister and his wife. Don’t leave it to the boys and girls of the village).
Secondly, as an educator I was and still am seriously concerned about the low level of literacy of Samoan children, in Samoa as well as in New Zealand schools. My concerns query the blame so often placed on the Samoan home as well as the church, in their inability to provide proper educational environments for Samoan children (who then enter school as ‘deprived’ of and ‘deficient’ in proper literacy skills). The deficit theory that continues to explain the relative underachievement of Pacific Island children in New Zealand, of which most are Samoans, is a generalization that has ‘stigmatised’ them as more or less empty vessels starting school with none (or very few) literacy skills. I elaborate on this in a later chapter. The study has given me an opportunity as a Samoan educator to write about my struggles to come to terms with why Samoan children are still plagued by poor literacy skills when teaching and learning styles and educational resources are so much more improved.

This is one important question that I am addressing in my study. Samoan children receive a rich literacy socialisation through the church and the Fa’a Samoa. While the latter have been blamed for the underachievement of Samoan children, this is only one side of the story and must not be used to shirk the blame from other factors, which may also be responsible. My review of the history of Samoan education has given impetus to my argument that the colonial or state schooling system also plays a part in instigating the problem not only in Samoa but also in New Zealand.

Evidence from the Education Review Office (ERO), points to ‘neglectful’ teaching in New Zealand schools. An overview of the recent International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) literacy survey reveals Pacific Island children as reading below average despite the IEA Survey reporting that overall New Zealand children were reading at a very high level. Jones’ study in a New Zealand high school reflects teaching and learning styles that favour Pakeha students over Pacific Islands students. The problem has been historically patterned and developed over many

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years. This historical patterning of the problem of underachievement in Samoan children is an important part of my writing.  

Thirdly, I want to acknowledge the contribution that the Samoan pastor of the CCCS has made to the education of the Samoan child. The success of European missionaries (albeit the LMS British missionaries) has been the main focus of the literature on the work of the church in Samoa. The relative peaceful conversion of the 'heathens' to Christianity and the 'civilised' ways of the European, the knowledge and skills to effect that conversion and the successful schooling of the heathens' children have been hailed largely as the Palagi missionaries' triumphs. While it was the early LMS missionaries who introduced formal education in Samoa, the Samoan pastors were 'acutely' responsible for the successful execution of the educational mission of the LMS. The relative success of this educational mission of the LMS in other Pacific Islands also can be attributed to the work of the Samoan LMS pastors who took over the role of the British LMS missionaries, for example in the Ellice Islands (Tuvalu), Niue Island, the Kiribati (Gilbert) Islands and the Tokelau Islands. They spread the gospel and introduced formal education in the Samoan language using the Samoan Bible, hymn book, the alphabet, primer book and maths book as these then had not been translated into those respective islands' languages. The repercussions of those early teachings by the Samoan pastor are still felt today especially with the older people of those societies who are still very much conversant in the Samoan language. A form of Samoan colonization perhaps? It would be an interesting topic for another PhD thesis but I make reference to it here for argument's sake. Keli Kalolo, a Tokelauan and a former colleague and fellow PhD student, alluded to this in his MA thesis.  

Fourthly, my writing provides a forum to express myself as a Samoan woman writing about a topic that is of great interest to me as an academic student. As a Samoan and Pacific Island woman, as well as a pastor's wife, I have found 'mixing' in the world of academics a major struggle. Within this academic sphere, not only are there extremely few Samoans or Pacific Islanders, but also it is quite divorced from the realities of my 'Samoaness' and my 'religiousness.' As a woman, I have found the world of academia  

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88 See Section Three where I elaborate on this.
dominated by men, Palagi men, and it can be quite intimidating and alienating at times. Being a Samoan elder pastor's wife comes with duties and responsibilities, expectations and religious beliefs, which at most times clash with my academic pursuits. In this awe-inspiring academic world though, I have found a ‘niche’ in my PhD study, where I can relate my ‘non-academic’ identities to it. As a fellow Samoan woman and colleague commented, "We (Pacific women) have learned (not only) to ‘speak’ our struggles through Western frames, (but) we seek at the same time to disrupt them."

My study in many ways synthesises my experiences in Fa'a Samoa and Fa'a Palagi settings. I am a Samoan woman with a Western education. I was socialised in a mixture of the two educational systems. The two ‘worked’ hand in hand in providing me with an education that on one hand I am fortunate to have, while on the other hand is problematic in many ways as I am sure all indigenous people experience. That is my dilemma also in the study. While I am required to think and write 'academically', I also want to weave into my writing my Fa'a Samoa learning. The constant question that plagues me is how to develop a balanced approach to my writing without losing the academic focus. It is the dilemma that confronts indigenous PhD students and academic writers. Konai Helu-Thaman, a Tongan academic found it “very painful.” Linda Mead, Maori academic and educationist found this a challenge in her own PhD study. As she stated:

To do this is to think and write differently from the way I have been trained in my academic education and to bring forward, without rejecting the 'academic', the ways I have learned to think within the Maori contexts in which I was socialised and in which I live. The effect, I think in this piece of work is that there is considerable movement, backwards, forwards and side ways. Some might refer to this as multiple positioning. I regard it as struggle or as decolonising or as being Maori.

Switching from one form of thinking to another is something that has always been problematic. Our English (subject) teachers especially in secondary school in Samoa constantly reminded us that we had to think in English. Although it is a continuous dilemma for indigenous people, on reflection it also makes learning and life interesting in many ways. It has enriched and enhanced our learning in the knowledge that achieving in

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a Western type education is a ‘double’ bonus, as it can also mean achieving in indigenous education or the Fa’a Samoa.

My writing also links the Samoan children’s education in the A’oga a le Faifeau to the historical development of their education and some of the problems encountered during this development. Although the A’oga a le Faifeau is rarely spoken or written about, it is a choice from yesteryear that was deliberately and consciously made and continues to be a very significant choice for many Samoans.

The study is focussed on an examination of the nature and significance of the A’oga a le Faifeau practices of the CCCS in Samoa and in New Zealand. It is unique in the sense that no comprehensive study of the A’oga a le Faifeau, per se, exists.

The literature reviewed for the purposes of this study includes historical as well as anthropological and ethnohistorical literary works. There is so far no direct writing by any Samoan (or anyone else) about the activities and practices of the A’oga a le Faifeau. As much as possible many a time reading between the lines I have attempted to synthesise those with my own research and views to construct a story about the A’oga a le Faifeau.

Historical sources include the unpublished primary sources and the published journals, the most notable of which is the Sulu Samoa (Samoan Torch) the official journal of the CCCS that was first published in 1839 by the LMS.

The A’oga a le Faifeau is a ‘Success’ Story

Success breeds success. The study is not about a ‘crisis’ though I am critical of some educational practices that have affected and still affect Samoan education in Samoa and New Zealand. It is a ‘success’ story that hardly anyone reads about but had forged and made early inroads into the development of formal education in Samoa, and still plays a very important role in the education of Samoan children.
The A'oga a le Faifeau provides an education that supplements and complements the Samoan child's A'oga Palagi education. It promotes their knowledge of the Samoan language and culture. It builds their spiritual and moral character. It provides background information for teachers about prior knowledge that these students bring to school. The A'oga a le Faifeau socialises children into ways of interacting with print, in some ways different from those used to interact with the school based literacy of today, and yet can be a starting point for their school learning.

Even though there is a lot of anti-church feeling because of the allegation that the church exploits people, it is unfair to generalise this way about a society that does a host of good things for its members. One such useful contribution is the role of the A'oga a le Faifeau in the education of the Samoan child, which has never been written about as having a place of its own in Samoan education.

The home culture of the Samoan child is largely influenced by his or her parents' religion. It typically revolves around the church. The church has a strong grip on the Samoan child. Church to the Samoans means more than just religion. It means a way of life, a social and family setting.

The Thesis Outline

The thesis is organized into nine chapters. The present chapter sets the 'mood' of the thesis by introducing my topic and its significance, a brief summary of the history of the A'oga a le Faifeau, and the main arguments of the thesis. Chapter Two examines the theoretical considerations of the concept of literacy, how it is defined and described, how it 'implicates' the underachievement of Samoan children in Samoa and New Zealand schools and how it might have been historically patterned and developed. Those historical practices have repercussions for Samoan education today. Chapter Three is about my indigenous education. I also critique in this chapter how some essential Fa'a Samoa literacy practices that have links with the present school literacies have been 'wiped out', namely the art of legend-telling. Chapter Four gives the historical

93 Utumapu, (Ibid), p. 27
94 Utumapu (Ibid) p.30
background of the A'oga a le Faifeau, its origins and its purposes as well as its 'attendance rolls' in Samoa and New Zealand. Chapter Five is about my research methodology. It also introduces the schools in the study. Chapter Six is a general analytical interpretation of the research data, the pastors' narratives and my observations. Chapter Seven looks at the statistics of children that attend A'oga a le Faifeau in Samoa and New Zealand. Chapter Eight documents the findings from my research, the pastors’ narratives and my observations, past and current syllabuses and samples of children’s work. The final, Chapter Nine forms the conclusion to the study. It is a recapitulation of the main arguments. It also attempts to locate the A'oga a le Faifeau where it may have relevance to the education of the Samoan child today, given that its pedagogies are under fire, because of their relative ‘outdatedness’ and their tendency to promote rote learning.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study is confined to the work of the A'oga a le Faifeau in the CCCS in Western Samoa and in New Zealand. Other denominations may have their own A'oga a le Faifeau. The Samoan Methodist Church parishes in Samoa and in New Zealand also run their own. For the purposes of this study I only deal with the A'oga a le Faifeau of the CCCS.

All Samoan words, except the word ‘Samoa’ (the country) are in bold throughout this thesis, to facilitate reading of the Samoan words and to stress the importance of my indigenous language.

The term literacy refers to the practices of (written) symbol systems or text use, reading and writing skills.
Chapter Two

Theoretical Considerations of Literacy

Introduction

A comprehensive understanding of literacy is a vital factor in any attempt to address and understand why children achieve or underachieve in schools. The differences in the educational attainments and abilities of students are differences in how competent or knowledgeable they are in school-based literacies. In the case of Samoan children, the literacies that they may be competent in may be quite different from those practised in the schools, thus they are considered 'illiterate' or poorly literate in the knowledge, values and skills of classroom instruction. Within the dominant literacies of the classroom are criteria that measure how competent and successful children are in those knowledges, skills and values. Because it takes much time and effort for some students to actively participate in those literacies, many do not successfully meet the set criteria within the set time frame. Consequently those students would underachieve.

The mismatch between Samoan children's literacies and those encouraged in the schools is a major contributing factor to the underachievement of Samoan children. This mismatch on one hand is not so much because the two cultures (Samoan and Palagi) have vastly different literacies. My argument is that the mismatch, which results in underachievement, stems partly from the relative lack of assessment by school authorities of those literacies which Samoan children take with them to school, and the authorities’ lack of consideration of the linkages between these Samoan literacies and school based ones.

On the other hand some of the literacies may be problematic (morally and behaviourally) for the school in which sense the school could be a site of resistance to counter them but these are often ‘passively’ addressed or swept under the carpet. The point about respect and passivity referred to earlier is a cultural issue that has effective educational impacts for many Samoan children if approached in a more positive way. Many Samoan children are non-English speaking background (NESB) and bilingual students in New Zealand.
schools. My study acknowledges the work done by the schools but adaptive strategies to deal with Samoan children more efficiently are still largely not in place.

The present chapter examines theoretical perspectives of literacy especially in addressing the underachievement of Samoan children in school. It responds also to my study’s second argument that there is a literacy problem in New Zealand (in the case of Samoan children) that the A'oga a le Faifeau 'literacy education' could contribute to addressing. The discussion also highlights some Fa'a Samoa practices that may link with school-based literacy. The chapter also includes an investigation into some of the underlying reasons of the problem, in particular its historical patterning.

**What Should Count as Proper Literacy?**

Literacy, according to Australian educationist Unsworth,\(^5\) is about the distribution of knowledge and power in contemporary society. He poses important questions about what should count as ‘proper’ literacy. Who gets what kinds of literate competence? Who has access to texts? Where and to what ends? Who can criticise knowledge and power? How? To what extent? These issues are significant not only for students’ lives and economic destinies but also for the overall distribution of competence and knowledge, as well as wealth and power. These questions have important implications for Samoan education.

The patterns of underachievement in Samoan education are described below as historically constructed. The discussion is guided by the above questions from Unsworth summarized into the question, ‘Education for what?’ The approach is from a historical perspective looking at the type of education that had been offered over the years and how it might have contributed to the resulting underachievement of Samoan children today, in Samoa and in New Zealand. I also examine part of the political history of Samoa, which puts in perspective some of the underlying issues, which could be the causes of Samoan children’s underachievement.

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A critical response: Defining Literacy

In response to Unsworth’s question, who can criticize? As a Samoan educator I want to say I can, while at the same time I feel ambivalent about it. I am being critical in exposing vital issues concerning how literacy is defined, of my country’s history, of critical thinking and the Fa’a Samoa, of opposing views about how minority groups learn at home and of the way Samoan education was handled in the formal colonization period from 1889 to 1961.

While the definitions of literacy are multiple, it is increasingly acknowledged that literacy is more than just the skills of reading and writing. Literacy means different things to different people. Its simple definition that most everyone knows is ‘the ability to read and write.’ The mere simplicity and the ‘briefness’ of the description and definition of literacy as such, has sparked off much controversy among educators. If defined as such, educationists like Lanksheal and Lawler say it is only a technology then, or a skill to employ the technology of print, the technology of alphabet writing. Freire describes this basic notion of literacy as basic or functional literacy, wherein the learner is not trained to participate in the learning process, but is merely a passive recipient of the knowledge he or she is fed, learning only those literacy skills deemed by the colonizers necessary to be able to function in society.

Yates agrees with Unsworth that the distinction between the definitions of literacy relate to issues of power, social reproduction, cultural differences and practices and the pedagogical processes of learning and acquiring skills. Yates further argues that in many cases, policies addressing curricula and pedagogy cannot be fully understood and appraised without considering their implications for promoting one or another form of literacy. She also summarises the various definitions of literacy below.

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Yates, B, Policy Analysis of the Adult Reading and Learning Assistance Federation, Aotearoa/NZ, Education Department, p. 3.
The relevant types to my discussion are 'functional literacy,' and 'critical literacy.' Yates describes a functionally literate person as having a command of reading skills that permit him or her to go about daily activities successfully on the job, or to move about society normally with comprehension of the usual printed expressions and messages a person encounters. She describes a person who has mastered reading as engaged in 'proper' literacy, a process in which a person can bring his or her knowledge and experience to bear on what passes before him (or her). There is meaningful learning involved because the reader understands what he (or she) is reading. The latter is encouraged and relatively categorised as conventional school literacy. The 'Freirean model' according to Yates, is 'critical' literacy, that literacy which allows us to become more fully human through our becoming ever more critically aware of one's world and be in creative control of it.99 The Freirean model is an extension of proper literacy.

Concerning 'traditional oral cultures' (including Samoa), Yates postulates that these do not fit into any definition of literacy. She adds that for these cultures, the values of the colonisers have defined what form literacy takes, and the perception has been that these cultures are without valid methods for recording and transmitting information.100 Egan, another educationist, like Yates, says that the emphasis placed by the colonisers on the written word has contributed to a lack of recognition of orality, as well as other forms of literacy as legitimate forms of communication. Egan claims that the fullest achievement of literacy requires the fullest achievement of oral capacities as well. He argues that:

If instead of viewing transition from orality to literacy as unqualified progress, we were to view it as a trade-off made for obvious functional advantages in a literate culture, then we might gain a different view of what is entailed in early education and make us more wary of displacing orality with literacy, and more sensitive to how we might preserve some of the more valuable characteristics of orality.101

Egan implies that there are oral literacies that are continuous with school-based literacies, but because the latter and their advocators are 'set in their own ways,' they do not recognize other literacies, even if of value, as legitimate. To them, there is only one legitimate form of literacy. In that sense, Street and Lankshear refer to it as 'literacy as

99 Yates, (Ibid), p.3
100 Yates, (Ibid), p.3
unitary essence,' because the only prerequisite for intellectual growth is seen to be through curricular study and school-based literacy.102

Literacy: Is Multi-Dimensional, Is Many, Is not Equal, It Varies

Yates contends that the priority and focus literacy takes rests with those who wield the power to define it. A bit like, 'beauty is in the eyes of the beholder' concept. That is, as said before, literacy means different things to different people. How people define literacy depends on their worldview and ideological and historical backgrounds. A Samoan brought up predominantly in the Fa’a Samoa may think differently from one whose education was 'steeped' in the A’oga a le Faifeau and the church, and so on.

The forms of literacy, and therefore the understanding of what literacy is, are crucial to the ways in which literacy skills are transmitted and acquired.103 Wickert defines literacy as a characteristic acquired by individuals in varying degrees from just above none to an indeterminate upper level. She claims that literacy is not a clearly definable positive-negative accomplishment because it is a relative ability and it also has many dimensions; sets of skills that people have to varying degrees. She views literacy as the application of specific skills for specific purposes in specific context and not as an isolated set of technical reading and writing skills.104

McNaughton refers to this multi-dimensional nature of literacy as variability in specific socialization activities, illustrated by a series of studies on family activities within which children’s early ways of reading and writing develop. He found that variability in early reading and writing activities both between and within groups of families, was manifested in several ways and that families in the same ethnic community carried out a variety of literacy activities, and could differ one from the other in their ways of carrying out the same activity.105

103 Yates, (Ibid) p.3

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In a study of low and middle-income families, Sigel, a psycholinguist, found a wide variety of interactional environments in which children grow up, and a broad range of cognitive and linguistic outcomes, even within a single social class. A study by Beals, another psycholinguist, of explanations occurring in low-income families of preschool children during mealtimes found that explanatory talk does occur with relative frequency within these families. Explanatory talk as a type of distancing or decontextualized talk between children and their parents is seen as having a facilitative effect on language, literacy, and cognitive ability, and that this ability to comprehend and produce explanations is crucial to a child's success in school.

The positive results of Beals' study dispute a major assumption that middle class ways of talking with children support literacy development while working class ways inhibit it. Bernstein, who backed this assumption with evidence from a study of working class families in England, specifically targeted social class differences in the style of interaction that occurred between parents and children at home. He posited that children from working class families were only exposed to restricted codes that were specific to the current physical context. He argued that language constrained what and how a child learned, forming a basis for future learning. He claimed that these codes 'are limited, stereotyped and condensed, inexact and non-specific.' On the other hand, he alleged that middle-class families, while using restricted codes in some situations also used elaborated codes in which the communication was not specific to the particular situation or context. 'Talk is more differentiated and more precise thus affording an opportunity for more complex thought.' He went on to say that children who were exposed exclusively to restricted codes were not properly equipped to handle the elaborated codes, because 'the different focusing of the experience through a restricted code creates a major problem of educability only where the school produces discontinuity between its symbolic orders, and those of the child. 'Our schools are not made for these children,' says Bernstein, 'why should these children respond?'

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109 Bernstein, (Ibid).
110 Bernstein, (Ibid).
Bernstein and Beals’ opposing studies serve as evidence of the difficulties of the study of literacy, and its meaning. Blanket assumptions ‘universalise’ working class or low-income families as having ‘poor’ literacy or major problems of educability. Elaborated codes can build on restricted codes. Bernstein’s study shows ‘successful’ middle class families also practise restricted codes in some situations. The major problem of educability in this case could perhaps lie in the failure of the conventional school to recognise this ability, limited though it may be, and the possibilities of making connections with elaborated codes in school. The process of ‘incorporation’ as advanced by McNaughton advocates this necessary connection whereby learning elaborated codes could build on familiar restricted codes.

Similarly, American psychologist Snow contends that oral language also, is not a single ability, but that different skills are developed in different contexts for different purposes. Lankshear reiterates this saying, ‘literacy is many,’ arguing that literacy should not be seen as a particular skill or technology which people may choose to use in different ways for different purposes once they have it. Literacy rather, is not a specific thing and nor is it the same for all. Lankshear argues that one thing that typical modes of reading and writing have in common is that, ‘they serve to maintain the status quo.’

This notion is illustrated by the following examples that describe the ‘unitary essence’ of literacy as seen in the way school-based literacies are limited and confined within certain strict prescribed boundaries.

Minority Groups and Literacy

The underachievement of Samoan children (whether in Samoa or New Zealand) is often explained by a ‘deficit theory’. The deficit theory, which describes educational failure in terms of the relative lack of educational resources and literacy skills in some families, is explained by New Zealand educators, Adams, Clark, O’Neill, Openshaw and Waitere-Ang, as an ‘off-shoot’ of the much debated ‘structural-functionalist and the social-

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conflict' perspectives. They critique and discuss these in relation to inequality and social stratification in New Zealand society. The structural-functionalist perspective according to Adams et al, proposes that, 'individuals are allocated to positions in society according to their ability and skills, and that once they reach the top of society, the power-elite interpretation suggests that this group may wield their power and influence to advantage themselves and their own interests.' On the other hand, they say that 'social-conflict perspectives propose that groups joust for wealth, prestige and power and when these groups get to the higher social locations in society, the political pluralist interpretation is that they 'veto' and restrain one another’s power and influence, so that no one group gains absolute dominance.' In critiquing those theories, the educators say that 'the theories can at times appear very deterministic, that is an individual’s inequality and life chances seem almost predetermined, either by their abilities and skills, or by their social location in society.' They say that criticism of these types of theories is often discussed in the literature as 'agency/structure debate' and that the debate centres on just how much individual freedom we have over our own inequality, social stratification and general place in society. They ask these important questions: Are we ‘captured’ by internal biological or external social structures of power and domination, so that we really have little or no choice over our own lives, or do we have ‘agency’? To what extent can we freely choose our paths in life and rise above or challenge our inequality if necessary?” The authors ask that we should look critically at New Zealand society and its stratification and at who really wields the power and for what reasons.

The educators above pose important questions especially in relation to the ongoing nature-nurture debate. One side of the debate argues that intelligence is inherited and another side posits that intelligence is there and can be nurtured and developed to its full potential given the right educational stimuli. This debate also relates to the reification of the process of critical thought as absent in some people and present in others. I elaborate on this in the next chapter. The ‘nature’ theory is based on a limited view of the potential in every human. It is a socially constructed theory that has been and still is explaining NESB children’s underachievement in school. It is a traditional belief that is still held by many people and which could be responsible for the lack of any real effort to help

114 Adams et al, (Ibid).
115 Adams et al,(Ibid).
minority groups and NESB children. The classic historical example of this in New Zealand is the limited education given to Maori, confining the boys for instance to learning manual rather than mental skills.\textsuperscript{117} It was also the reason why the introduction of better and higher education was stalled in Western Samoa until nine years before independence (after 64 years of formal colonisation from 1889 to 1953).

Related to this notion is the allegation by Rutherford, the New Zealand Superintendent of Schools in 1936 (in Samoa), that one of the disappointments in the work of education in Samoa was the lack, after 100 years of Christianity, of any outstanding men. He said that 'the Fa'a Samoa may have a lot to do with this.'\textsuperscript{118} This is an illustration of how deterministic the deficit theory (referred to earlier) is in 'hierarchicalising' people into those who are thought to be naturally, educable and not educable, have and have not, or high and lowly and so on. Rutherford implied that the Fa'a Samoa was a hindrance to Samoan education.

These notions are further exemplified in the following examples, which provide 'international evidence' that supports the need for conventional schools to be more responsive to 'other' literacies.

A British study of typical modes of reading and writing in the teaching of English to minority groups in England is a clear example of deliberate assimilation and disregard for 'other' literacies such as those of immigrant cultures in England. According to Gundara, Jones and Kimberley,\textsuperscript{119} "(those typical modes) serve as a metaphor for a policy of enforced cultural assimilation, an official gentling of the masses by way of induction into a culture of civilization, accompanied by the educational and political entry of the working classes into citizenship within a nation. This, dovetailed with the view expressed by a large proportion of heads and teachers, that the desire of minority groups to hold on to their respective 'immigrant cultures,' was evidence of a 'ghetto mentality.' The ghetto

\textsuperscript{117} Simon, J, 1992, 'State Schooling for Maori: The Control of Access to Knowledge,' Paper presented at the AARE/NZARE Joint Conference, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia, 22-26 November. P. 9

\textsuperscript{118} Keesing, F, 1942, South Seas in the Modern World, Henderson & Spalding, London, p. 6

mentality was seen as an educational hindrance that required vigilant exclusion from the culture of the school."

The ghetto mentality of NESB children in England is analogous to the street corner knowledge of the Portuguese Catholic students in Toronto, of Giroux’s ethnographic study. He says street knowledge is epistemologically different from traditional conceptions of school knowledge. For the Italian and Portuguese students in his study, knowledge acquired in the streets was “lived” and mediated through discursive alignments and affective ideological investments not found in school. According to Giroux, “Knowledge in this instance is not something to be ‘understood;’ it is always, understood or not, felt and responded to somatically (relating to the body), that is in its corporeal (of the nature of the physical body, material, not spiritual) materiality.”

The children in these studies of minority cultures reacted and responded more readily to what they saw and felt; things which were more immediate and concrete, and were lived and personalised in their daily lives, rather than those that were more abstract and ‘impersonal’ as they experienced in the school. This more emotive attitude became a hindrance to their learning in school because classroom instruction had been designed to serve and to conserve a mono-literacy - a singular, monolithic and relatively non-affective mode of learning. Those children’s experiences did not fit into such a rigid mode of learning. As Boler, an historian and educationist says, “the role of schools is not to alter social inequities but to adapt the individuals to the existing system (because) the educational aim is not to challenge the fundamental social structures.”

123 This also further explains literacy as unitary essence as advocated by Lankshear as referred to earlier on in the chapter.
It is worth noting here what Boler says about emotional literacy:

Almost anyone who has spent time in a classroom can attest that the felt and expressed emotions, and the emotional dynamics of groups, shape the project of learning and the classroom environment. Yet how often do educators and cultural theorists ask: How do emotions define what counts as knowledge? How do emotions inform our ethical values and actions? How are social hierarchies established through unspoken emotional rules, and injustices perpetuated through unexamined rules of emotional expression? The phenomenon of the ignorance of emotion and the unpopularity of this subject is worthy of its own study.... The fact that educational studies rarely address emotions systematically, and even more rarely emotions contextualised by power relations, reflects neglect across academic disciplines.

What Boler says, reflects on the reluctance of educational institutions such as those in the studies in England and Toronto to accept, let alone address, other knowledge or literacies students bring to school. For one, the knowledge is problematic. Secondly it is emotionally charged. The emphasis of school-based literacy is to develop ‘academics.’ There is ‘no room in the (educational) inn’ for emotional ‘things.’

The school site could provide problem solving opportunities for those students which would open doors to more positive learning as their needs for safety, security, self-esteem and self-actualisation are being fulfilled. Educators need not be reminded that all human beings have physical, psychological and emotional needs, and that all those needs must be met successfully in order for a child to learn effectively and efficiently. Schools in general, pay lip service to those needs because school-based literacy prioritises intellectual growth through curricular study and that discounts emotional growth. The children in the above examples are expected to leave those other literacies at home as they get in the way of school-based literacies.

The examples suggest the reluctance of classroom instruction to recognize other forms of literacies or ‘knowledges’ especially those that minority group children bring to school. Giroux refers to classroom knowledge as more formally differentiated, but because such knowledge was not a lived engagement it remained distant, isolated, abstract. Students chose not to invest affectively in this kind of knowledge. It was knowledge that had become safely insulated from the “tainted” production of desire, a knowledge that had been congruent with the discourse of the ‘Other’. Giroux argues that classroom

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instruction must be understood within a reformulated theory of ideology that problematizes the classroom as a gathering point for the construction of Otherness in which racial, class and gender determinations are tightly woven.\textsuperscript{126}

**Literacy is not Equal, it is not the same for all; a paradoxical statement**

This statement is paradoxical in the sense that, on one hand it denotes schooling as a benevolent and noble cause that should be executed for the good of all. It has significant educational implications. Its fulfilment would create survival strategies for other students whose literacies would not fit into the 'one size fits all' literacy practices in school. In theory, if put into practice in the classroom, it should cater for individual differences in students and thus would serve the interests of all types of students. On the other hand, this is not the reality in school. Literacy assessment still tends to be the same for all. Adherence to a relatively 'set' curriculum rules the day.

**Closer to Home: The Maori and Samoa Examples**

The following discussion focuses on what I see as relatively less problematic literacies and experience than those discussed above. The colonizers also saw Maori and Samoan 'out of school' experiences as interfering with their 'in-school' learning. By comparison with the above examples, Maori and Samoan 'home' knowledges are seen as much less problematic and threatening. Yet because of their mere status of 'otherness' their literacies have often been discounted as irrelevant. As Maori educators Hohepa and Jenkins postulated:

> These forms of literacy did not fall within the scope and range of their (Western) print tradition which was indeed used as a measuring rod for judging how 'civilised' and literate society might be; these other societies are branded as 'primitive and uncivilised' because their pictorial representations, carving, hieroglyphics are not equated to Western alphabetical system. Therefore they are not valued as a legitimate way of communication.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{126} Giroux, (Ibid), p.47

The reification of the subordinate status of colonised people in relation to the Palagi as naturally superior implies that their destiny, their place in society would always be as the underdog in those power relations. The colonizers' (the dominant classes) culture, values and language inculcated in school would naturally exclude other literacies.

Judith Simon, a New Zealand educationist and Maori education researcher, in writing about Maori education in New Zealand endorses those issues as also true of the type of education historically offered to Maori. She reports Taylor, a New Zealand government official, as having said of Maori schooling in the late 1800s:

I do not advocate for the Natives under present circumstances a refined education or high mental culture. It would be inconsistent if we take account of the position they are likely to hold for many years to come in the local scale, and inappropriate if we remember that they are better calculated by nature to get their living by manual than by mental labour. 128

In support of this view for Maori education, Bird, a school inspector of Maori schools said that, "it would be better and of greater use to the Maori boy to know the principles and practices of agriculture than the declension of Latin nouns and verbs." Higher education was considered too superior and would be wasted on Maori boys who would only be farm workers as nature had destined them to be. 129

The school as a state apparatus, according to Poulantzas, supports the reproduction of the notion of the division of manual and mental labour as 'natural' and by serving as complex filters for sorting students for places within the hierarchy of the market. It does this through organizational processes such as streaming where children are grouped according to their perceived natural abilities or achievement levels and then channelled into 'appropriate' curriculum areas. In this way 'knowledge power' remains the preserve of the dominant classes. 130

The situation for other minority groups such as Pacific Islands students in New Zealand has been patterned similarly. Only in recent years have any attempts been made to

consider the importance of those out-of-school experiences ‘lived’ by these groups. The initiative has come largely from the minority groups themselves, whose traditional literacies have been seen as interfering with their respective children’s learning in schools.

In the case of Samoan education, these notions go right back to when formal education was first introduced in Samoa and more so during the formal colonization period from 1899 to 1961. The London Missionary Society who introduced formal education in Samoa, at first did not use ‘traditional’ Samoan examples and stories, and merely translated English stories into Samoan for the Pastors’ Schools. Good examples of the ignoring of local knowledge include the Alphabet Chart used by the Pastor’s School Preschool Class (Vasega Faitau Pi), the First Alphabet Reader (Tusi Pi Muamua) used by Class 1 and the Samoan Primer (Tusi a Tamaiti) used by Classes 2 and 3. The pictures of the basket for A-Ato, elephant for E-Elefane, watch for U-Ua6, car for T-Taavale or rabbit for R-Rapiti would have been quite unfamiliar and strange a hundred and fifty years ago, as they were not found in Samoa then. The elephant and rabbit are still relatively foreign to many Samoan children. The stories in the Primer are all about English children. The Alphabet Chart (Pi Tautau) has been revised with more up to date and Samoan examples used. The picture of the Samoan basket for example is used for Ato (basket) instead of the cane basket as the LMS missionaries originally put there. The First Alphabet Reader (Tusi Pi Muamua) and the Samoan Primer have remained the same and are still very useful because they have the right spelling and the use of punctuation marks (macrons and commas in particular).

Nevertheless, despite their use of English imagery, the missionaries were instrumental in the teaching and subsequently the promotion and maintenance of the Samoan language. Even though their agenda in using the Samoan language as the medium for their teaching was to effect a more rapid spread of the Gospel and ‘civilised’ ways, it was one of the greatest things the missionaries did because the move also facilitated the learning of the Samoan language and the Fa'a Samoa. The teaching of Samoan language cannot be complete without the language of respect so it has become an important part of the A'oga a le Faifeau curriculum.
Family Background and School Achievement

Sociologists of education like Jones and Lankshear recognize the pattemed relationships between family background and school achievement. That is, sociological investigations show consistent relations between poor school results and students' working class backgrounds on the one hand, and between superior school achievement and privileged class background on the other. Out of this recognition was born the notion that equality of educational opportunity did not exist.

The crucial question is how can a working class student improve if only a limited type of education is provided for him or her? To illustrate and to further clarify this point, Lankshear and Lawler compare two examples, one a historical example, and the other a local (New Zealand) and contemporary one. The historical example is that of Hannah More's work with children of coalminers in England during the late eighteenth century. She ran Sunday schools in which the children were taught religious doctrine and proper forms of behaviour. According to More, the social order was 'beautiful when each (person) according to their place pays willing honour to their superiors, when high, low, rich and poor sit down satisfied with their own place. This was where religious doctrine came in because it taught that the existing social order was God's will and plan.'

More was only teaching a minimal form of reading. There was no writing. She taught an approach to reading whereby children could absorb ideas, not question or challenge them. According to Lankshear, these children were not simply learning the mechanics or the skills of reading. They were also being introduced to a definite view about what they should be reading, why they should be reading it, and how they should read. The poor were being socialised into a view and practice of reading which More saw as appropriate to their social rank; one, which would keep them not only on the straight and narrow but passive and accepting.

131 Jones, A, 1987 (Ibid)
132 Lankshear (Ibid)
134 Lankshear, (Ibid).
More’s approach contrasted dramatically with that of radical working class organizations, which taught reading and established study groups, based on material designed to actively encourage working people to understand and reject the social order, and as far as possible, to organise struggle against it. The ideas and practices of reading promoted by Hannah More and by radical worker groups were the exact opposite of each other. Lankshear argues that these literacies were not so much different uses of the same skill or technology. They were completely different literacies, which had quite different implications for how people responded to their world and whether or not they would passively accept their lot. Lankshear and Lawler saw this restricted literacy as a tool to guard against a critical literacy that might in turn encourage questioning of social practices and arrangements of the values of the hegemony sought by ruling interests.

The contemporary example, a local New Zealand one, is that of Alison Jones’ study, also cited in the previous chapter (See p. 28), in an Auckland Girls school. Jones observed the classroom practices of two streams within a single form year. One was a top stream class made up mainly of white middle class students. The other was a lower stream class, made up mainly of Pacific Island working class students. The two streams had quite different views of what was involved in classroom reading and writing.

The lower stream students brought to school with them certain ideas about the role of the teacher and what it meant to learn school knowledge, a view that the teachers themselves reinforced through their teaching approaches. For them, the teacher was the source of the knowledge they needed to pass their exams. They concentrated on copying down the teachers’ words- ‘getting the notes’ - and memorising them later for tests and exams. They had no conception of grasping underlying principles, abstracting from general to particular (and vice versa) ordering and expressing ideas and using reading and writing for those purposes. Consequently, they failed to read and write in these ways.

The top stream class had quite a different view of what school-based reading and writing was for. For them, syllabus content was to be thought about and organised into arguments. The teacher was seen as a resource, along with books and other sources of

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information. They saw school literacy as involving much more than just copying down the teachers’ notes or absorbing information for regurgitating later. It was to provide them with material to operate on intellectually, as well as the medium for expressing their intellectual work.

The common goal for these students was to pass School Certificate. Unfortunately only one of the literacies Jones describes was appropriate for passing. The literacy of the top stream class was more adequate than that of the lower stream, whose literacy was inappropriate because School Certificate assesses as valuable only the literacy taught to the top stream; it does not simply reward memorised notes.

These examples are relevant to my discussion below of Samoan education and the underlying reasons behind the problems of underachievement or illiteracy. Jones’ study especially is of direct relevance, as not only is it about Pacific Island girls but it happened in New Zealand. In particular, the study exemplifies some of the reasons why so many Samoan children underachieve in school.

Implications of the Study for Education

Jones’ study provides concrete and ‘transitional’ evidence to what I term as the ‘cumulative disadvantage syndrome’ (cds) in the case of the Pacific Islands students in the study. It is not something that these girls only just acquired when they entered secondary school. Rather, they have been allowed to transit from class to class and from school to school, carrying ‘educational disadvantage baggage’. They were disadvantaged because their literacies were relatively inadequate for and were not being practised in the school. The Pacific Island girls demonstrated a general lack of a sense of depth in meaning or any critical discourse in their responses to the teachers’ questions. Although their literacies could have provided a basic foundation for critical literacy, it was not developed. It should have been nurtured and developed right from when they first started school.

136 I also find very close similarities in the way these girls learned to how I did back in the 1960s.
Fondness for school learning and study is presumed to depend on the early encounters with the school. The early formative years of any child are vital and extremely important years in his or her education. Ten or so years of a cumulative process of educational deficits spell failure for those students. It is not surprising then that they are underachieving. The problem has become an attitudinal one at this late stage of the girls’ education because they have internalised the school-based practices as beyond them. The study implies that the girls were ‘ignored’ throughout their schooling, as teachers directed their teaching to more verbal students and those who would live up to the teachers’ expectations. The girls’ answers were also largely ignored. The teachers instead gave the right answers. As Jones says:

The ongoing interactions in the classroom produce and confirm the girls’ common-sense belief that ‘I as a student do not know. She as teacher knows.”

The girls believed that it was the teacher’s role to provide the necessary information. When Jones asked one of the girls why everyone ‘shuts up’ when the teacher wanted them to say something, she said, ‘what’s the point? Waste of time.’ According to Jones, “indeed, if it is only the teacher’s knowledge which is valuable, the girls’ knowledge becomes irrelevant by definition, and its expression (quite logically) a waste of time.”

Walberg says that the way in which teachers structure learning goals, determines how students interact with each other and with the teacher. He reaffirms that it is those interaction patterns that determine the cognitive and affective outcomes of instruction. The girls’ teachers obviously structured learning goals with middle class Pakeha students in mind. They demonstrate a much more interactive pattern with the Pakeha girls and a more restricted one with the Pacific Islands girls.

In summary

The examples demonstrate several typical characteristics of school-based literacy that contribute to the underachievement of NESB (or working class) children. First, school-

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137 Jones (Ibid) p.126
138 Jones (Ibid) p.80
based literacy is designed (either consciously or unconsciously) to fail some children because it is designed for a specific group of children thus maintaining the status quo in education. According to Jones, "the net effect of schooling is that it tends to confer success and privilege on those pupils who are already advantaged within society and denies it to most of those who are not." The economics lesson for example that she observed shows a reluctance by the teacher to acknowledge or make an attempt to relate the answers given by the Pacific Island girls, by using 'everyday' or concrete examples that the girls are familiar with.

Second, the idea behind the provision of a limited education is to maintain inequalities of power and privilege where the minority group is disadvantaged, an extension of the dominant class hegemony. This is clearly the case in More’s teaching where the working class children’s education was limited to reading only but not writing. Even their reading was confined to what More decided was adequate for their needs. In Jones’ study, the knowledge taught was limited to by the teachers’ engagement in what they thought were appropriate pedagogies for working class Pacific Island girls.

Third, ‘other’ literacies do not fall within the scope and range of the dominant class literacies, ‘reified’ as superior to all other knowledges. Jones argued that in some instances the teacher ignored the Pacific Islands girls’ knowledge because it did not fit into the teacher’s own or the set curriculum, which for instance examined the idea of sex role stereotyping.

Fourth, streaming classes into top and lower streams is a function of a meritocratic process that rewards only the top stream students who of course would succeed with the minimum effort, as the school literacy is designed with their values in mind.

Fifth and finally, the school reproduces the notion of manual and mental labour as 'natural’ by ‘hierarchicalising’ students into those that are better calculated by nature to get their living by mental labour (at the top of the pecking order) and those by mental

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140 Jones (Ibid) p. 13
labour (at the bottom). In this way, ‘knowledge power’ remains the preserve of the dominant classes. Children are channelled into ‘appropriate curriculum areas’ with top order students doing more academic work and the bottom order students doing mainly practical oriented subjects.

The school reproduces the social organization of production (work) by selecting individuals and providing them with differential access to the hierarchy of occupations. Schooling and work are contexts within which men and women, Maori, Pakeha and Pacific Island Polynesians are assigned to segments within society.\(^{142}\)

Those five points make up part of the formula for underachievement or the conditions that are conducive to failing some children, like Pacific Islanders and those minority groups whose literacies do not match with school-based ones. The continuing underachievement of Samoan children in schools in Samoa and New Zealand can be explained by those historically patterned practices. The upward mobility of minority persons in the social and economic hierarchy can only be achieved with the breaking of this cycle.

The out of school educational experiences of those children have to be considered and assessed for what they are worth. Relevant experiences and skills must be properly linked with school literacies. On the other hand, where out-of-school literacies are problematic, the school can become a site of resistance for counter action. Underachieving parents are relatively poor and would pass on their disadvantages to their children so the cycle would go on and on until the seemingly unbreakable cycle does break, and it can with changes made as (some) suggested above.

A study like Jones’, as referred to before, of the Samoan education system would be interesting - that is - one considering the internal ‘inequalities’ or the ways it distributes rewards and on what basis.

**Why revisit the past?**

The underachievement of Samoan children in schools today is an inheritance from the past. We cannot fully understand the present without consulting the past in order to

\(^{142}\)Jones, *(Ibid)*, p. 13
understand the present that will in turn inform the future. Some very important messages about the literacy skills and education of Samoan children can be gleaned from this past. As Jones pointed out, there is a need to look at the ‘world already made’ as knowing the already made world is the beginning to the understanding of the world in the making and the world that will be made. It would be ‘cultural suicide’ if we wipe the slate clean and start afresh.

The Problem in Samoa

The most recent policy document put out by the Western Samoa education department in 1994 highlighted problems in practically all aspects of education from its top management to its primary schools. The document reported the Department of Education as generally perceived to be ineffective and inefficient in its management and there was a deficient educational management information system. It was reported that in the Samoan primary schools, facilities were generally poor with equipment either non-existent or run down and curricula materials and textbooks particularly those written in Samoan were not readily available. There was an over-reliance on rote learning methods and a general lack of creativity plus extremes in class sizes of 70-80 in the Malifa Compound in Apia. There was also a high rate of attrition of teachers and principals.

An issue of the Samoa Observer newspaper in 1995 reported Western Samoa as one of two Pacific nations with the lowest literacy rate, according to a literacy survey carried out on Samoan primary school children. The following is an excerpt from that report.

In 1992, a UNDP funded survey reported that Western Samoa and Kiribati were the two Pacific countries, which had the highest rate of illiteracy among primary school children. Early this year (1995) a similar survey reported a similar result. Many children have difficulties in reading and writing comprehensively in Samoan and English. Several factors can be attributed to this; the lack of material resources, textbooks, qualified teachers, compounded by the absolute absence of parents’ assistance in the teaching of their own children.

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145 Sa’e, L, 1995, 'Education and Literacy,' In The Samoa Observer, May 9, pp. 1-23.
The results reported illiteracy in both English and Samoan. For a people that could boast a high literacy rate (over 80%) in 1920, it is a very sad situation indeed. This high level of literacy displayed by the Samoans in 1920 was a direct result of the work of the church schools including the CCCS A’oga a le Faifeau, attended by most Samoan children up to 1920.146

The Historical Patterning of Illiteracy and Underachievement

There are causes and reasons that explain why things happen just as the Samoan proverb in Chapter Three expresses. The term ‘diminishing level of literacy’ could be used to explain the notion that the ability to read and write that was there, has increasingly diminished to a disability and an inability. The term denotes that literacy levels had been decreasing over time and continued unchecked. Polarised reasons have explained this problem but the more common one has pointed to the inability of the Samoan home and Samoan race as largely responsible. These become more explicit in the historical background of Samoan education that follows which refers to how the New Zealand administration stalled the introduction of higher education in Samoa. Putting the whole onus on the Samoan race plus its ‘reification’ as the cause of underachievement, is only but an obnoxious and racist belief that had over many years, put on hold any real improvement in the education of Samoan people. The repercussions of those policies are being felt today. All those years of suppression cannot just be peeled away in a matter of a few years.

The literature on the history of Samoan education especially during the formal colonization period, from 1899 up to independence in 1962, portrays a rather troubled and unstable system of education in the islands. I am offering here some insights and interpretations into the historical patterning of the underachievement of Samoan children today. I have said before that the process of illiteracy is cyclical and that if left unchecked, underachieving parents would pass on their disadvantages to their children. In the same way poorly trained and ‘uninformed’ teachers would also pass on their disadvantages to the children they teach.

Mission Education

The arrival of the LMS missionaries in Samoa (also briefly referred to in Chapter One), marked the beginning of a serious effort at the introduction of a type of education that was not only new, but in many ways was the opposite to the traditional education of the Samoans - an oral versus a print literacy. Not only were large numbers of Samoans converted to Christianity, they were also taught how to read and write because the bible had to be read and written about, which would aid their understanding of Christian teachings. In addition to reading and writing skills, what was included was based on what aided the civilization of the Samoans. Girls learned sewing, embroidery, English etiquette and so on. The boys learned the skills of carpentry and agriculture. These were the aims of the LMS. As John Williams the pioneer missionary of the LMS in Samoa said:

Through the conversion of the heathens and the education of the natives, the experience of a few more years will demonstrate the fact that the missionary enterprise is incomparably the most effective machinery that has ever been brought to operate upon the social, the civil, and the commercial as well as the moral and spiritual interests of mankind... The blessings conveyed to the Samoans by Christianity had not been simply of a spiritual nature but that civilization and commerce had invariably followed in her train.  

The aims of the LMS missionaries were successfully carried out. They established schools in the villages under the direct control of the pastors in each village. These were the A'oga a le Faifeau or Pastors' Schools. Basically, a primary education was given, but it provided the much-needed educational opportunities for Samoan children. As Burton said:

Except for Christian missions the vast mass of the (South Pacific) people would have been wholly illiterate.  

The education received by the Samoans under the missionaries could be categorized generally as functional literacy, a form of literacy referred to before as having the knowledge of reading and writing, which allows a person to carry out daily tasks competently with a good understanding of the usual printed material and messages.  

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149 Yates, (Ibid), p.3
This functional education provided the Samoan children with the foundations and preparation for higher learning. The LMS started a training school in 1844, to train Samoan pastors not only to evangelize but also to teach the print literacy. They also started a boarding school for girls at Papauta, supposedly to provide wives for the pastors, as well as preparatory schools to feed the training school. Other missions that came not long after the LMS, notably the Methodists and Catholics, also set up their own schools and started their own respective A'oga a le Faifeau.

Maintaining the Status Quo in Samoan Education

German Samoa

When formal colonization began with the takeover by Germany of Western Samoa in 1889, the LMS church as well as other missions had established a well organised primary education system in Samoa. On observing this, Dr Solf, the first German administrator, decided to leave the schooling of the Samoans to the British missionaries, and over the fifteen years (1889-1914) of German colonization, education was left largely in the hands of the missionaries. Solf saw mission education as adequate for the Samoans' needs and as he said:

The object in view is not to turn natives into Europeans. Our aim can only be to introduce a higher-grade native civilization.

The Germans showed very little interest in educating the Samoans. The maintenance of the status quo in education by the provision of a limited education to primary schooling offered by the missions was, according to Meleisea:

A tool deliberately used by Solf to maintain the relationship in which Samoans were inferior to the superior and dominant European.

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150 It was then called the Samoan Mission Seminary. It later changed name to what is now the Malua Theological College.
151 Keesing (Ibid) p. 82
152 Meleisea, M, 1987, Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa, University of the South Pacific, Suva, p.177.
Although the Samoans were perceived to be improvable, the aim was to maintain inequalities of power and privilege in which the Samoans were disadvantaged.

Despite Soll's professed admiration for the Samoans he still regarded them as inferior and as possessing inherently different characteristics from Europeans. His racial views were characteristic of the time, even for a man of his culture and education.\(^{133}\)

The Germans set up a school in *Apia* for their own people and the children of their local marriages, where the German language was the main subject of instruction. Another school was also set up for the sons of more important Samoan leaders. This segregation had been an old bone of contention between the Samoans and the *Palagi* and *Afakasi* (half-castes) ever since the German days. They were elitist schools that offered the best education in the country because they were much more richly endowed in resources, teachers and educational facilities than the *Malifa* and village schools.\(^{134}\) This is still the case today. The withdrawal of formal colonisation had hailed the beginning of a new form, 'neo-colonialism.' The *Malifa* schools are still the best equipped compared to the schools in the rural areas. Rural parents that could afford to send their children to the *Malifa* schools do not help the situation in the rural areas.

**New Zealand Samoa**

In August 1914, the New Zealand Expeditionary Force landed in Samoa to protect the territory while the First World War was being fought. In 1915, the Superintendent of New Zealand Schools, E W Beaglehole was sent to Samoa to look into Samoan education. He set up a school in *Malifa (Apia)*, to accommodate 60 pupils, and hundreds turned up for admission. Since the school was supposed to cater for the whole population of *Apia*, selection of the fortunate few was not an easy task, but it was finally opened on April 1916, with 60 selected pupils.\(^{135}\)

The administration soon realised that it could not undertake the whole responsibility for education and a temporary grant of 500 pounds was made to the Missions for their...


\(^{135}\) Ross, (Ibid), p. 291
educational work. Apart from the delayed establishment and expansion of a government schooling system, it took some time to hammer out an education policy. A New Zealand Standard Four equivalent was agreed upon despite serious criticism and strong demands for educational opportunities especially for secondary schooling.\textsuperscript{156}

Often the administrators did not agree on a common theory of action, and the system stagnated for years and drifted on in leisurely fashion. According to Irwin a New Zealand teacher who taught in Samoa:

In those days, every officer seconded to the education department started off from scratch. Nobody was much interested in what his predecessor had done. Everybody arrived with brand new ideas of his own. It was no wonder there was no continuity of education policy, school organization or teaching methods and no wonder the Samoans sat back to see what was going to happen every time a new European teacher arrived.\textsuperscript{157}

In 1926, the conference held in Wellington to discuss the educational welfare of the island peoples produced some effect on education and was the last real attempt to find some basis for cooperation until the 1945 visit of Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser and Dr Beeby.\textsuperscript{158}

Ross reported that for many years no text books in the Samoan language existed. Thus, until 1948, no printed vernacular literature was available regularly in the schools. The LMS had printed translations of ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ and the ‘Bottle Imp’ by Robert Louis Stevenson, but apart from these, only religious literature had been produced in any large quantity. Buildings in the 1920s and 1930s were entirely of the fale type with open sides and thatched roofs. There were no facilities for teaching aids and children sat on mats covering pebbles. Desks were practically unknown, and children developed a curious method of writing to suit a prone position. Teachers worked under insurmountable difficulties. The local teachers themselves had very little basic training; they tried to teach English but knew practically none themselves. It was some years before a training school was started and most of the teachers learned to teach mainly by understudying others, and thereby perpetuating their mistakes.\textsuperscript{159} I referred earlier to this

\textsuperscript{156} Ross, (Ibid)
\textsuperscript{157} Irwin, G, 1965, Samoa: A Teacher’s Tale, Cassel & Company Ltd., London
\textsuperscript{158} Ross, (Ibid) p. 292
\textsuperscript{159} Ross, (Ibid) p. 293
'cumulative disadvantage syndrome' where not only are literacy deficits accumulated but its cycle continues to be repeated over and over again through generations of Samoans.

The Debate Begins: What should the curriculum emphasise?

While educational administrators were busy attending to their political debates, the Samoan pastors under the guidance of the missionaries carried on with their A'oga a le Faifeau doing their best with the resources available.

The Fa'a Samoa as well as the Samoan language came under fire as they were regarded as impediments to the advancement of education. Bird, a retired Inspector of Maori schools for example, described the Samoan language as lacking the ability to develop the Samoan's intellect. As he said:

> The Samoan requires to be taught self-reliance, industry and initiative, his intellectual powers are acknowledged to be capable of much, but they cannot be developed from a primitive language whose idiom is a product of conditions fast disappearing and which is inapplicable to the condition which the entry of European civilization has produced.

Bird, though, espoused one theory and actioned another. He recommended that the Samoan language must remain the medium of instruction, and he did not press for the use of English as a medium. He claimed that:

> The territory's New Zealand-controlled administrative structure was so modest that there was no place for Samoans in it. Education should encourage the Samoans to live as Samoans in the village environment. Mission education was quite adequate for the very simple educational requirements of the majority of the Samoan children.

There is much irony and contradiction in the way some of those statements were made. The continuous refusal of the demands by the Samoans for higher education was a political decision, the discourse that serves desire and power. It had the function of maintaining the status quo in Samoan education.

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161 Barrington, (Ibid)
162 Barrington, (Ibid)
It is very difficult to come to terms with the fact that a people who have had, for 100 years, a basic primary education in the vernacular over and over again many times, would not be ready for an intermediate education at least. The old adage that ‘history repeats itself’ can certainly be applied to Samoan education. Poorly trained Samoan teachers did the best they could while the New Zealand administrators debated as to what would be the most appropriate education agenda for the territory. The demands for better, higher education and the teaching of English were met with reluctance because of the lack of suitably qualified teachers, the vast expense involved, plus the belief that most people were not yet ready for tuition in even the fundamentals of a Western style education.163

When Richardson, an army colonel, became the New Zealand administrator in Samoa in 1923, education up to Standard Two level remained the responsibility of the missions in the Grade 1 (Infant or Primer classes) village A’oga a le Faifeau, and up to Standard Four level in the Grade 2 (Standard 1 to 4 classes) district schools under government supervision. Three Grade 3 (Standard 5 and 6) boarding schools under government control and various mission schools provided education up to the New Zealand Standard Six or proficiency examination.

New Zealand administrators continually thwarted the demands for better and higher education. Maiai, a Samoan educator, as well as historian Boyd and anthropologist Keesing all alluded to this lack of interest by New Zealand to ‘better’ the education of Samoans. The administrators favoured a policy of educating the Samoans to become good citizens, but not too much in advance of their surroundings and social conditions.164

It was generally agreed that New Zealand education was too literary and that it was undesirable to Europeanise and over-educate the Samoans, and to extend the teaching of English. The aim was to train a hard-core of Samoan teachers locally through the probationer assistant method and employ them under the direction of a New Zealand superintendent and one or two New Zealand assistants. According to Boyd, “in terms of

163 Barrington, (Ibid), p. 20
present-day thinking, this policy was ill-fitted to promote Samoan economic, social and political advancement." In the 1920s however, as she observed, it seemed a healthy reaction against the assimilative tendencies, which had achieved so little in Maori education for almost a century.\(^{165}\) Partly because of this allegation Richardson proposed:

> Education should be harmonized with the future needs of Samoa, not to educate them to become Europeans in outlook, but to make them better Samoans. It would be both politically and socially dangerous for the Samoan child. Such a system would over-educate them thereby disturbing their social conditions and so causing unrest.\(^{166}\)

The whole idea was to maintain inequalities of power and privilege in which the Samoans were disadvantaged. More (referred to earlier) kept her British working class Sunday school children in the same sort of inferior position by limiting their education to reading without any writing. In both cases, the Samoans and More's children had to be kept on the 'straight and narrow,' as too much knowledge would incite them politically and might lead to their questioning of their positions as the underdogs.

Richardson though, ironically, demonstrated an ardent desire for Western progress to dominate the development of Samoa, to the extent that he felt the Fa'a Samoa stood in the way of his attempts to Westernize the Samoans. He prohibited or attempted to control Samoan customs relating to malaga,\(^{167}\) fine mat exchange, saofa'i (ceremony of appointment to a title), marriage and burials and the European inspired sport, village cricket (kirikiti). He proposed schemes for remodelling Samoan villages to make them more sanitary and more attractive, as well as to keep the Samoans busy. He founded the Fetu (Star), a sort of Boy Scout movement to develop character and national ideals. Overnight as it were, he hoped to develop Samoans into healthy, hardworking and prosperous planters and good citizens.\(^{168}\)

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165 Boyd: Ibid p.138  
166 Mai'ai Famaafi p.196  
167 Malaga means trips or visitations. These involved parties of Samoans travelling to other villages to arrange or to participate in a marriage usually between a high chief's son from one village and a high chief's daughter from another village. The trip would often take days or weeks, (if it was a trip to another island) with much celebration that may involve the host village for several days or weeks.  
It was during Richardson’s administration (1923-1925) of Samoa that the ‘Mau Movement,169 an anti-New Zealand Administration movement, was formed. Their slogan was “Samoa mo Samoa” (Samoa for Samoa). This movement was formed in protest at the continuous refusal by the New Zealand Administration of the requests by Samoans for higher education as well as the Samoans’ disenchantment with New Zealand paternalism. The New Zealand administration was not prepared to deal with the fundamental change in the attitudes of the Samoans towards education or anything else. A peaceful demonstration march by the Mau group resulted in the death of their leader, fatally shot by New Zealand police. Because of the political instability and restlessness that Samoa went through at this time, some people in New Zealand were concerned that the best interests of the Samoans would be served by a policy of isolation so that the harmful and disorganising effects of outside influences could be minimised. As Keesing wrote,

At the height of the political troubles in Western Samoa, during 1927-30, a vocal section of the New Zealand public advocated drawing a “cordon sanitaire” around the islands.170

In 1936 Rutherford, the Superintendent of Samoan schools, criticised the work of the church as well as the Fa’a Samoa for not producing any outstanding Samoan men. He alleged that:

One of the disappointments in the work of education is the lack after 100 years of Christianity, of any outstanding men; the Fa’a Samoa may have a lot to do with this, but on the other hand, where young men have shown brilliance, the tendency is to become ‘top heavy’ and a fall usually follows. The student then drops out of the race.171

Given the type of education (basic primary) permitted for the Samoans, it is no wonder that there were no outstanding men. This allegation is not true though. The Samoan pastors could be counted as outstanding but then the colonisers could not bring themselves to admit so. In the Fa’a Samoa, the elders with their knowledge would be outstanding. What Rutherford said for whatever reason cannot be correct, but it was a very patronising and insulting statement that shifted the blame on to others from the

169 Field, M.J. 1984, Mau: Samoa’s struggle against New Zealand Oppression, Reed, Wellington
170 Keesing F 1942, South Seas in the Modern world, Henderson & Spalding, London, p.81
171 Keesing, (Ibid) p.6
colonisers themselves. It was not enough that the administrators continuously thwarted Western Samoa's demands for better and higher education. The Samoans (and the church) but never the coloniser, had to be blamed for their own lack of education. In the eyes of the colonisers the Samoans were 'uneducated' because they did not have the knowledge and literacies of the colonisers, who were not prepared either to permit the Samoans to have this 'higher' knowledge. The Samoans had to remain subordinate in their relationship with the superior colonisers. It was a 'no win' situation for the Samoans whichever way they wanted to move.

The Debate Continues

During 1939 and 1940, McKenzie, the Superintendent of Samoan schools, encouraged teachers to develop school gardens where the pupils could do practical work in connection with "the only calling in post school life, work on the land."\(^{172}\)

The Samoans saw in schooling, restricted though it was, a practical means of gaining access to Palagi knowledge. Their attitude towards attempts to teach agriculture in the schools was one of apathy. The major concern of the majority was the acquiring of as much education of a literary nature as possible. Samoan parents had prioritised the value of an academic education, which was much more likely to bring about political and economic gains, social status and social esteem. They wanted 'knowledge power.' To them, agricultural work was manual rather than educational. Dr Beeby,\(^ {173}\) Director – General of New Zealand schools at the time explained:

> It is the kind of academic scholarship their European rulers had that (which) evidently gave the European his material superiority and that offered the local boy a hope of release, from the poverty and tedium of life on the land.

A serious attempt to improve education in Samoa was not to be realized until 1949. There was pressure from the 1945 Beeby Report, the 1947 UNO Mission, the 1949 Davis Report, criticism from the Russian, Chinese and Mexican representatives during the 1949 Trusteeship Council Debate, and the inclusion of Samoans for the first time in

\(^{172}\) Barrington, (Ibid), p. 71

\(^{173}\) Beeby, In Fairbairn-Dunlop, P, 1981, Samoan Parents and the Primary School, MA Thesis, Victoria University, Wellington, p. 34.
educational policy making in 1949. The year 1950 saw the start of an intermediate school at Leifiifi, with the abolition of racial segregation in the Apia schools by the amalgamation of the European schools at Leifiifi and the Malifa School for the Samoans. In 1953, the first government secondary school, Samoa College, was opened.

The 1945 Beeby Report described the Samoan schools in 1945 as:

Beyond words, muddled and messy. Many of the classes are terribly large. Even at the Malifa grade two schools there are four infant classes with four teachers in one large room. The Samoan teachers are severely handicapped by their own lack of education and training. Very few had reached a NZ standard six level of attainment and many had not progressed beyond a standard three level. The school system is handicapped by shortages of qualified staff, lack of equipment and textbooks.

Ensuing reports revealed similar school conditions as noted in the Beeby report. The muddled and messy conditions of the Samoan schools cannot be functions of the Fa'a-Samo or the Samoan language or the church. In over 30 years under the New Zealand administration, very little improvement had been made to Samoan education.

In 1959, three years before Samoa became independent, a mission of ministers from Wellington were very much concerned with the poor condition of Samoan education and reported:

New Zealand should help to remedy Western Samoa's educational backwardness. New Zealand had a special responsibility to assist Samoan education not only while Samoa remained under trusteeship, but also after independence.

In 1964, Dr Williams a UNESCO adviser in Samoa, criticised education in Western Samoa as catering for only a few and that it should change from a philosophy of the education of the elite to one of education for the masses. He criticised the selection procedures where one in every two pupils proceeded to Form One and one in every three from intermediate to secondary. As he observed:

The people have more leisure than almost any place in the world, but what do they do with it? They are often mere vegetables.

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175 Beeby in Barrington, (Ibid), p.80

This criticism came two years after Western Samoa became independent from New Zealand rule in 1962. The educational task imposed upon her as an independent nation was an immense one. Barrington, a New Zealand educator, commented on this saying:

(A huge task for a people) who had for many years watched powerless, the seemingly aimless drift of education in this country (Western Samoa). The blame lies in the long history of top-level administration sterile of educational philosophy, unable to adopt its own system and beliefs to a very different Samoan environment and society.\(^{178}\)

The debate on whether the English language should be introduced or not, if a more mental or manual education should be given, to introduce secondary education or not, or to modernise and assimilate the Samoans into a perfect community went on for years to maintain the status quo in Samoan education. The hegemonic thinking and racist views dominant amongst the administrators at the time prevented the provision of higher education.

In such an unstable and doubtful situation, one could hardly blame people if they did not want to attend school or if parents stopped their children from going to school. For one, the schools were in an appalling condition. Secondly, there was no foreseen future after a basic primary education, except to go back to tilling the soil. For those who still went to school, they could have been aspiring to more ‘mental’ jobs. After their appetites were whetted for more education, they would naturally refuse to go back to the land. The hunger for mental stimulation of a higher order, though, can have devastating and adverse effects on such children, which could be psychological and social in nature. Williams described them above as ‘often mere vegetables.’ The children had all the time in the world on their hands but many had other ideas and planting taro was not one of them. They became marginalised, having been educated in a ‘half-hearted’ sort of way, and probably very unsure of what the future held. What do such children turn to?

\(^{177}\) Williams, Dr, In Lauterbach, A. & Stacy, V D, 1964, Economic Survey and Proposed Development Measures for Western Samoa, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNO, New York, p.17.

The A'oga a le Faifeau as ‘Saving Grace’ for Samoan Education

While the colonial administrators were debating on what education system would be best for the Samoans, the missionaries and pastors carried on with their A'oga a le Faifeau, teaching the Samoan children the three Rs and more. They ascertained the continuity in teaching Samoan children even though they had their own religious agenda to attend to. The A'oga a le Faifeau was actually the ‘saving grace’ for Samoan education during the formal colonization period.

Despite the many odds and difficulties it encountered, the A'oga a le Faifeau survived to carry on with the task of educating the Samoans. It was able to do this because it had a 'robust constitution' developed from careful planning and adherence to a sound belief in doing good to others, even though the missionaries also had their own agenda. The problems encountered during the formal colonisation period were only some of the inhibitions to their work. Chapter Four, that discusses the historical development of the A'oga a le Faifeau, describes other difficulties.

The virtual absence of any real acknowledgment by colonial administrators or researchers of the A'oga a le Faifeau, as a significant provider of education in Samoa, is one reason why many do not know what an A'oga a le Faifeau is. The church on the other hand has undergone much criticism, especially from those who do not really see the services that the church renders to its members. This is one such service among others, which the church provides. While no organisation or society can be described as perfect, there are things, which every group does to promote the well-being of its members and others. In New Zealand, the Samoan church also provides a village setting where Samoans express their Fa'a Samoa.

The missionaries were successful not only in converting large numbers of Samoans to Christianity, but also educating them in the three R’s. The Samoans were well and truly prepared for the next step up in their education, having been given the ‘basics’ over and over again, by the missionaries. But it was not to be for some years because of the reasons detailed above.
The A'oga a le Faifeau had truly been the backbone of education in Samoa for over a hundred years. Although most recipients of this A'oga a le Faifeau education acquired a relatively basic education, it nevertheless inspired and whetted the mental appetites of many students to want to advance intellectually. Sadly it was not to be until the Samoans themselves were represented on the Board of Education for the first time in 1949.

The situation of Samoan Children in Education, in New Zealand: Background

The situation for Samoan children in New Zealand, like in Samoa, is unfortunately a grim one also. Samoan people in New Zealand are a minority group. Many Samoan children in New Zealand schools are non-English speaking background (NESB) students. They make up the largest number of Pacific Island children in New Zealand schools. Out of a total 58,402 Pacific Island students attending schools at 1st of July 2001, Samoan students numbered 28,249. This is approximately 48% of all Pacific Island students in New Zealand schools. These figures are for domestic students only (without overseas students).

The Problem

Overall, the outcomes for Pacific Island students are significantly lower than other students, as shown by the most recent statistics below published by the Ministry of Education, which compare them with other students. To begin with, most Pacific Island students attend schools in 'poor' areas. Table 1 shows 68% of all Pacific students go to schools in the lowest decile, while 8% attend schools in the highest deciles. Schools in the lowest deciles (1-3) draw their students from communities with the highest socio-economic disadvantage, while those in the highest deciles (8-10) draw the least from these communities. Although as deciles include ethnicity, as part of their definition, it is expected that most Pacific Island students will be in low decile schools.

Table 1: Number of Students attending Schools by Sector, Socio-economic Status of School Community and Ethnic Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Economic Decile Band for All Sectors (Primary, Composite, Secondary, Special)</th>
<th>Pacific</th>
<th>European /Pakeha</th>
<th>Maori</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>39661</td>
<td>57814</td>
<td>392590</td>
<td>8529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 7</td>
<td>14084</td>
<td>435520</td>
<td>51420</td>
<td>14967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 - 10</td>
<td>4369</td>
<td>193739</td>
<td>15163</td>
<td>19665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>9907</td>
<td>2277</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58402</td>
<td>462311</td>
<td>149590</td>
<td>43653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Number of students Leaving New Zealand Secondary Schools in 2000 by Level of Highest Attainment and Ethnic Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Attainment</th>
<th>European /Pakeha</th>
<th>Maori</th>
<th>Pacific</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Pacific Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A or B Bursary or National certificate</td>
<td>8058</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>10564</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrance Qualification or 40 or more credits at National Cert. Level or above</td>
<td>3086</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4002</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher School Cert. or 12-39 credits at National Certificate Level 2 or above</td>
<td>3975</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5857</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Form Cert. or 12 or more Credits at National Cert. Level 2 or above</td>
<td>10328</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>1116</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>14949</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Cert. or 12 or more credits at National Certificate Level 1 or above</td>
<td>6660</td>
<td>2491</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>10243</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Formal Qualifications or less than 12 credits at National Cert. Level 1</td>
<td>4595</td>
<td>3072</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>9018</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>36702</td>
<td>9453</td>
<td>3525</td>
<td>4081</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>4633</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Excludes international students. A Minimum of 3 Cs in University Bursaries-1 or more subjects irrespective of grade awarded.

Table 2 shows that 24% (860/3525) of Pacific Island students gained no formal qualifications compared with 12.5% (4595/36702) of Pakeha and 7.4% (302/4081) of Asian students.

Percentages of Students leaving School in 2000 with Sixth Form certificate or Higher

According to the 2002 New Zealand Ministry of Education statistics, 65% of all students leaving schools in 2000 gained a Sixth Form Certificate or higher. Asian students had the highest with 85%, then European/Pakeha students with 69%, and Pacific and Maori students had the lowest with 56% and 41% respectively. 49% of all students leaving decile 1-3 schools gained one of the qualifications compared to 80% in the 8-10 decile areas.

Table 3 shows very low percentages in the eight years from 1993 to 2000. The range in any significant gains made is extremely small and the trends overall are inconsistent and unpredictable. The highest respective percentages were for, Bursary since 1996, University Entrance since 1998, Higher School Certificate since 1997, Sixth Form Certificate since 1999, and No Qualification since 1999.

Table 3: Trends in Percentages of Highest Attainment of Pacific School Leavers for the years 1993 to 2000 in New Zealand Schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>University Bursary</th>
<th>Entrance Qualification</th>
<th>Higher School Cert.</th>
<th>6th Form Cert.*</th>
<th>School Cert.*</th>
<th>No Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One or more subjects

Certificate in 2000 and School Certificate since 1993. The lowest percentage that left without any qualifications was in 1994. The percentages for those leaving without any qualifications are relatively high.

It cannot be said that a marked improvement has been made. But it may be said that encouraging progress was made in the two years from 1999 to 2000 especially with respective increases in the Bursary, Sixth Form Certificate and School Certificate qualifications, and a decrease in the percentage of those leaving without any qualifications. Except for the highest percentage in 2000, for the eight years, of those with Sixth Form Certificates, the highest percentages for other attainments have not been reached again.

Table 3 gives graphic evidence of 'lack of improvement over time' despite widespread concerns about the poor achievement of Pacific Island students over the years. The 'significance' of the table is the lack of change.

Table 4: Summary of 2000 New Zealand Public Tertiary Graduates by Qualification Award Category And Ethic Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification Award Category</th>
<th>Pacific Students</th>
<th>Total for Pacific Students</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Total for All Students</th>
<th>Percentage of Pacific Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters/ Honours</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>2481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma/Cert.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>8708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>2490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>9693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications Completed</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>1219</td>
<td>2071</td>
<td>3331</td>
<td>25246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustments for Multiple</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF GRADUATES</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>1173</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>3166</td>
<td>24113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 indicates very low figures and percentages of graduates in tertiary education for Pacific Islanders. The table also shows a marked difference between Pacific Island male and female graduates. Except in the Doctorate category, where there is no female graduate, totals of female graduates for all other qualifications are much higher than totals of male graduates. Of the total Pacific Island graduates, 41% (819/1992) are male while 59% (1173/1992) are female. All Pacific Island graduates make up 3.3% (1992/60645) of the total New Zealand graduates in 2002. Overall for Pacific Island students, there are comparatively few graduates in tertiary education.

In the intermediate and primary schools, the situation mirrors that of the secondary and tertiary students. Studies by educational psychologists McNaughton\textsuperscript{185} and Wilkinson\textsuperscript{186} indicate that Samoan children may have difficulties in beginning reading instruction.\textsuperscript{187} The latest International Educational Achievement (IEA) comparisons\textsuperscript{188} show that by year 5, there is a significant difference between Pakeha students and Pacific Island students in reading tasks. The comparisons also reveal that New Zealand has one of the largest disparities in reading achievement between those children for whom English is their first language and children for whom English is not. The IEA survey of 32 countries on reading achievement among 9 and 14 year olds reports New Zealand as having the largest gap at both Standard 3 and Form 4 levels, between non-English background students and English-background students. The survey found that Pacific Island (NESB) students had the lowest scores.

According to a report by Warwick Elley of the 1991 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), ‘parents and teachers should feel justifiably proud that New Zealand children are among the best readers in the world! This has been supported by the recent IEA reading literacy survey.'\textsuperscript{189} This might be justified when looking only at the performance of a relatively few top readers. The report, on

\textsuperscript{185} McNaughton, S., 1995, Patterns of Emergent Literacy, Oxford University Press, Auckland.
\textsuperscript{189} Warwick, E. December 1993, ‘Comprehending the Recent IEA Reading Literacy Survey: An Overview, New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), Wellington, p.6
closer analysis, also makes reference to the fact that the difference between the literacy levels of Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) children and mainstream pupils as very high, greater than any other country at both 9 year and 14-year levels. 'NESB children at the 9 year level scored 70 points below children whose first language was English, and 81 points lower at the 14 year level. This result has clear implications for language support for these children, many of whom are Pacific Island children.'

Finnish children are reported by Hans Wagemaker\(^1\) to have performed the best out of the 32 participating countries in the IEA Literacy Survey at both age levels (9 and 14). The reasons given by Wagemaker for Finland showing consistently high average scores include the following, which I include here because they have significant implications for the study:

- an unusually regular orthography and phonetic writing system
- high pupil expenditure, spending more than twice as much per child as New Zealand
- highly valued and well-run early childhood education
- teachers highly respected and well paid
- teachers are very well qualified, requiring at least a B Ed or Master degree
- schools are linguistically homogeneous (it had the lowest percentage of second language learners)

The first four reasons are of particular relevance. The first reason connotes pedagogical implications. Interestingly, the A'oga a le Faifeau emphasises the orthography of the Samoan language and uses a phonetic writing system especially in its preschool and infant classes.

The next three reasons imply that it is worth investing money in education. I am digressing here to emphasise the point that this investment may be the only way to ensure highly valued and well-run early childhood education. Preschool education is important especially for NESB children in New Zealand. Although many Samoan children attend


\(^{191}\) Wagemaker, (Ibid)
the A'oga a le Faifaeu, many still do not. The key to success in later schooling lies in
good solid education especially in the first seven years.

Research on early childhood education points to the importance of the pre-compulsory
education period to future educational performance. The 1996 report by the Early Child
Development Unit cited research on the effect of Head Start programmes in the United
States of America, which indicated “disadvantaged children do better in schools for at
least 10 years after one-to-one training from infancy. The indications are that putting
resources in at preschool level with the aim of reducing learning difficulties of children in
later compulsory education could reduce the need for addition of resources to remedial
programmes that attempt to address learning difficulties of older children.”

Parents must value this part of their children’s education and must be prepared to invest
in their children’s preschool education. The same goes for teachers. The success of any
education system depends on good teachers. This is reflected in the Finnish successful
education system where its teachers are well paid and well respected. Finland invests
money in its teachers who are reported to be highly qualified.

The IEA report cites Finnish schools as linguistically homogeneous, having the lowest
percentage of second language learners, out of all the participating countries. This is a
contributing factor to Finland’s showing consistently high average scores. The situation
in New Zealand though is the opposite. New Zealand has a high percentage of NESB
children. Pacific Islanders make up eight percent of New Zealand’s population and is
increasing at a rapid rate. In Auckland for example, there are more Polynesians than any
other city in the world. In some Auckland urban schools, more than 95% of the children
are either Pacific Islanders or Maori. In some classrooms teachers may have children
from as many as 12 different language or cultural backgrounds. These changes have
occurred partly because of the urban drift and partly because of increased immigration.
The IEA overview reports NESB children, many of whom are Pacific Islanders, as
having very low literacy levels, 70 points and 81 points respectively, below the literacy
levels of mainstream children. Schools are under increasing pressure to raise the literacy

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192 Early Childhood development Unit, 1996, Report on Current Service, Provision and Projected
levels of children from different cultural and language backgrounds. Teachers cannot assume that most children in their classrooms will share similar language or cultural backgrounds. A ‘one size fits all’ curriculum will not address the individual differences and any educational problems that may arise in a multicultural classroom. The Ministry of Education Literacy Taskforce also addresses this.\textsuperscript{194}

A report by the Education Review Office (ERO) in 1997, compiled from reviews on 322 schools throughout New Zealand, said that in three-quarters of primary schools, the teaching of literacy skills was patchy or poor. This report was published in the September 1\textsuperscript{st} edition of the New Zealand Herald in 1997 and was headed, ‘Literacy by Luck, Teaching of reading, writing ‘patchy’’.\textsuperscript{195} The main findings from this report are as follows:

1. Currently, the failure of the English curriculum to provide any more than vague indications of what teachers should include in their programmes is leaving improvements in levels of literacy to chance.
2. Student progress in literacy is at risk when the quality of learning and teaching programmes vary from year to year and it is just a matter of chance if they get good teaching in any particular year.
3. Although good and mixed literacy programmes are run in all types of schools, those with poor programmes are disproportionately rural, small and in lower socio-economic areas.
4. Teachers of first reading are well qualified and knowledgeable, but once pupils have learned to read, little more is done on teaching them to use reading to learn.

The report says that internationally, reading levels of New Zealand children, last assessed in 1990, were above average. But, analysed separately, the performances of Maori and Pacific Island children and students who did not speak English at home were substantially lower.

The cause of the problem is not entirely in ‘the student’ or his or her background. There is a tendency to believe that if parents do not support literacy development, there is no


\textsuperscript{195} September 1, 1997, ‘Literacy by Luck: Teaching of Reading and Writing ‘patchy’’. In The New Zealand Herald.
way of avoiding literacy failure. However the lack of home support for reading should not be the 'be all' excuse for the low achievement of those students. The school also has contributed to this problem as implied by the ERO report, which points to the 'patchy and left to chance teaching of reading.'

The 'patchy' and 'left to chance' nature of teaching literacy skills is not new in the history of education, even with the vast improvements and advances in literacy education. The blame put on the 'type' of literacy practised, as responsible for the underachievement of Samoan children, is an avoidance technique that shifts the blame onto the 'tools of the trade' from the users of the tools. The executors of those pedagogical practices and the 'adhocness' in shifting educational ideologies were and are partly responsible. This 'patchy' and 'left to chance' approach to teaching, has been evident right throughout the history of Samoan education. The onus was on the educational administrators to provide proper literacy practices in Samoa. It was within their jurisdiction to do this as they were the decision makers but chose not to. This is evident also in New Zealand as the ERO reports referred to earlier reveal. In three-quarters of 322 primary schools, the teaching of reading was poor, that is 240, too many schools with such poor records of teaching reading. It is no wonder the children are underachieving. The responsibility is on the teachers to provide proper education but in many cases they have failed to.

Pacific Island children have been the targets for research in the last 10 years. As a Samoan researcher for the AIMHI project in 1996, one of the problems I faced was the lack of enthusiasm on the part of Samoan parents to come forward with information needed. According to some parents, they had been over-researched. The words I used were, 'Samoan parents have been researched to death.' The parents were asking why their children were still underachieving when they were told that things were going to look up for their children. The problem of underachievement and poor literacy has been known for more than a decade. Still, hundreds of thousands of dollars are being poured into research that yields the same results. The Pacific Island children and parents are still targeted in much of educational research today but sadly their children are still at the bottom of the heap.

The Argument in Favour of ‘Phonics’, the Traditional A’oga a le Faifeau pedagogy
“Reading Report Says Old Way Best”197

This is the title of an article that headlined the New Zealand Herald on Tuesday, August 14, 2001. It was an exciting article, firstly because it was a respite from reading about the same old gory stories of rape, violence and murder, but more importantly because it added fuel and value to what I am trying to say in this study, that the phonics approach, which is also the A’oga a le Faifeau pedagogy, is the key to solving many problems of underachievement especially in reading and writing. An article titled, ‘Making Sense of those black squiggles,’198 in the Weekend Herald of August 18-19, looks at Papakura Normal in South Auckland and Rosebank School, Avondale in West Auckland, who use an integrated approach to teaching reading. Papakura is a middle-to-lower socio-economic area. Mrs Vlaar, a teacher at Papakura Normal School says, it makes sense to use a mix of methods so children have as many clues as possible to unlock the mysteries of words. She uses both the whole language and phonics to teach reading. According to Mrs Vlaar, using solely whole language would be fruitless if children got stuck and could not sound their way through a tricky word. This is where the phonics approach works best.

Flesch in his book, Why Johnny Can’t Read, claimed that the primary cause of Johnny’s problem, the ‘sight’ method, was demonstrably inferior to the ‘phonics’ approach.199 Chall says that Flesch was almost right, in that what she called the ‘code emphasis’ was, without doubt, superior to the ‘meaning emphasis’ - at least for beginning readers, particularly for children of ‘average and below average ‘intelligence’ and from lower socio-economic backgrounds.’200 She went on to recommend, among other things, that publishers of ‘basal’ reading programs, the most widely used materials for the teaching of reading in the US, should heed her findings and shift the emphasis in reading texts and workbooks from ‘look - say’ to some systematic ‘phonics’ approach, a recommendation that appears to have had considerable influence. She argues further that a molecular

emphasis in the teaching of beginning reading was superior to a more holistic approach like the whole language approach.

In 1996, Nicholson, an educational psychologist at the University of Auckland, argued that a renewed focus on the teaching of phonemes and simple phonics could make a big difference to children’s reading ability - especially for children from less privileged backgrounds. He found that instruction of just 10 minutes a day over three months in phonemic awareness (for instance, alliteration and rhyme) and phonics led to significant improvements in the literacy skills of five-year-old children from low-income backgrounds. As Nicholson said:

Such training, if done more intensively and as part of the regular classroom programme, could be even more helpful in narrowing the literacy gap between children from rich and poor schools.

Nicholson carried out research in which a group of 82 pupils from schools in low-income areas were compared with a group of 25 new entrants from a school in a high-income area, who started schools with significantly higher readiness skills than the pupils in the low-income area. The aim of his research was to get new entrant pupils off to a better start in reading and spelling. The research results showed that the experimental group in the low-income area made significant gains, particularly in spelling, and to a small extent in reading. This supported his research hypothesis that phonemic awareness training and simple phonics would get these children off to a better start if they were added to the regular whole-language curriculum. Nicholson argued that guesswork as used in whole language teaching was not a sound basis for learning about written language because guesswork would create a crack through which too many children, particularly those not exposed to written language at home, will fall.

The problem issue here is not so much the ‘tools of the trade’ as the use or user of the tools. All teaching/learning styles are ‘good servants’ but can be ‘bad masters’ depending on the user and the application of the methods. The success of any method of teaching

201 Nicholson, T, 1996, 'Phonics helps close literacy gap,' p. 15
depends on its effectiveness and relevance of application to the learners and situation. As Limbrick, principal lecturer at Auckland College of Education said,

Some children will learn to read using the whole language approach, just like some children will learn to read through a strict phonetics programme. It’s really important to discuss what can make a difference, but the whole language versus phonetics debate is just so dead now. What research shows is, phonetics is really important but it’s only one component.²⁰³

Milner, principal of one Auckland primary school, said that his school used a variety of approaches to reading and that different things worked for different kids and that he wouldn’t discount any method.²⁰⁴

I can illustrate the point about the use and user of literacy teaching tools by referring to a personal experience. When my oldest three children were at primary school in Porirua in the early 1980s, they went to a small government school of less than 200 pupils.²⁰⁵ The pupils were encouraged at this school to ‘read and read and read.’ The teachers believed in reading as the key to success in life and they demonstrated this belief by making sure that the pupils were engaged in reading. They were encouraged to read widely right from the new entrants class. There were reading books, comics, newspapers and reading material in both English and Maori. The teaching of reading at this school was certainly neither patchy nor left to chance. The teachers believed in reading as the key to success and demonstrated their belief and conviction by providing an educational environment in which children succeeded. The parents were welcome at the school any time to observe as long as they did not create too much disruption to classroom instruction. Every month the parents were invited to come to the school to see their children’s work and talk about their children’s progress. The school created an atmosphere of high interaction among students, teachers and parents. Those children would have extremely enjoyed their time at that school as my own children had. They have very happy memories of the school and more importantly, it was where their fondness for reading and study was nurtured and developed. There was much individualized instruction, and this was made possible also because the pupil-teacher ratio was low.

²⁰³ Patterson, A, August 28 2002, ‘Schools Stand by their Methods,’ Auckland City Harbour News, p.3
²⁰⁴ Patterson, (Ibid) p. 3.
²⁰⁵ Naione Park School in Waitangirua, Porirua.
On the other hand my children were also being taught how to read in the A’oga a le Faifeau and brought their own literacy skills to reading in the conventional school. As well as the above reading experiences at their old primary school, they also learned in the A’oga a le Faifeau about parts of speech in Samoan Grammar and usage, knowledge and skills, which they were able to transfer into learning English. Moreover, like the above primary school, the A’oga a le Faifeau also gives individual attention to its students, especially to the infant classes who are only just beginning to learn how to read.

I do not advocate a ‘phonics only’ approach to teaching reading but I do promote an integrated approach with the inclusion of phonics as an indispensable part of the method of teaching literacy. It is encouraging to know that some schools in New Zealand use this integrated approach to teaching reading, using phonics as well as the whole language approach where applicable and appropriate.
Chapter Three

Connecting with the Past: Samoan Indigenous education

_E le fulala fua le niu, sei vagana ua agi se matagi_  
(The coconut tree does not necessarily sway unless a wind blows)

This Samoan proverb sets the mood for the present chapter and introduces the following discussion, which centres on Samoan indigenous education, the Fa’a Samoa, and how people learned before (and still do) after formal education was introduced. This is an important issue that affects the A’oga a le Faifeau because it teaches the Fa’a Samoa, the language and cultural values. The discussion also provides a ‘theoretical context’ to this indigenous education.

The history of formal education (Palagi schools) in Samoa started with the arrival of the LMS missionaries. The historical account though will not be complete without reference to what went on before colonial history, even if the Fa’a Samoa is perhaps unfairly branded as ‘prehistoric,’ a term that carries a connotation of archaism or extinction. The Fa’a Samoa is very much intact even if some of its practices have been ‘disgraced, devalued or dispensed with.’ Samoan children continue to learn within the norms of their indigenous education, formal schooling and the A’oga a le Faifeau in a simultaneous existence.

Information about the setting before colonial history is a necessary prerequisite to understanding the historical development of the Pastor’s School, because this setting had significant implications for the contact situation between the Samoans, who were the recipients and executors of the innovations in education, and the LMS missionaries who were the donors and advocates of those educational innovations. The status of the Pastor’s School, as an introduced educational phenomenon in Samoa gives the discussion, centred on Samoan indigenous education, a necessary prerogative because the latter preceded it. It also serves to put in perspective the link with this relatively new system of education that my whole thesis is about.
The Samoan proverb above symbolises a pure oral literacy that has 'assimilated' the print literacy. Theorising about the Fa'a Samoa in this context gives perhaps a new meaning to the word 'assimilation' which has been closely associated with British hegemony and the colonising practices of the British Empire of old.

I attempt in the present chapter also to critique some of the issues that relate to colonising practices and their effects on the Samoan people and the Fa'a Samoa. A critical issue relates to some of the devalued and altogether discarded ‘useful’ practices that would assist the education of Samoan children if reinstated and resurrected. In particular, I make reference to the art of legend telling which is practically a thing of the past yet was vital to Samoan indigenous education and which also has spans to literacy learning in school, especially in promoting 'readiness' for reading.

Samoan Proverbs

Vaaelua, who wrote a BD\textsuperscript{206} thesis on the use of Samoan proverbs in theological sermons, gives a definition and description of proverbs as follows:

The Samoan translation of the word proverb is \textit{alagaupu}, \textit{al} meaning way, path, cause or source, and \textit{upu} meaning word. The word literally means the source or the way or path in which certain words or phrases came to being. They give expression to the folk wisdom and truths about life derived from the experience of past generations and express in encapsulated form the accumulated knowledge of the sages of old Samoa.\textsuperscript{207}

Proverbs are a part of Samoan literature. The use by pastors of Samoan proverbs to promote their Christian mission is another example of how a Samoan form of literacy has spans with a 'Western' practice.

The proverb quoted at the beginning of this chapter literally means that the coconut-tree (\textit{niu}) does not (\textit{e le}) necessarily sway (\textit{falala fua}) unless (\textit{sei vagana}) a wind (\textit{matagi}) blows (\textit{ua agi}). On a calm day the coconut tree would be upright. On a windy day it

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{206}] Bachelor of Divinity
\item Vaaelua researched the meanings of Samoan proverbs with the older generation of Samoan orators and pastors.
\end{itemize}
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would sway to the direction the wind is blowing. It is a simple proverb. Though its seemingly ‘banal’ literal meaning might appear too obvious and ‘simplistic,’ the proverb carries a deeper meaning in the Fa’a Samoa, and is used figuratively and metaphorically by Samoan orators to mean - there is always a reason or cause for everything.

Most Samoan proverbs have origins in their ecological and physical environment and the coconut tree has a fair share of proverbs deriving from it. The coconut tree is one of the most (if not the most) important trees in Samoa and the Pacific. It is looked upon as Samoa’s ‘tree of life’ because every part from its roots in the ground to its fruits and leaves at the top have multiple uses which sustain life in a physical environment with relatively scarce resources.

In the absence of a print literacy, the proverbial terms including those derived from the coconut tree serve to store the knowledge that Samoans verbalise in their daily lives. Their use in oratory and daily conversation also remind the people of the importance of their physical environment and, in the case of the coconut tree, sources of sustenance.

The proverb is one that a Samoan orator speaking for a visiting party, that includes his high chief and family, would often shout across the malae to a host family on a special occasion to mean, ‘We are here for a reason, or purpose.’ The occasion could be that of a birth, a wedding, a funeral or the bestowal of a matai title, so the visitors might have made their presence felt, because they have some connections to the host family, at these respective occasions.

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208 Examples of other proverbs originating from the coconut tree (niu) are: E suamalie a niu aati (Sweet like a coconut husked with one’s teeth, which means real satisfaction can only be achieved with your own hard labour). O le pau a le popo uli (ripe coconut) e toe tupu (The ripe coconut that falls on the ground will in time sprout roots and grow as compared to a green coconut that falls on the ground and rots away: This means that a person with maturity of mind will not dwell on his or her mistakes or misfortunes but will rise above them to better things given time).

209 The roots are woven to make fish/crayfish traps, the trunk is used for building and umu (open oven logs), the leaves are woven into mats, baskets, fale blinds, and thatches, the hard strands of the leaves are made into brooms, the flesh of the very green coconuts is food for babies and the elderly invalids, the ripe nuts provide coconut cream while their husks are used as fuel for the fire. The hard inner crusts are used as cups or made into necklaces and earrings. The very small green coconuts are used for medicinal purposes.

210 Every high chief (ali‘i) has an orator or talking chief (tulafale) that speaks on his behalf.

211 The malae is an open space in the centre of the village reserved for festivals, special events, big gatherings, or village sports and so on. On the outer fringes of the malae are the village houses surrounding the malae in a circular fashion.
The orator would first address the dignitaries and chiefly ranks of the host family, and then he would state the reasons for their presence at the occasion, going into the complexities of the genealogies involved, making connections here and there, raking up past histories and perhaps finding a common ancestor. Then the orator might say, “O tatou lava o le aiga e tasi,” (we are one family) after having established the connection.

The visiting orator would have to tread very carefully when addressing the ‘host’ family and especially when speaking about genealogies and family histories. He would have researched and studied those with the help of other chiefs and orators that know about the host family. He might even have spent sleepless nights mulling over what to say because his reputation and honour as an orator would be at stake. It would be a great test of his knowledge and ability to orate. Not only would he have to address the family correctly, giving their proper titles and forms of address, but also he could not afford to forget his speech. He would not take his job lightly, because there is nothing more shameful for an orator, than to stop in the middle of a speech to jog his memory for the next line, and many half-said and forgotten speeches have brought dishonour, not only on the family, but also on the village where the orator is from. His failure to deliver would be very costly to him, his aiga and his village. He would have gone over his speech many times in preparation, as he only has his memory to depend on.

The orator of the host family on the other side of the malae would respond by addressing the dignitaries and chiefly ranks of the visitors, extending a warm welcome signifying his family’s acceptance of them. Often, he would throw in a traditional Samoan proverb among others that would justify and symbolize the coming together of the two families, such as one that might have a religious connotation. For example, E ailiilo faiva o Fiti

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212 Orators that would do this are either severely reprimanded or punished by the village council of chiefs, the dishonour means the belittling of one’s village’s wisdom and pride in the eyes of the host village. The Samoan orator carries his family as well as his village’s honour in whatever occasion he speaks at. The high chiefs of the orator’s aiga (extended family) would have given him their blessing. He would go with a heavy heart knowing every one’s hopes of maintaining the family and village honour rest on his shoulders.

213 Aiga is family, the extended family that includes all those people that are blood relations.

214 If the host family is satisfied that the visitors are genuine, and have made the proper addresses and right connections.

215 Such proverbs are traditional ones that were in use before the missionaries, to acknowledge the Samoan gods, especially their god Tagaloa-a-tagai. Tagaloa of the ten heavens, to which the Samoans owe their
(Fiti's work is a mystery), which is also used in Samoan oratory today as, **E ailiilo le finagalo o le Atua**, (God works in mysterious ways) which means that God had brought the two families together even though they did not know they would meet that day.

Religion is a major part of the **Fa'a Samoa**. The Christian God is comfortable beside **Tagaloa** (Samoan god) and **Nafanua** (Samoan goddess), particularly during ceremonies. At the start or finish of a special occasion, prayers are offered to the Christian God; however as Simanu and Simanu-Klutz said, “all activities in between are controlled by the spirits and gods of our ancestors, proverbs from the elements, and the cunningness of the war goddess Nafanua.”

The host orator would also thank the visiting orator for expounding on the genealogies and the histories of familial connections which had added a great deal of knowledge to the little they knew about the two families’ relationships. He might also share his own knowledge of the genealogies and histories of the visiting family, which would benefit the visitors.

The verbal exchange and sharing of this knowledge is an important learning process for Samoans. Because it is an oral process, Samoan protocol demands absolute silence and people sitting down during speeches, as it is a process that requires close listening, attention to detail and the committing to memory of this knowledge. The prioritised formality of the occasion is not only to show respect but more importantly for people to learn and to mentally bank the knowledge acquired. You only have your mental facilities to rely on. Without the convenience of the print literacy, the **Fa’a Samoa** relied entirely on its oral literacy and pragmatic methods to educate its generations of children for over 3000 years.

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*traditional creation story. Tagaloa sent his sons down from the nine heavens to inhabit Samoa. In a kava ceremony, it is Fa'a Samoa protocol to acknowledge one's god or gods by tipping out a little kava juice from the cup and say, 'O lau ava lea le Atua. Fa'amanuaia mai' (This is your kava drink God, bless us). With the acceptance by the Samoans of Christianity, the use of those proverbs and practices were automatically affiliated to the Christian God. Tagaloa-a-lagi was like the super being, but some families had their own gods, like the octopus, a fish, a tree, the owl or even a stone. The Samoan word for god is Atua. The word is often used to mean a fanatical obsession for something like, 'E te atua lava oe i mea'i (You make food your god.).


217 Aione, (Ibid) p. 12
This exchange and sharing of knowledge in the Fa’a Samoa (Samoan culture or Samoan way) is symbolic in many ways of this study and an analogy can be drawn between the two learning processes. In this study, the exchange of ideas and knowledge with my supervisors, the pastors, the Grey Lynn CCCS parish, my family, the various writers and many others has been a great learning process for me, a process driven by a great sense of purpose and necessity to achieve academic, educational and personal goals, with Samoan children in mind.

The proverb epitomises the need to explain why I am writing this thesis, why I am critiquing issues and ‘colonizing’ practices to do with Samoan education and Samoan history, why people say and do things the way they say and do them. There is always an agenda, obvious or hidden, behind people’s statements and actions. I have my own agenda made explicit in the previous chapters; suffice to say here in connection with the Samoan proverb that, this study has a purpose and that I am writing for a reason.

Making connections

In Samoan oratory, a little story here and there will impart meaning or the clarification of meaning and most importantly there is linkage to the main plot. No matter how distant the relationship is or how little is known about a person or an event, the good Samoan orator, as the analogy of the above Samoan proverb presumes, will make connections by referring to a common genealogy or something similar or habitual or a historical event of significance to the audience that each member can connect to. Those connections of the indigenous setting before colonial history and its introduced practices are made more explicit in the following chapters.

The setting before history:

In pre-colonial days, the Samoans for centuries had lived in their own specialised world of system and thought. They had a definite system of education in the broad sense that every generation took steps to transmit their cultural heritage to its growing youth. Samoa, like other small-scale societies, may be referred to as original affluent societies, because they were independent economically and politically. They were self-sufficient
horticulturists, supplementing their diets by hunting game, and fishing as well as gathering shellfish, and edibles from the forest. Their ideas were tied up in their indigenous education system, which was their life-long process of socialisation. Individuals were given instruction concerning beliefs and ways of behaving formally and the means of producing things according to the cultural traditions of their society.  

**Education for Continuity**

The aim of the indigenous education system of Samoa, as in other Pacific Island societies, was the continuity of society in which adult members passed on to the younger generations what they acquired through informal and organised experience. Their aim of continuity was achieved in different ways, depending on the nature and size of the physical environment, the availability of resources, their worldview and beliefs in the supernatural. Because Samoa was small, compared to other larger Pacific islands, like Vanuatu, the Solomons or Papua New Guinea, its resources were relatively fewer in quantity and variety. The Samoan education system then revolved around socialising their people to exercise thrift and consideration in the use of those scarce resources.

In response to the need for tight control of those relatively scarce resources, a hierarchical political system developed, a matai (chiefly) system and a land tenure system to ensure the ‘equitable’ distribution of the resources. To support this system, there developed a ‘religious’ system, which sanctioned and conditioned all Samoan behaviour, in the belief that the gods controlled everything that occurred in life. Their religious beliefs sanctioned their actions in war or peace, in fishing or working on the plantation and in the way they treated elders, women and their kings. A more detailed treatment of this religious issue:

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219 These larger islands had abundant resources and because of that, a less hierarchical system developed. The ‘big man’ system developed whereby such status was achieved through an accumulation of pigs and goods. They were more ‘entrepreneurial’ than the cultures of those islands, like Samoa or Tonga, with much less resources. These societies also developed quite an elaborate exchange/trade system whereby coastal dwellers would trade with inland people those goods not normally found in their respective environments. For example, fish with pork or wooden or stone tools with seashell crafts and so on.

220 I refer to this in Chapter One. Though not an ideal distribution, the system must have worked as it survived for many centuries up to now.

221 Taase, (Ibid), p. 66
is given in the following chapter. Its special treatment as such, is important because these relatively ‘prehistorical’ beliefs were a blessing and did pave the way for the more ready acceptance and consequent rapid expansion of the work of the missionaries in Samoa after the initial contact.

With a physical environment that is most vulnerable to fierce annual tropical cyclones, droughts and leaching soils, the traditional education of the Samoans revolved around maintaining the balance of ecological relationships, with a land tenure system that enabled families to have access to the land and sea resources. The matai of each aiga, appointed by family consensus, is the trustee of the family land. He or she is responsible for the allocation of land to the members of the aiga. It is still the practice today. Eighty one percent (81%) of Samoa’s land at present is under this land tenure system. The other 19% is either government or privately owned. The German administration (1899-1914), although it took land for its purposes, passed a law prohibiting Samoan customary land from being sold.

The values of living in harmony with their environment were instilled in Samoan children through observation, imitation and practice as they accompanied their parents on their daily rounds of activities. Women gathered and collected food from the forest and sea, while the men planted, fished and cooked. Samoan children are also taught from a very young age to regard wealth as a group resource. The practice of generalised reciprocity, whereby one would give without any immediate expectation of a return (but the favour would be reciprocated later), was also a means to ensure the equitable distribution of resources. It was a survival strategy. One must share so that the other would survive. Respect for one’s elders and respect for the physical environment, had to

222 The men did the cooking because the women had to concentrate on their ‘profession’ of making wealth-ietoga (the fine mats) as well as weaving of falamoefalalilii (sleeping mats) and falanofo/papa/papa laufala (sitting mats, the mats used daily to sit on). The women also had to look after the children and the elderly. The men did the cooking and the heavier work in the plantation. The women occasionally helped with the weeding. Cooking in the Fa’a Samoa is considered heavy work because in the absence of pots and pans, almost all food was baked in the umu Samoa (Samoan oven). Unlike the Maori hangi, in which the food is ‘buried’, theSamoan umu is done by making an open fire to heat rocks, and on top of these hot rocks, the food is placed and covered with banana and breadfruit leaves. It takes about two hours depending on how much food is being cooked.

223 This practice often clashes with the COD (Cash on Delivery) and ‘user pay’ values of the Western economy and has posed a dilemma for the Samoans ever since the cash economy was introduced.
be observed so that generation after generation of Samoans would be able to survive in a relatively delicate and vulnerable environment to carry on their heritage and culture.

**Tapu** (taboo) was often put on some crops or fishes. The Samoans also planned for bad times when food was scarce. Wild yams (**ufi vao**) were preserved for drought and cyclone times. The surplus of breadfruit during the breadfruit season was made into **masi** Samoa (Samoan biscuits) and buried to be dug up only when needed. Word would soon reach the village **fono** (council) if anyone sought to raid stores and the culprits would be punished accordingly. Reserved food was for the community during bad times, not for lazy people who looked for the easy way out to feed themselves. People were expected to cultivate their land and grow crops for their daily use.225 The men did the cooking to ‘free’ up the women to weave and look after children. The major part of a woman’s work was spent weaving sleeping mats and fine mats. The women were the **faioloa** (makers of wealth). The weaving of the very fine mats, was a tenuous task that required hours, days and even years of bending over the weaving. The long and wide very finely woven mats that have a ‘satin and glossy’ feel were the most treasured. The owners of such were considered wealthy. These very fine mats symbolise the endurance, the ingenuity of the weaver.226 One such fine mat is referred to as ‘e tasi ae afe’ (only one but a thousand). The women taught their young daughters how to weave while the men took the sons to the plantation.

Most educational instruction was given by example, learning from observation and imitation of relatives, peers and neighbours. Children saw how adults performed tasks

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222 **Masi** Samoa is made from a mixture of breadfruit and coconut cream, then buried in the soil and only dug up when there was no food such as during drought and cyclones when the food plants wilt or were blown down respectively.

225 A free handout, (a bag of rice, a carton of tinned fish) from cyclone aid has taken over this Fa’a Samoa practice. People are now dependent on aid donors during those bad times as well as on their relatives overseas (eg. in NZ, USA, Australia and so on).

226 Today, it is rare to find these kinds of fine mats, especially the very fine ones. The large but less finely woven ones have replaced those very fine mats. Size and quantity (three or four of such big ones given for a Fa’alavelave—a special occasion) have substituted for quality. The ‘mana’ though of the finer mats is not there. One was enough because it had all the qualities such as, softness, glossiness, and lightness, light brown colouring and sheer beauty, almost like the feel of satin. E tasi ae afe. (Only one but a thousand). Even before the actual weaving, the processing of the leaves of the pandanus tree from which a fine mat is woven, takes weeks. It is extremely hard work. The serrated sharp edges of the leaves can injure, and if the little prickles lodge in one’s hands they can become infected very fast. These have to be taken away first. The leaves are then taken to the sea and tied down under coral to soften them, before they are cleaned out in fresh water and then sun dried. All that and more have to be done before the actual weaving takes place.
and how they behaved. The education process was direct, situational and practical. The Fa’a Samoa was handed down by way of mouth and Samoan ‘literature’ was manifest in their tapa, mats, baskets, fale, dances, rites, rituals, their tattoos and their oratory.

The Fa’a Samoa value of Fa’aaloalo\(^\text{227}\) (respect) must be observed first and foremost in everything. This tradition that must be observed in one’s relationship to other people as well as to one’s physical environment, had been the mainstay of the existence and more importantly of the survival of Samoan people before contact with the West. The hierarchical chiefly (matai) system that developed was accompanied by a land tenure system that would ensure the ‘equitable distribution’\(^\text{228}\) (an ideal) of those scarce resources, land in particular. The traditional land tenure system of the Samoans is unique perhaps in the sense that the matai title is the owner of the land, while the person with the matai title is only a trustee of the land, whose job it is to allocate this resource. Every Samoan is directly related to a matai either through his or her mother or father and thus is eligible to become one. Every Samoan family is entitled to land under this matai system.

The Fa’a Samoa system of course had not survived without its fair share of shortcomings and problems, but then no system is free from these. An ‘ideal’ system is only but a dream. However, the Fa’a Samoa seemed to have worked well as the system has survived, even if in a form ‘corrupted’ by commerce, technology and the internet. It has survived to tell its own lived and living history.

\(^{227}\) The word Fa’aaloalo means respect/ to respect/ be respectful or politeness/ be polite. Its root word is ‘alo’ which literally means to face the front/people. When you face people your body must immediately respond by sitting cross-legged, pay attention and be prepared to speak in the language of respect. For those not ‘conversant’ with the Fa’a Samoa, it is rude to sit with your legs stretched out with feet pointing to other people. It is not Fa’aaloalo. (Fa’a=to make, aloalo=know how to face people)

\(^{228}\) Even though a hierarchical system suggests a fair measure of inequality, especially in rank, and this is also true in the Samoan matai system where at the top are paramount chiefs then orators then lesser chiefs, then untitled people down to the children, it is not as rigid as or formal a system as it is often made out or seen to be. The selection of a paramount chief is by consensus agreement of his/her extended family. Although he/she expects to be served by the extended family, the paramount matai (ali si) or any chief (matai) is also expected to hold the family together and to show justice and honesty in dealing with family affairs especially in the allocation of land. Any goods that he/she may bring back home from a Malaga (trip) or a special occasion are expected to be shared with the family. It is a reciprocal relationship where the favour has to be returned, maybe not immediately but at a later time. It is not uncommon for a matai to be stripped of his/her title if the family expectations are not lived up to. There is no such thing as a free lunch.
Critical Reflection on some Fa’a Samoa Issues

Customary Land versus Private-owned Land

While Samoan ‘prehistor’y tells me that the Samoan people owned 100% of its own land, Samoan ‘history’ informs me that the people now own 81% of that land. The other 19%, which is mostly prime land, and close to Apia was taken over first by Germany, then was passed on to New Zealand, and now that Samoa has become politically independent since 1962 the Samoa government, a relatively new political institution, now owns it. Some of it has been sold to private owners that include our family. We bought our half-acre from the government in 1988.

Since independence, the villages whose land was taken over by Germany and New Zealand and which are now with the government and private landowners have been fighting to get their land back or some form of land compensation. Where the government has refused to do that, some villages have ‘illegally’ occupied these lands and refused to leave. About a hundred metres from where we have bought land in Samoa, the neighbouring village protested in 1999 against a national stadium proposed to be built on land they claimed as their traditional land. A new golf course has already been built on part of this land. The altercation between the police and the villagers resulted in violence and imprisonment of some protestors.

Critical thinking and the Fa’a Samoa

It has been said that Polynesian societies (including Samoa) ‘are complex and beautiful creations, but none of them developed the analytical tools for their own criticism.’ In other words, these cultures have not created nor developed a tradition of critical thinking. This supposed lack of a tradition in critical thinking in the Fa’a Samoa has been claimed as a contributing factor to the underachievement of Samoan children in school, because school values an inquiring and critical mind, manifest in the ability of a student to question and to speak out his or her mind. Although this presumption might

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229 Twyford, P. 1988, October 5, Teacher to the Revolution, *Auckland Star*, p. 10
have truth in it, it should not however be taken to mean that there is no critical facility whatsoever in the Fa’a Samoa. A culture that does not employ this mental facility would not survive because culture is not static; it changes and before any change is effected it must first be thought about and ‘mentally fleshed and thrashed out.’ In order to survive over so many centuries, Samoa as a small-scale society would not have been able to without improving its ‘primitive’ and ‘simple’ technology. Subsequently any attempts to ‘perfect’ their tools would have involved this higher mental culture, the process of critical thinking. Careful planning for example of a malaga (visitation or trip), building of a Samoan guest house or a long boat, a ‘war’ against another village, a special occasion such as a Samoan wedding or a bestowal of a title, or even a taro patch, would have involved some critical thinking at least.

The decision to appoint a matai had to be by consensus agreement of the aiga potopoto (extended family). The best candidate to be entrusted with a matai title had to have passed a test defined in the Samoan proverb, O le ala i le pule o le tautua (the way to the top is through service).

There are several types of tautua (service) in the Fa’a Samoa. For example, tautua toto (‘blood’ service) demands laying down one’s life for the family. Tautua matavela (service with ‘burnt or cooked eyes’) means long and untiring service. Tautua tuavae (service at the feet) means to be constantly ready or alert, on your feet immediately, to carry out however difficult, the matai and aiga’s instructions.

220 Primitive here means of old, and simple refers to the comparatively simple materials used in the absence of any iron and such tools. Wooden and stone tools were the only types available.
221 A Malaga (visitation/trip) to another island for a special occasion would involve not only planning for the actual event, but also of the route they would take, the kind of long boat suitable for the trip, and of course the kinds and amount of provisions that would last them during the malaga.
222 The Samoa Islands are also known as the Navigator islands (named so by the Dutch Navigator Roggeveen who first discovered the Samoa islands in 1722) because of their ability to navigate the ocean
223 Much of this is experienced daily in the lives of the Samoans even in New Zealand. I am also very much involved in my own aiga’s talatalaga and tautua. It is important as in future talatalaga, my service to the aiga would carry much favour especially if a sister or brother or a very close relative of mine is to be put forward as candidate for a title.
All parties connected to the matai title have to be represented at the talatalaga. This talatalaga may be repeated many times until there is a consensus agreement. Each party would come prepared to argue about the suitability of their candidate for the title. Each must have evidence to support their claim. Matai titles are not necessarily handed down from parents to siblings. They are ascribed to people who deserve them through untiring services (tautua) to their respective aiga (extended families). The discussion in a talatalaga would centre on this very important concept of tautua (service).

Another instance where this thinking process would have readily occurred would be during the telling of legends by grandparents. This was an informal time when formality was relaxed and children and adults alike would ask questions of the storyteller.

Legend Telling: A Fa’a Samoa pedagogy

Profound changes in thought processes and in personality and social structure were brought about by the introduction of the print literacy and Christianity in Samoa. The new process of education induced a transformation from one stage of consciousness to another, for example from a pure oral literacy to a mixed oral and print tradition. With the introduction of formal schooling, there was also a shift of emphasis in the way Samoans were taught, and who was responsible for their instruction. The missionaries and later the schoolteachers, in assuming the primary role in education, resulted in the loss of instructional autonomy at the Samoan family and community level.

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234 *Talatalaga* comes from the verb, *talata* that means to speak openly revealing everything in one’s mind about the issue being discussed. Associated with this word are other Samoan words like *tata* = to open, *tala* = a story, *talatala* = to loosen up, to spread out wide, to untangle (to do with a tangled up fishing net). The term *talatalaga* is confined to familial meetings of people that have relatively close family connections, especially when important family matters arise, *matai* titles, weddings or funerals. This sharing of opinions and the openness involved in this sharing within *talatalaga* is not often found in village meetings. The term *fono* is given to the latter, which are also more formal meetings whose membership is usually of people not necessarily related to each other. *O le fono a le nuu* = the village meeting, *ole fono a matai* = the titled people’s meeting, *o le fono a le aualuma ma tamaita'i* = the village unmarried women’s meeting.

As a result of this new form of education, Samoan stories increasingly paled into insignificance, as bible and ‘other’ stories were used in the schools. The habitual telling of legends at night, especially by parents and grandparents, came to be replaced by bible reading and learning of the ‘new’ stories. The relative ease with which people could move from one place to another, with the development of modern transport, encouraged the exodus of people to urban areas and overseas. The resultant more mobile Samoan society increasingly separated the parents and children from grandparents, the legend tellers, and eventually the telling of legends became history. The Print literacy has made the documentation of Samoan stories possible so that Samoans can hear those stories again. The ‘prioritised status’ (the ‘nightly’ ritual of listening to those stories) of story telling however, is a thing of the past. The written stories often do not include the chants and music that traditionally accompany the telling of Samoan stories.

According to MacGill,236 fairy stories, myths and legends provide a very simple way of handing down cultural wisdom and that, even if one generation were to entirely neglect their spiritual wisdom, it could be later retrieved from beneath the sands of time. So long as the children still heard these simple stories, the following generations could then live full and rich lives again.

Legend-Telling/Story telling: Its Implications for Education
A Samoan Framework to guide literacy training in the Samoan home

Bedtime stories are not new to the Samoans. The Grandparents played a vital role in the education of their grandchildren, as they were the storytellers. This legend telling served very significant cultural and educational purposes which include: the handing down of cultural, moral, and spiritual knowledge and values, the acquisition of the cognitive skills of comprehension, listening, language, critical thinking, numeracy skills, music skills, geography skills, cultural history and drama skills.237

Of direct relevance to this discussion is the fact that this traditional Fa’a Samoa art is at least continuous with formal school culture. It has parallels with reading to children, by its nurturing role, in the intellectual and affective development of children. This was also

236 MacGill V, 1995, When the Dragon Stirs, Dragon Enterprises, Dunedin.
237 Tanielu, (Ibid), pp.7-23
where it was of extreme importance in the Fa’a Samoa. The development of an inquiring mind was nurtured and encouraged during this process in the children from a very young age. It was an informal time when children could ask questions without having to observe formality. Children learned spontaneously in a relaxed atmosphere. The only formal order was for them to say, “aue”, every now and then in the course of the story, a cue to the teller that they were paying attention. Story telling can be said to be an indispensable practice in the Fa’a Samoa, as it developed early in the children this critical thinking.

Legend telling was a necessary pastime for an oral culture that depended on the mental facilities of its members to carry on its heritage. It was a form of socialization practice that developed cognitive and affective skills in Samoan children. It was the time when they acquired a set of meanings and cultural values with the type of vocabulary developed with the kind of control and discipline they could identify with.

If Samoan children today could be equipped with those skills, the task of adjusting and adapting to the wider world at school should not be as daunting as many Samoan children are experiencing, as the gap between the home culture and the school could be bridged. The transfer of skills (which children learn during those story telling times) is an educational prerogative. What was there in the Samoan home should be replaced by storybooks but in many homes this is a virtual impossibility for several reasons. The present day realities are products of historical and colonial conditions. Resurrecting the traditional pedagogy by reinventing legend telling is a cultural and educational priority. These educational opportunities, if fostered again in the Samoan home, would provide skills which children could transfer into their learning at school. Participation of parents and family members in the education of their children by providing such support in the home is important. Education begins in the home with parents as the child’s first teachers, as it used to be!

The Legend: “Tui – o le - Tafu’e the Ogre”

I have selected a legend called Tui-o le-Tafu’e the Ogre to illustrate the point made earlier about how a Samoan legend could be instructional and educational, and entertaining at the same time. It also provides elements through which literacy can develop in the Samoan home and which the Pastor’s School could redevelop for the
invaluable skills it offers. I have said earlier that the introduction of formal education in Samoa was also the beginning of the undervaluing of the Fa'a Samoa. Also as Samoans literally threw themselves into learning the print literacy and Bible stories, Samoan stories became increasingly ignored. They were considered with other indigenous practices as too mythical and belonged in a ‘prehistorically, heathenistic, unenlightened and uncivilised’ world.

The relatively recent use of Samoan proverbs and legends by pastors in their sermons and speeches heralds an informal ‘indigenisation’ of the Christian ministry. It is commonly held that Christianity has been ‘indigenised’ by the Samoans, as explained in the chapter on the historical background of the A'oga a le Faifeau. The church is like a Samoan village setting, a meeting place for Samoans to practise their Fa'a Samoa, and this has not been more true as in New Zealand. The Fa'a Samoa hierarchy ‘sits’ quite comfortably (though at times it is a ‘trouble-shooter’) with the hierarchy of the local congregation. The origins of this go back to the initial contact between the paramount chief Malietoa and the LMS missionaries in 1830 when the Samoan chief transferred his own status and honour to the Christian God in favour of a lesser position.

The legend below is an allegory that the older generations of Samoans are familiar with. It is an entertaining story, which has a moral and deeper meaning. I have presented only a much-shortened version of the legend. Its inclusion in the discussion is necessary to illustrate some of the educational skills and values of legend telling.

The legend goes:

There was once a couple in the island of Savaii. Their names were Tapitofoa and Ogafoa. One day they had a child; a boy and they named him Tui. The next baby was also a boy. They named him Tui. The next baby again was a boy and they also named him Tui. The couple kept on having babies until there were ten boys. All were named Tui.

Then one day, another baby was born. This time it was a girl, and they named her Sina. Sina grew into a beautiful girl with long, silky black hair, and the parents and brothers doted on her.

\[238\] Mara et al, (Ibid)
One day the parents said to their children, "We are going to visit your father's family. Look after your sister, Tui and Tui and Tui... and do not leave her alone in the house. Look after her and make sure you do what she wants."

Then the parents were gone. One day, while Sina and her brothers were playing outside, Sina saw this beautiful white bird, the seagull flying overhead, and she cried, "I want that bird, I want that bird. Please go and get that bird for me."

The ten boys went looking for the bird. They searched far and wide; over the mountains and down the valleys they went. It became dark and the boys were still looking. Sina became really afraid being all alone in the house. Then she started calling out to the boys, "Tui and Tui and Tui and Tui..."

She called out the name Tui ten times. An ogre named Tui-ole-tafu'e, Tui for short heard her. Well, Sina heard this gruff and throaty voice say, "O... e, what do you want eh?"

Sina looked up and saw this giant of a man, with long dirty hair and beard. Then she screamed! The ogre said, "You wait, if you don't do as I say, something terrible is going to happen to you."

Sina crying said, "Oh...Alright, I...I will do anything you ask, a... anything."

"Come and sit down. You are to pick the nits off my hair," said the ogre in a throaty voice, which made Sina more afraid.

Sina sat down, and immediately the ogre lay down with his head on Sina's lap. Soon he slept and started snoring so very loudly and so very 'gruffly' that Sina was so scared she could die. The older nine boys came back and saw this huge and fearsome person sleeping on their sister's lap, and were so frightened that they all ran off to hide. The youngest boy, who was the last to arrive, saw his sister's predicament and went to her help. He helped Sina to lift the ogre's head off her lap taking taking every care so they do not wake the ogre. Together they carefully tied the long tufts of the ogre's hair to the posts of the house and then they took off. When the ogre woke up, he could not move his head. With all his might he pulled and pulled bringing the house down on himself. That was the end of the ogre.

**THE CHANT:**

Come Lady Sina, Come Lady Sina

The female child of the covenant  
You cried for the seagull  
You wanted its beautiful feathers  
Down the valleys and over the mountains  
Here is your bird, I am going  
Before I fall and faint
During the telling of the legend the storyteller would often stop to ask or to answer questions. The intermittent reversion to discussion would revolve around the following:

1. The names: What are the names of the parents? (An explanation of the origins of the parents’ names would follow) They derive from a very useful tree in Samoa, the fau tree. Tapito-fau and Oga-fau. The explanation of names would involve - their origins - their meanings. Tapito means a side or small piece, and oga means a big chunk, the concepts of size - big and small and parts of a tree.

2. The skills of numeracy: Counting from 1 to 10/11.

3. The gender of the children (Boys and one girl). The boys have the same name, Tui to differentiate them from their one sister. Girls and boys’ names. Sina is always a girl’s name.

4. Geography: Flora and Fauna: The island of Savaii, the biggest island in Samoa, the mountains, the valleys and the birds.

5. The Moral and Values: In the Fa’a Samoa, there is a feagaiga (covenant) between the brother and sister. The brother protects the sister, lays down his life for her. The brothers always accompany girls wherever they go. Girls are not to be left alone in the house. One of Sina’s brothers at least should have stayed behind with Sina, or when it was growing dark they should have come home then. In the Fa’a Samoa we say, O le mea uliuli o le mata o le tama o lona tuafafine, literally translated, the black part of the Samoan boy’s eye is his sister. (May perhaps have the analogy in the English saying – She is the apple of her father’s eye?).

6. Music: The storyteller sings the chant and the audience joins in.

7. Comprehension skills: Why, Where, did the boys go? What is the moral? And so on. The moral analysis is also part of comprehension.

During legend-telling time, caution to formality was relaxed, as children and adults alike shared views and ideas about the story without paying heed to who ought to speak first or have the last say. Children learning in a relatively happy and relaxed atmosphere, one that was conducive to learning.
A Difference in degree not in kind

The analysis of the legend above demonstrates how a Fa’a Samoa practice cultivated literacy skills necessary for the development of creative and critical thought in Samoan children.

The difference perhaps in terms of the critical thought required by the conventional school learning would not be in the ‘kind’ of thinking but in the degree and frequency to which this mental facility is employed in the Fa’a Samoa. Understandably so, it would have been much less used in a more pragmatic culture where educational instruction was given by example, learning from observation and imitation of relatives, peers and neighbours. But even with a more practical oriented culture, there would have been a questioning of some practices for example, as to how and why certain things were done this way or that way, why certain species of taro or yams for example would grow well in some types of soils and not in others. During the practical process of planting the fathers would have explained to their children why. Likewise, in the case of Samoan women and their daughters, the questioning of the ways of weaving the various different mats and baskets, how to differentiate between the respective edible and inedible shell fish and vegetables during food gathering would have been in order. These are developed from an early age as the children accompanied their parents during their daily activities.

Critical thinking is a process that is present in every human being in different degrees of intensity depending on the goals and purposes for which it would be developed, how it is nurtured, how often it is used and how urgent the need is to use it. Practice makes perfect. In today’s school, for students to be successful they have to nurture, develop and perfect this mental facility. It is a good thing to be critical; to be aware and be wary of what is going on. On the other hand, critical thought has been ‘reified’ to mean that some people have it and some do not. I make a strong stand on this in the discussion about underachievement of Samoan children in the previous chapter. I cite the provision of Samoan and Maori education that was manually, rather than mentally orientated. In the case of Samoa, it prevented the introduction of higher education despite the demands made by the Samoans. The lack of resources and teaching personnel foiled the underlying reason and the hegemonic stance of the colonisers. In school, critical thought is
synonymous with abstract thinking. Children in the Fa’a Samoa mostly learn to do things in informal but more practically oriented situations. Critical thought is employed relatively less frequently and with much less immediacy. There are thus fewer chances of using their critical thinking processes and especially so as people live and work according to Samoan time,239 which is within any time, two hours, a day, a month or even a year later.

In school, children learn in a more formal situation as well as to a timetable that controls what and when to learn. While special occasions may demand formality in the Fa’a Samoa, in a child’s own family a less formal and relaxed existence is the norm. The father may take his son to the taro patch for some planting or other garden work, and the child may be taught how to plant or he may just be left to observe and practise with his own digging stick or do his own thing. In such an informal situation, the child learns at his or her own pace, at times with a person directing his or her learning on a one to one basis, without the pressure of having to complete work according to a timetable. Learning is relatively spontaneous and likewise is the need to employ a critical thinking process. In the classroom and for this particular child, he or she suddenly finds that one has to work many times as quickly, thinks many times as deeply and consequently fails as many times to cope or catch up.

Samoan Oratory: A Fa’a Samoa Pedagogy

In Samoan oratory, critical thought is integral. Samoan orators (tulafale or talking chiefs) may be referred to as the intellectuals of Samoa because they are expected to have the skills to argue, to debate, to think on their feet all the time, to be able to employ lateral thinking when needed, and to have wit and good memories. Paramount chiefs (ali'i sili) may call on their talking chiefs any time, and many times on short notice, to speak at gatherings or to make presentations on their behalf. In a fa'atau (verbal exchange among orators bidding for who to speak at a special occasion), orators must have the skills to

239 There is no word for time in the Fa’a Samoa, as we know it in the modern school and world of work. The word used is avanoa, which means when there is a ‘chance’ or space, and time is ‘relational’ to what a person does. I will do the cooking as soon as I finish weeding the taro patch. When I have a chance from looking after my sick mother I will come for a visit. We now have a word ‘taimi’, derived from its English version time.
analyse and synthesise what other orators say to prepare his retorts. It is like campaigning for an election. In order to be the speaker of the event, the orators have to outdo and outwit each other by expounding on the reasons why one should or should not be the chosen speaker. This is no mean feat because an orator must be able to speak with authority on the points he puts forward. The art of good oratory is to speak with dignity and authority and at the same time showing respect (fa’aaloalo). An orator must make critically sound and intelligent remarks in arguing about his rights to orate at the occasion. This oratorical debate is an essential part of the Fa’a Samoa, even though it can be lengthy and may become a heated argument in which case a paramount chief might put a stop to it. When this happens the paramount chief would usually speak himself, and this would be a poor reflection on the ability of the concerned orators to carry out a proper fa’atau. In such an occasion, the paramount chief’s role is to fa’afilemu ma fa’alelei se fa’atau ua fai le mafaufau ma le le fa’aaloalo (calm down and smooth out an over-heated debate that has developed into a disrespectful argument among orators). It means that orators have failed to carry out their role as stipulated by the Fa’a Samoa.

The debate is a show of oratorical talent and ability. The winner of the debate is often rewarded materially (a few fine mats or dollars as often done today). Socially, his status as a good orator is highly regarded and he brings honour not only to himself but also to his high chief, his aiga and his village. This is much more important and satisfying than any material rewards. An orator’s task is not easy and he must be prepared mentally most of the time. The ability of a person to orate is part of the criteria used to assess the suitability of a candidate to a matai tulafale (an orator or talking chief) status.

In situational and experiential learning, such as in Samoa and other Pacific cultures, a more abstract and critical thinking process would not have been used as often, but it was there, because the practical knowledge and skills learned are lived and experienced on a daily basis. As Professor Helu-Thaman, a Tongan educationist argued:

For most of us who still identify with Pacific cultures, culture is not something to be defined; rather it is something that is lived and continually demonstrated as a matter of behaviour and performance. Within each culture there are processes and contexts within which values, knowledge and understanding are analysed, stored and transmitted from one generation to another.240

In the analysis of those values, knowledge and understanding, critical thinking would naturally occur. The Fa’a Samoa would not have survived for centuries without this thinking process. Even if it occurred in small doses and not as often, it would have been vital to their existence and survival. There was no great need for any urgency for its use as there was plenty of time, as the Fa’a Samoa 'evolved' \(^{241}\) empirically, over scores of centuries. The notion of the Fa’a Samoa or Polynesian cultures as having no critical thinkers, and Samoans as having little critical thinking ability should not be entertained nor condoned at all.

**We are what we are today because of the choices made yesterday**

**Historical events of great impact**

Any real contact of Samoa with the West, as said before, started in 1830 with the coming of the missionaries. This contact also marked the beginning of Samoan 'history.' It aimed at total societal change and consequently revolutionized the Fa’a Samoa in many ways, comparatively speaking, in a matter of a few years. People who had been used to evolutionary \(^{242}\) changes in their lives cannot cope as quickly nor as efficiently with any relatively revolutionary and sudden changes to their way of life, within a short time. There have to be adaptive strategies and orientation processes in place for the smooth transition from one stage to another. While there were spans between the old and the new educational systems, these were not encouraged nor developed. Even though many Samoans were mentally prepared to advance educationally, they were not 'smoothly transitioned' into the next step up in their education. This has been the dilemma for the Samoans since contact with the West, attempting to cope with growing up in two 'large' worlds, theirs and the Palagi's. The children in particular are most affected by these changes. Children grow up to become adults, parents and elders, carrying with them the marks, bitter and sweet, of this dilemma. Any expectation for these people to snap out of this dilemma is unrealistic, because those much sought after adaptive strategies and orientation processes to bridge the gap are still not in place.

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\(^{241}\) The term evolved as used here refers to a slow and undramatic change occurring over a long time.

\(^{242}\) These are only very gradual changes that happened slowly over many years.
Political Expediency always takes precedence over the Learner

In the seven years from 1995 to 2001, the following account of the history of colonial Samoa was an important part of my lectures in one of the education courses (165.207) at the University of Auckland. Most of the students over the years in this course were Maori and Pacific Islanders. The highlights of these lectures for many students have been the historical events, the part of their Pacific history that most had never heard about, and for me as a Samoan lecturer it was an opportunity to talk about a history that was more or less ‘hush-hushed.’ That is, I never got to study it in school in Samoa while pursuing a New Zealand school-based curriculum.

When Hon. Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand apologised during the 40th Samoa independence celebrations in June 2002, for the ‘atrocities’ done to the Samoans during the New Zealand administration of the country, I was hoping that those students would be able to understand her act, because they would know the history to which it refers.

When I originally wrote this chapter in October 2001, I never dreamt then that this ‘piece’ of history would become a controversial issue in New Zealand and Samoa the next year 2002, with the formal apology given to Samoa by the Prime Minister of New Zealand. I had thought that this part of Samoan history was pushed to the background. The New Zealand Herald newspaper at the time (May-June) printed articles that depicted mixed feelings and ambivalence amongst Samoans. Why now and not before? Why has it become politically expedient now and not after the actual events, in particular the peaceful Mau Movement march (1929) and the influenza epidemic (1918) that killed eight (including the leader of the movement, Paramount Chief Tupua Tamasese), and 8,500 people in two weeks respectively.

I read the related articles in the local newspapers of the week leading up to Samoa’s 40th independence anniversary (June 1st 2002) with much interest. I even thought of having part of this writing published in the New Zealand Herald, especially the story below, handed down from grandparents, survivors of the epidemic, to their children to the
grandchildren, which would have added another view. The number of people slain by the epidemic in Samoa was almost three times the number of people that died during the September 11th attack in 2001 on the United States of America. The whole world became and still is much involved and justifiably so, because terrorism is an evil that must be stopped. In the case of Samoa, the New Zealand administrators, Colonel Logan Richardson was associated with the flu epidemic and Richardson the oppression that gave rise to the Mau movement. Allen was the New Zealand administrator at the time of the Black Saturday when the New Zealand police fired the fatal shots that killed the Mau leader.

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The point I stress here is the fact that 8,500 people died, from a population of 45,000 already 'denuded' by introduced diseases, was comparatively 'genocide'. The official apology had to wait until 84 (since 1918) and 71 (since 1929) years later respectively. It was unexpected after such a long lapse of time. The New Zealand Prime Minister’s apology was a most noble, honourable and justified gesture as so many people were allowed to die in an epidemic that could have been avoided and the Mau movement’s march was a peaceful one. Help was at hand in American Samoa, yet politics seemed to have over-ridden justice and humanity. As one friend rhetorically said, "What’s in an apology anyway? Mere words! Promises were made to help the country after independence. Who has really benefited from the New Zealand occupation of Samoa?"

The history of contact with the West is full of strange and rather ironical political situations. For example, this history tells me that my mother hails from Eastern Samoa and my father is from Western Samoa; two different Samoas that used to be one, that speak the same language and practise a similar culture. The country was split up into Western and Eastern Samoa in 1899, a decision made by the three great powers, Great Britain, USA and Germany.243 Western Samoa went to Germany and became known as German Samoa, while Eastern Samoa went to the USA,244 and became American Samoa. As a direct result of this partitioning, the relative ease by which the islanders had visited one another at any time without restrictions suddenly was not there any more. Thus 1899 was the year, figuratively speaking, when the ‘twin sisters’ were separated from their ‘mother’ and from each other. While people before then had often rowed their paopao

244 The two Samoas became German Samoa and American Samoa respectively.
(canoes) and fautasi (long boats) back and forth without any restrictions (apart from natural disasters like cyclones or earthquakes) to see parents or relatives, they were suddenly banned from doing so. Political expediency took precedence over a people's normal way of life and close family connections. The power play between Germany and the United States came to the fore as more important.

Immigration since then has become more restrictive. A ‘Western’ Samoan that wants to travel to American Samoa would have to get a visa to go there. With my New Zealand passport I can visit my mother's family in American Samoa any time without a visa. If I use my Western Samoa passport, I have to get a visa. That is one story of our history with an ironical twist to it. Another consequence of this split is the comparison made between the two Samoas, where Western Samoa is known as the poorer sister and Eastern Samoa the richer one. Although Western Samoa approached American Samoa about reuniting and becoming an independent nation before 1962, the pull of ‘Uncle Sam’s’ dollar perhaps was too strong for American Samoa to sever ties with the most powerful nation in the world. In 1914 New Zealand troops, on behalf of Great Britain, took over Western Samoa from the Germans.

The Samoans were not prepared, either, for the indentured Chinese and Melanesian labourers ‘imported’ by Germany to work the plantations as the Samoans showed no desire to forsake their customary village life to become wage earners. German plantation interests claimed 19 percent of Samoa's land. During the German Samoa years, German planters produced copra, rubber and cocoa for export. They formed a planters’ association that was licensed to import Chinese and Melanesian labourers, on three-year terms with provision for two-year renewals and compulsory repatriation. All Chinese and Melanesians without Samoan families, except for those who had Samoan wives and children, were eventually sent back. The indentured labour policy was one of economic expediency that some Samoans did not like and one that has become problematic for some Pacific nations.

\[245\] The long boats are much wider and longer than the two-seater canoes. A long boat can be built to carry up to 50 people. Long boat racing is a highlight of every independence anniversary celebration.

\[246\] Logan to Liverpool, 27 October, 1914 In Boyd (Ibid) p. 116-117
A most disastrous event in Samoan history

Another story of great impact was the disastrous influenza epidemic (briefly mentioned before), which hit Western Samoa in 1918, killing almost 25 percent of its population. The epidemic was directly attributed to the failure to quarantine the ship Talune on arrival from Auckland where the influenza was already raging. Lack of medical services and Samoan susceptibility to introduced diseases contributed to the heavy toll. Medical help was not available until a relief expedition arrived three weeks later from Australia. Foreign diseases had been the great destroyer in Samoa in the nineteenth century and the fear of epidemics, coupled with the belief that the Europeans were the cause of them, was widespread.

The survivors of the epidemic felt that the authorities could have prevented the disaster as the Americans did in American Samoa, and could have obtained more immediate medical relief from American Samoa. Logan, the New Zealand administrator in Western Samoa at the time, under great strain because there was no advice from New Zealand of any danger, had suffered severe criticism from American critics during the war years. He misunderstood an offer of help from the governor of American Samoa and closed down all wireless communication. After the epidemic, the Samoans requested a royal commission to investigate the circumstances leading to the epidemic. A petition was presented by the Samoans, requesting that Western Samoa be handed over to the United States or failing that, be administered directly under the Colonial Office but on no account by the Government of New Zealand. They had learnt from bitter experience that they could not stand-alone in the modern world, but they naturally preferred to look to the dignity and authority of a big power to protect them, not a small dominion. Provided they were left to live in their own way, it was in a sense immaterial whether their protector was Germany, Britain or the United States.

The epidemic struck at a time when there was a debate going on about who would administer Western Samoa at the end of the First World War. A New Zealand military force led by Colonel Robert Logan on behalf of the British Government seized and

247 Boyd, (Ibid), p.119
occupied the German colony in August 1914, and Logan became the administrator in Western Samoa pending a decision by the League of Nations. In 1919 New Zealand, much to Samoa’s consternation (in the aftermath of the epidemic) was officially given a mandate to administer Western Samoa. The mandate was not formally conferred until December 1920, and the New Zealand Parliament could not pass the Samoa Act incorporating the Samoan Constitutional Order until its next session in November 1921. The Act did not finally come into force until May 1922. The long delay in introducing civil government and enacting a constitution meant that Samoa’s affairs were in chaos. Although the delay was largely the fault of forces beyond New Zealand’s control, the Samoans added it to their list of grievances against New Zealand.249

Logan discovered that the Samoans did not approve of the indentured labour system. Logan personally sympathized with such feelings and felt that it was his duty to help the Samoans ‘to keep their race pure.’ He sought and obtained British approval for a repatriation policy with short-term re-indentures to cope with labour needs and shipping difficulties.250 Tate succeeded Logan, who was repatriated to New Zealand and was not reappointed to administer Western Samoa, who was still reeling from the effects of the epidemic disaster. Like his predecessor, Tate showed a genuine concern for Samoan well being. In supporting a policy that aimed at the reasonable conservation of native interests, Tate advised the Samoans to, ‘always go slow; do not go too fast.’251

Whose history gets to be told? What type of history? The history of colonization, the history of assimilation, the history of resistance or the history of independence?

If the history of Samoa was never studied during my generation’s schooling, how can we be critical of or learn from it? It is only now that I am able to be critical of what went on as I have become more and more aware of my own history. This study especially has done that for me. Awareness by Samoan children of their own history is important not only for an appreciation of who they are but more importantly of why they are what they are. History not only repeats itself, it continues to shape people’s lives in various ways.

249 Gray to External, 16 Mar. 1920, In Boyd (ibid) p. 127.
250 Logan to Liverpool, 12 Apr. 1917, 14 July 1917, 15 Dec. 1917 In Boyd (ibid) pp. 117-118
251 Tate, in a Speech to the Fono of Faipule, 16 March, In Boyd, (ibid), p.131.
not always of their own making but of what others, such as politicians, may see as appropriate.

I have learned from this bit of history that the Samoan people had generally led an unstable and insecure existence because of dramatic disruptions to their lives. They had to contend with several different cultures; their own, the church and the colonizers. While they were recovering from the onslaught of Christianity on their supposedly ‘barbaric’ and ‘heathenistic’ culture, they were thrust into the claws of three great powers, which unilaterally made the decision to partition them into two different colonies. Then some of their land was taken from them. It did not help when an influx of indentured labourers was suddenly imposed on them.

The First World War and the epidemic that wiped out many of their people must have been harrowing and threatening times. Stories of the latter disaster handed down by word of mouth to our generations will likewise be related to coming ones. Mass graves were dug, and bodies piled up because they were just thrown in. They were extremely sad and sorry sights. They passed on without the dignity of a proper burial. There was no one to do that when everyone was suffering. Some were ‘hurried’ to their deaths because there was not enough food to go round as the less affected, though weak, tried to gather some strength to cook food for the children and the elderly. My father was four years old then. He was born in 1914. In the village where his father was the pastor, a mass grave was dug not far from the pastor’s house. He also became a pastor in this village for 14 years. A mound of lime indicates where the mass grave used to be. It is left well alone by superstitious people who would scare the hell out of any one that might do anything unbecoming to it.

The Samoans showed resilience in the midst of adversity. Even with the great reduction in their population, they survived to fight for their independence from colonialism, and became the first Pacific nation to do so. The history of Samoan education that I write about in Chapter Two tells of the struggles by Western Samoa for better education for her people as well as for political independence.
What happened to Samoan education while all that went on?

The missionaries and Samoan pastors carried on with the education of the Samoans, with intermittent disruptions. The First World War did not affect the people that much as it was being fought far away in Europe. The presence of the New Zealand troops in Samoa though might have been disconcerting. The influenza epidemic would have closed down the schools for quite some time. Because medical help did not arrive until three weeks later, the aftermath of the epidemic would have meant weeks or months of recuperation. It is inevitable that the education of Samoans had to be put on hold during these disastrous times. Partly because of those reasons, and others detailed in the previous chapter, Samoan education has always been in a ‘catch up’ mode, a mode that has become the norm for Samoan education up to now!

In Summary

The earlier section of the chapter highlights some of the Fa’a Samoa knowledge and skills that Samoan children acquire in their continual contacts with, and participation in, various Fa’a Samoa occasions. Reference is made also to an important component of Samoan indigenous education, that of legend telling, with a view to reviving it because it is now a thing of the past. Its educational implications, clearly, have spans with literacy learning in conventional schools. Critical thinking, greatly encouraged in the latter school, is nurtured and developed in legend telling.

The latter part of the chapter is a critical response to some crucial issues of Samoa’s history. They are ‘lived’ experiences, and even though painful and bitter, they have social and moral implications for Samoan education. Samoan children need to know about their past in order to put their future in a better, or perhaps the right perspective and understanding.
Chapter Four

The historical development of the A’oga a le Faifeau

Introduction

The initial contact process between people of different cultures is extremely important, especially if one group of people is aiming to introduce its own culture into another. The process may involve either acceptance or resistance on the part of the receiving culture. It is extremely important also to introduce this chapter with a discussion of this initial contact process between the Samoans and the LMS missionaries because the consequent formation of the institution of the A’oga a le Faifeau depended on the success of this initial contact. Some of the important reasons behind this success are discussed below.

The Initial Contact

According to John Williams, the pioneer LMS missionary in Samoa, no other islands visited before by missionaries had offered a secure and peaceable settlement on the initial visit. The initial contact between the Samoans and the LMS missionaries was peaceful, with no resistance. Historians Wright and Fry said that, “the reception of the missionaries in Samoa was exceedingly cordial and although a civil war was raging on the neighbouring island of Upolu, Malietoa, the leading chief, came in person to welcome them.” Williams gives a generous account below of his first and most amicable meeting with the paramount chief Malietoa at his home in Sapapali village:

We scarcely expected to secure any more than a safe and peaceable settlement for our teachers, and even that had not been obtained on the first visit at any other islands where missionaries had been previously established. In some places, indeed, the teachers landed at the peril of their lives and in almost all the Hervey Islands they were plundered and ill used, while here they were welcomed with open arms both by chiefs and by people who vied with one another in expressions of kindness and delight. Instead of losing their property, four excellent dwellings were given to them and the very best and largest house in the settlement was set apart for public worship and instruction. In addition to this, we ourselves were permitted to land in safety, and to live amongst the people not only without molestation and dread, but distinguished by every mark of their attention and respect and importuned by neighbouring chiefs to furnish them also with missionaries.

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252 Williams, J, 1888, Missionary Enterprises in the South-Sea Islands, Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work, Philadelphia, pp. 267-298
253 Wright, L and Fry, M I, 1936, Puritans in the South Seas, Henry Holt and Company, New York, p151
254 Williams, (Ibid), p. 267
The relatively peaceful contact between the Samoans and the first LMS missionaries, and the subsequent success of their mission, is not to be taken for granted though as a sign that the Samoans were ‘totally’ overpowered or overwhelmed. It is important to keep in mind that how this process was worked out, and its consequences for Samoa depended largely on the particular indigenous context in which it occurred. Resistance to, negotiation with and manipulation of external forces such as the missionaries and colonisers, meant that the subsequent social (including religious and educational) political and economic changes were not just imposed.255

Malietoa Vainuupo, Nafanua’s prophecy and the LMS Missionaries

The paramount chief Malietoa is renowned in Samoa and in the writings about Christianity in the Pacific, as the man who accepted Christianity in Samoa. The story about his acceptance of the new religion in a most peaceful manner, owes its beginnings to a prophecy made by the Samoan war goddess and prophetess named Nafanua. The story goes that Malietoa was the last paramount chief to request from the war goddess a head for his government. When he finally went to her, she had already appointed all the heads to the other paramount chiefs. She then said to Malietoa, “Tali i lagi se ao o lou malo” (Await a head (ao) for your government from heaven). When John Williams arrived in Savaii, Malietoa was in Upolu fighting a war. He left for Savaii immediately, when he was told of the arrival of the LMS missionaries, on the premise that this was probably the head of his government from heaven, according to Nafanua’s (the war goddess) prophecy.

Malietoa welcomed the LMS missionaries with open arms, and the Christian God became the head of his government. The honour accorded him as the paramount chief and how he was addressed were likewise bestowed upon the Christian God. The address, Lau Afioga (Your Highness) was given for the Christian God, while an address of lesser significance, Lau Susuga, he gave for himself. The pastors were thus given status as paramount chiefs, even though they were not to hold chiefly titles. They were to be addressed as ‘ao o Fa’alupega’ (heads of all genealogies) or feagaiga tau lagi (heavenly

covenant). The pastor was to be seen as O le sui vaaia o le Atua i le lalolagi (God’s representative on earth) and thus was to be served and revered.256

The success of the LMS mission can also be attributed to the following story. Even before Paramount Chief Malietoa had met with the LMS missionaries, negotiation had gone on in Tonga between them and Fauea, a Samoan matai Williams met when he arrived in Tonga in early August 1830.

While in Tonga: The Meeting with Fauea and his wife Puaseisei

Fauea was a matai from the village of Sapapalii in Savaii, which is also the village of Malietoa. Fauea and his wife Puaseisei went to Tonga by canoe and, being caught in strong winds, were stranded there. They stayed on for eleven years. John Williams was in fact on his way to Fiji via Tonga. His original travel itinerary was to go from Tonga to the Fiji Islands then to the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) and then to the Navigators’ Group (Samoa).257 John Williams and Charles Barff, LMS missionaries, became acquainted with Fauea and his wife who, during their time in Tonga had converted to Christianity. A request made to Williams by the Wesleyan missionaries in Tongatapu to leave the Fiji Islands to them, plus Fauea’s persistent persuasion of John Williams to go to Samoa first and William’s own conviction that this was the Lord’s will, were reasons enough to convince him to sail straight to Samoa.

256 Perhaps for many that do not know this story, it can be very difficult for them to understand why Samoan people accord so much honour and respect to their pastors. It was a tradition that indirectly began with Nafanua’s prophecy and became manifest in the actual initial contact between the paramount chief Malietoa and the LMS missionaries, Williams and Barff. For the Samoan people who had been used to treating their paramount chiefs in such manner, it was just a matter of transferring their loyalty and allegiance to the pastors (the new paramount chiefs without matai titles). The same went for their relationship to their god Tagaloa-a-lagi and the Christian God. However, this relatively new high status of the Samoan pastor came with all the responsibilities and expectations that Samoans have of their paramount chiefs, plus his religious duties. The honoured position definitely does not make the Samoan pastor indispensable. Just as in the Fa’a Samoa practice, where the chief can be stripped of his title if the aiga’s expectations of his obligations and responsibilities as the head of the aiga are not efficiently carried out, likewise the pastor is expected to perform accordingly. A ‘fall’ from a pedestal can be very painful and demeaning. Many Samoan pastors have experienced this. It is a fact of life and is like in any other career situation. Positions and statuses are only names and titles. More important are the good interactions and communications that should be nurtured between the individual pastor and his parishioners, and between the chief and members of his aiga. These make up the more important parts of living and develop the values that are more important.

257 Hutton, ibid, pp. 138-139. Samoa is known in many history books by the name, The ‘Navigator Islands’ conferred upon them by the French Navigator De Bougainville in 1768, by reason of the great number of canoes he observed flitting to and fro along the coast.
According to Hutton:

Fauea was very anxious that his countrymen should be instructed in the “new religion”. He (Fauea) is represented as an exceptionally sensible and intelligent barbarian, actuated chiefly by motives of personal ambition and interest, but who, during his eleven years of expatriation, had learned to respect the spiritual and humanising influences of Christianity. His wife appears to have been a truly estimable woman, and a sincere Christian, and subsequently co-operated with the missionaries in a highly efficient manner. Those gentlemen, (Williams and Barff), it may well be imagined, were not a little pleased when Fauea asked permission to accompany them on their projected mission to his fellow-islanders, and they frankly admit that their early successes were largely due to his shrewdness and direction. For instance he counselled them to restrain their native teachers from premature denunciations of the Samoan pastimes and social usages.

Fauea became a most important ‘counsellor’ for the missionaries. He warned them to tread slowly and carefully and not be too hasty in banning those Samoan practices that they might consider indecent and unchristian. Wright and Fry also refer to this warning by Fauea to the missionaries saying:

In order not to prejudice the Samoans against the white men’s religion, Fauea the friendly chief who had returned from Tongatapu, warned the missionaries not to condemn at once the games and sports of the people; later when they had won the confidence of the Samoans, Fauea assured them they could increase their power and enforce laws against dancing, boat-racing and other iniquities. It was advice that was well heeded by the missionaries.

While at Sea: On the way to Samoa

A mutual and ‘reciprocal’ relationship had developed between Williams and Fauea. Sailing to Samoa enabled Fauea to reach his own home in a more rapid and a much safer passage than he would have if he had to row his canoe back. Williams’ account tells of how Fauea, though converted, was not as keen a Christian as his wife, but he wanted his people to have the new religion and its civilising influences. He wanted to show his own people his new ‘life style’ and knowledge of the gospel and the print literacy. Fauea might also have had political motives. As Wright and Fry said of him, “This chief had not accompanied the missionaries to Samoa for nothing, he proposed to rise to power through the missionaries’ influence.”

258 Hutton, (Ibid) p.142
259 Wright and Fry, (Ibid) p.152
260 Wright and Fry, (Ibid), p.152
On the other hand, Williams had his own ‘ulterior’ motives. Fauea was a godsend to Williams for several reasons. He had heard of the altercation between the Samoans and La Perouse’s crew when eleven were slain. Fauea would effect a more peaceful contact, him being a Samoan and a chief (matai). Williams found in Fauea a keen facilitator that would greatly assist his work in converting the Samoans to Christianity. Fauea being Samoan would provide a more convincing story and would effect a more rapid conversion of his own people. His outward appearance, a Samoan in Palagi clothes, and with knowledge of Palagi education as well as owner of Palagi goods, was the role model to win over his own people. Fauea’s long absence from home, his status as a matai as well as being a relative of Malietoa, would carry favour and respect among his own people.

Fauea’s presence had certainly been a great help, to put it mildly. Williams interpreted all this as divine providence. Tippett in support of Williams said, “Who turned John Williams away from Fiji to go to Samoa? Who provided Fauea, the Samoan who was converted in Tonga, as a spokesman? Who directed that ship to Samoa at precisely the time they had no High Priest? Who opened the door to the converted Samoan to witness to his friends who thought he was lost? I believe the Lord was in this.” Whatever the reason, Williams was greatly impressed with Fauea and the decision to take him on board is made clear in how Williams described this Samoan matai:

In all our conversations with that individual we were impressed with his intelligence, shrewdness and good sense, but never more so than on the morning we arrived at the place of our destination, when he led us to a private part of the vessel and requested us to desire the teachers not to commence their labors among his countrymen by condemning their canoe-races, their dances, and other amusements to which they were much attached, lest in the very onset they should conceive a dislike to the religion which imposed such restraints.” Tell them, said he, “to be diligent in teaching the people, to make them wise and then their hearts will be afraid and they themselves will put away that which is evil. Let the ‘word’ prevail and get a firm hold upon them, and then we may with safety adopt measures which at first would prove injurious.” Thus we were constrained to admire the goodness of God in providentially bringing to us an individual whose character and connections so admirably fitted him to advance the objects we had in view.
During this trip Fauea related to Williams the story about the Samoan chief Tamafainga\(^{263}\) the ‘devil’, as he was referred to, because he terrorised the Samoans. This story (I wonder) if told earlier to Williams perhaps could have changed his mind. It was a strategy leaving this story until they were so close to Samoa. Fauea was determined that Williams would not be given any cause not to go to his home island, and perhaps Fauea also predicted that a bit of fear might assist Williams’ loyalty to him. Although Williams found the information rather discouraging, there was no alternative but to proceed, in the belief that divine Providence would protect them.

**On arrival in Samoa**

Fauea directed the missionary ship “Savali o le Filemu”\(^{264}\) (The Messenger of Peace) to his own village of Sapapalii in Savaii, and consequently to his paramount chief Malietoa. Nearing shore, people arrived in their canoes and Fauea asked them about Tamafaiga the ‘devil’ and was told that he was slain a few days before. As Williams reported:

Fauea asked a variety of questions, to all of which he received satisfactory answers. At length, with a tremulous voice, as if afraid to hear the reply, he said, “And where is Tamafainga?” “Oh,” shouted the people, with evident delight, “he is dead, he is dead! He was killed only about ten or twelve days ago.” Frantic with joy at this unexpected intelligence, Fauea leaped about the vessel and ran toward me, shouting, “Ua mate le Devolo, ua mate le Devolo!” etc. (“the devil is dead, the devil is dead! Our work is done: the devil is dead”). Astonished at this singular exclamation, I inquired what he meant, when he replied, “The obstacle we dreaded is removed. Tamafainga is dead; they have killed him. The people now will receive the lotu (religion)” From this intercourse we were convinced that Fauea was really a chief, for his countrymen addressed him as such, the common people kissed his hands and the chiefs saluted him by rubbing noses.\(^{265}\)

The death of Tamafaiga was great news to the LMS missionaries. It could not have happened at a more opportune time for them. The Samoans had not had time to choose Tamafaiga’s successor who, according to Williams, would have put up some resistance to their mission.

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\(^{263}\) The name Tamafainga is spelled without the n before the g in the Samoan language and books written in Samoan. While English writing of other Polynesian languages such as Maori and Rarotongan used ng rather than g alone this was not the case in the introduction of spelling in Samoan. I refer to this later in the chapter with the discussion of the Samoan alphabet.

\(^{264}\) Savali o le Filemu is the translation of the name of the missionary ship, Messenger of Peace.

Messenger=savali, filemu=peace

\(^{265}\) Williams, (Ibid)
Fauea amongst his own people

At the time of their arrival, Malietoa was fighting a war in Upolu to avenge the slaying of Tamafaiga to whom he was related. While a message was dispatched to Malietoa in Upolu about the arrival of the LMS missionaries in Savaii, Fauea became the indispensable guide and liaison person for the missionaries. He was already negotiating with his own people, trying to convince them to accept the new religion. Fauea gave a persuasive speech, which must have given his Samoan brethren hope for a future in peace and harmony with Christianity. As Fauea said:

Can the religion of these wonderful papalangis (foreigners) be anything but wise and good? said our friend to his naked countrymen, who had filled the deck and who with outstretched necks and gaping mouths were eagerly catching the words as they fell from his lips. "Let us look at them, and then look at ourselves. Their heads are covered while ours are exposed to the heat of the sun and the wet of the rain; their bodies are clothed all over with beautiful cloth, while we have nothing but a bandage of leaves around our waist; they have clothes upon their very feet while ours are like the dogs. And then look at their axes, their scissors and their other property! How rich they are!" They all appeared to understand and appreciate this reasoning and gazed on us with great interest and surprise. Some of them began to examine the different parts of our dress, when not meeting with any repulse one pulled off my shoe. Startled at the appearance of my foot with the stocking on, he whispered to Fauea, "What extraordinary people these papalangis are! They have no toes as we have." "Oh," said our facetious friend, "did I not tell you that they had clothes upon their feet? Feel them and you will find that they have toes as well as ourselves."

Fauea desperately wanted this new 'life' for his people. He had been away for such a long time and what better way than to arrive in a white man's ship dressed in white man's clothes. The story goes that when they reached shore, Fauea was quite an attraction because his people thought he was lost, and now that he had come home there was much rejoicing. But he also came back a 'converted' man. He had befriended the white man and his people were keen to find out what had happened to him and his wife Puaseisei while they were away. Everyone wanted to listen. Everyone wanted to know. 268

266 Papalagi means sky bursters – Papa=burst, lagi=sky or heaven-It is the name given to Europeans/white foreigners
267 Williams, (Ibid)
268 Hutton, (Ibid), p.143
The meeting with Malietoa in his home

When Malietoa finally arrived from Upolu he was taken to the ship. He met Fauea and the LMS missionaries and invited them to his home. During this meeting Williams put a formal request to Malietoa for the Christian mission to be carried out amongst the Samoan people. The paramount chief gave his official consent with grace and favour. The missionaries then gave him gifts, which he accepted with much gratitude. According to Williams:

We then desired one of our people to open a basket and place before the two chiefs the articles we had brought as a present. The scene that followed both amused and delighted us, for as soon as the articles were laid out, the chief took up an axe and placing it upon his head exclaimed, “Fa’afetai le toi tele” (Thank you for this large axe). Having observed the same ceremony with every other article, he concluded by saying, “Thank you for all! Thank you for all!” He then said that, “delighted as he was with his valuable present, he thought far more of us than our gift – that, though he was always a great man, yet he felt himself a greater man that day than ever he was before, because two great English chiefs had come to form his acquaintance and bring him good.” “This,” continued the delighted chieftain, “is the happiest day of my life, and I rejoice that I have lived to see it. In future I shall consider ourselves and you as ainga tasi (one family) and hope you will do the same.”

The missionaries were more than pleased. Not only were they given the much sought official consent from Malietoa, they were treated like royals, given houses, sleeping mats, food, Samoan kindness and hospitality. The teachers to be left behind were promised protection also and were to stay with the paramount chief himself and his brother. So began a ‘phenomenon’ that spread like the ‘proverbial’ fire, which brought revolutionary changes to the life of the Samoan people.

In Summary

Five main factors were crucial in Samoa’s ready acceptance and the subsequent rapid expansion of Christianity, and formal education in the islands. Some of those factors also have very important educational and psychological implications especially in the case of Fauea.

260 Williams, (Ibid)
First, and not necessarily in order of importance, there was the prophecy of a head for Malietoa’s government, as said above, from heaven, which the paramount chief saw the LMS missionaries as its fulfilment.

Second, there was Fauea a Samoan matai related to Malietoa, brought by Williams from Tonga, and who acted as liaison person between Williams and the Samoans. Fauea negotiated first with the LMS missionaries and later with his Samoan brethren on arrival. He was the catalyst in the bringing together of the Samoans and the missionaries. He was also a good role model for his fellow Samoans. He instructed his people by posing as an example, appearing outwardly dressed in Palagi clothes. First impressions and appearances are lasting experiences. Starting with what the learner is familiar with, then moving on, gradually introducing more difficult and unfamiliar content, such as the gospel and the print literacy. This is an important educational strategy.

Fauea was Samoan, a relatively familiar face that the Samoans identified with. Starting with something interesting and captivating would create and develop the interest in the learner to want more. Fauea and his wife definitely captured the interest of their people. All those stories about how other islanders were converted, and were communicating without the need to leave home, is captivating ‘stuff’ for a person who had never experienced it. Fauea was also very convincing. Williams quotes Fauea as possessing ‘fluency of speech as would rivet the attention of listening multitudes for hours together and always secure him the victory in a dispute.’

The introduction of a lesson is a critical time in teaching. Fauea instructed the missionaries to “Go slow” so as to allow time for the learner to be oriented to the new material. If the learning conditions are right the child will learn.

Third, the missionaries made good impressions on the Samoans on initial contact. First impressions are very important and often lasting. When Malietoa and his entourage visited the LMS ship, they were enamoured of the goods and gifts of the Palagi and these might well have whetted their appetites for things ‘foreign’.
Fourth, it was an opportune time to arrive not long after the death of Tamafaiga who ‘terrorised’ the Samoans, as Fauea described to Williams. The new religion promised hope and peace for a people who had lived in fear and insecurity, especially also with civil wars such as the one that Malietaoa was involved in when the missionaries arrived.

The fifth and last factor points to the fact that there were Fa’a Samoa practices that could be described as the pre-contact preparation for the relatively new way of life. Although Williams would put it down to divine Providence, the Samoans were in many ways quite prepared to fit in and adapt to the Christian religion, and the print literacy education because the new ways connected with some aspects of the Fa’a Samoa.

The first four factors were most important especially during the initial contact. They are also quite explicit and obvious as they were more ‘physically’ and personally experienced. While those factors might have set the precedent to be followed by many other Samoans later on, it was the last and relatively more implicit factor that was the force behind the effective continuity and rapid expansion of Christianity and ‘civilisation’ in Samoa. That is, some of the social, political, and religious conditions in Samoa made for a smoother and more congenial spread of the new ways and practices, because the former connected in some ways, with the latter. This entails the occurrence of the educational and psychological process of ‘incorporation’ as advocated by McNaughton, which I discussed in Chapter One. The process essentially involves ‘building on the familiar’ by incorporating children’s out-of-school experiences with conventional school experiences.270

Pierson refers to those factors as, “historical contextual conditions” which he describes as the key element in new movements of renewal and expansion. He explained that there are, for example, certain times when the contextual conditions are right, so that when new alternatives are introduced, they will be received and incorporated without much resistance. He also argued that in the study of culture change, it is recognised that change comes as a result of the interaction between advocates from outside of culture, whose

message presents new alternatives and the innovators or implementers inside culture who accept the new alternatives and consequently seek to implement the desired changes. 271

One of those more obvious conditions was the fact that one of Samoa’s paramount chiefs had accepted the new religion first. It was a political move by the LMS missionaries to include Fauea in their plans, who in turn introduced them to his paramount chief Malietoa who, once converted, would induce his people to follow suit. Williams was able to secure a base and the subsequent expansion of the LMS mission by seeking the patronage of the paramount Samoan chief Malietoa. This was the outcome as desired. An old Samoan adage that originated from this, which Samoan orators have used since to refer to how Malietoa was a role model for his people goes: ‘O lau susuga Malietoa e te afio i lou nofoa vaevaeloloa, na Fa’alogo iai Samoa.’ (Your ‘Highness’ Malietoa, you are seated on your high throne, and the Samoan people listened and obeyed you). This is said in reference to the Samoans’ ready acceptance of Christianity because their chief set the example, which his people followed.

There were also some parallels between the indigenous Samoan religious beliefs and cultural practices, and the missionaries’. Already there were similar Samoan frameworks and ‘moulds’ that could accommodate the constructs of the new religion and education system. In other words, the ‘historical contextual conditions’ in Samoa provided a favourable ‘climate’ in which to sow the seeds of Christianity and ‘civilisation’. Those favourable conditions paved the way for the peaceful contact between the Samoans and the LMS missionaries and the subsequent rapid expansion of their mission. It was also the human psychologist at work; if the political leaders were converted first their subjects would naturally follow. This was the outcome as desired.

Taase details these important ‘contextual conditions’ in his thesis and I include the following information concerning Samoa’s religious beliefs to support my foregoing argument of the contextual conditions, which Taase also includes in his writing in greater detail. In the general introduction in Chapter One, I referred to Taase’s study of the history of our Samoan church as the most complete and comprehensive to date. His study

contributes much to this chapter in particular to the following discussion of Samoan religious issues.\textsuperscript{272}

**Samoan’s Religious Beliefs**

Taase defines religion as habits and behaviours that have to do with the supernatural. He said that religion permeated all facets of Samoan life, and that Samoa had its own creation story, its beliefs in life after death, and its own rites and rituals, prayers and worship and priests that carried them out. According to Taase, almost every form of Samoan behaviour, practice and custom and visual art form had religious connotations and their worldview was also a reflection of their religious beliefs.\textsuperscript{273}

Every culture has its own creation stories as well as its own supernatural and religious beliefs, and Samoa is no different. Although the Biblical Genesis story about Adam and Eve has now become the more accepted creation story by the Christianised Samoans, Samoa had its own traditional one about their God, Tagaloa-a-lagi or Tagaloa of the ten heavens. The religious awareness and sense of the supernatural in the life of the Samoans was a good preparation for the work of the missionaries. The fact that they believed in the gods, especially the one Great Supreme Being of heaven they called Tagaloa (Tangaroa), provided a good basis for and transition to the basic beliefs which the missionaries brought, of a faith in the one great God of heaven. There were rituals, the prayers, the offerings, the discernment of the will of gods through observations in nature and the things that occur in life. There were religious practitioners, the matai, and the special priests. The missionaries would have no difficulty introducing these elements because similar factors already existed as part of Samoa’s own religion.\textsuperscript{274}

The Samoans also had beliefs in life after death. Like many other Polynesian people they had a firm and distinct belief in the immortality of the soul. The Samoans believed that the agaga, “the soul” or “spirit” would leave the body when a person passed away. If a person died of unnatural causes, the agaga would remain wondering on the earth, haunting the living until it was freed by rituals performed by the living. The souls of

\textsuperscript{272} Taase, (Ibid), pp.62-67
\textsuperscript{273} Taase, (Ibid)
\textsuperscript{274} Taase, (Ibid)
those who departed naturally, however, immediately embarked upon their journey to the land of the spirits at Pulotu in the village of Falealupo, on the western end of Savai'i.275

In special occasions when chiefs come together in council or during their frequent social occasions in the villages, a kava ceremony is usually performed. It is especially made elaborate when the village welcomes visitors to their midst. When a chief is served, he will hold up the cup before the assembly, pour out a small portion of kava from the cup and declare for everyone to hear,

This is kava for you O God
Be present with us and help us as we fellowship
As we have met in good health and happiness
We may also part in peace 276

The small portion, poured out is the libation277 to the gods, which accompanied the petition for favours. This idea of a sacrificial offering out of the common things in life is recognition of the omnipresence of the gods and man’s responsibility of recognising that presence in everyday life. Thus, whenever people gathered, whether in councils or in ceremonies of exchanges, the inati, “portion”, for the priests and hence the gods was taken before everyone else’s.278 I make brief reference to this also in Chapter One.

In another practice for example when the village fono (council) came together to sit in judgment for criminal acts, the tautoga (confession by swearing by something) was used in Samoa to invoke a confession from a person, guilty of committing a crime or sin for which no suspect had been apprehended. There were two forms of this ceremony; the ordinary tautoga and the tautoga oti, “confession of death”. The ordinary tautoga would be performed as often as there were reports of stealing, of untoward behaviour like shouting in the village under cover of night, of moetolo, “unlawful entry” into another family’s house for the purpose of having sexual relations with a young woman in the house. When the council of chiefs could not coerce confessions by questions, a tautoga was called for. An object, the incarnation of the village god, like a cup, a bowl, a conch shell, would be laid in the house in front of the chief.’ All the young men of the village

275 Taase, (Ibid)
276 Taase, (Ibid)
277 Taase, (Ibid)
278 Taase, (Ibid)
would be called one by one into the house. Each would hold the incarnation of the god in his hands and swear his innocence on pain of injury, and even death. When Christianity came, people were required to swear by the bible.²⁷⁹

All Samoan behaviour and action was sanctioned and conditioned by the religious understanding that the gods controlled everything that occurred in life. Favour and good fortune were the consequences of maintaining good relations with the gods while misfortune and disfavour resulted from insensitivity to and treating gods with contempt. They rationalized that the gods gave them everything, their land, their political and social systems, their food, their riches, and even their sacred relationships. Their religious beliefs sanctioned their actions in war or peace, in fishing or working on the plantation, and in the way they treated elders, women and their kings. When the Samoans met the fair skinned papalagi, “sky bursters”, as they called the Europeans, and marvelled at the strange technological objects they brought, the Samoans could only reason with their basic worldview assumptions. Thus Malietoa Vainu’upō when shown a pocket watch marvelled and declared that, “...it must have been made by the new God as no mortal could have framed so curious an article.”²⁸⁰

The Samoan Art of Legend–telling, a Prerequisite to ‘Reading Readiness’

The Fa’a Samoa practice of legend telling was an integral part of the education of the Samoan child. It is not much different from bedtime story telling today except that the latter is helped along by storybooks. Because of the great significance of this Fa’a Samoa pedagogy, I am reiterating here that the legend-telling process can create a schema that promotes reading readiness and encourages the development of semantic resources in children. When print literacy was introduced to the Samoans, those schemata for literacy created by the legend-telling process were already in place to facilitate the learning of the three Rs. The transferring of these skills to learning reading and writing would have helped many Samoan people to quickly learn the skills of the print literacy. This could be one reason why the missionaries found the Samoans a most enthusiastic

²⁷⁹ Taase, (Ibid)
²⁸⁰ Taase, (Ibid), p.76
and fast group of learners as those literacy skills acquired in learning about the Fa’a Samoa stories would have had spans with the print literacy skills.

Naturally the novelty of the new process, curiosity and the acquisition of any benefits from the new practices would also have something to do with this reported ‘over-eagerness’. The zest for learning was boundless. From an education standpoint, the Samoan people’s states and conditions of mind and thought were prepared in advance for the relatively new literacy, so much so that it was reported in 1920,\textsuperscript{281} when the New Zealand administration took over the control of the schools from the pastors, that Samoa had a high literacy rate (over 80%) in the basics at least.

People were so keen that they travelled long distances to learn to read and write. Williams, who was at the centre of it all, experienced this enthusiasm in Samoans for the print literacy. He expressed this in his tribute to Fauea saying:

Facts so well attested and so forcibly described (by Fauea) had immense weight with the natives. Of this we had an interesting proof. When they were told by Fauea that those who had embraced this religion could communicate their thoughts to one another at a distance and while residing even at a remote island, they flocked to the teachers’ houses to learn this mysterious art, many of them coming eight or ten miles each day to be taught their letters.\textsuperscript{282}

Aiono, in her latest book written in Samoan, wrote of the LMS missionaries’ experience of people who converted to Christianity because they wanted so much to learn and become skilled in the art of reading and writing and not necessarily to embrace the new religion.

\begin{quote}
O le iloa Fa’a’A’oga le Pi Faitau, o le isi poto, agavaa faigata lea. O le molimau a misionare, o le aiga mai i le 1836 na matua tino u tagata Samoa ina ia latou iloa faiatua le Pi Faitau, sosoo ai ma lo latou fia iloa tusitusi. E iai isi Fa’amauaumauga o le vaisau lea (sefuluiva senetenari) o lo o aumai ai le manatu, e iai le vaega o tagata na liliu i le Lotu Kerisiano, ona o le fia iloa ma popoto i tusitusi ma faiatutusi a e le na o le fia avea ma kerisiano. (The knowledge of how to use the alphabet is a special ability or expertise, a difficult skill. According to the missionaries, towards the year 1836, Samoan people were intensely devoted to learning how to read and write. Other records about this time (during the nineteenth century) postulated that a group of people converted to Christianity in order to learn and to become proficient in reading and writing and not only to become Christians).\textsuperscript{283}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{281} Rowe, 1930 (Ibid) p.46
\textsuperscript{282} Williams, J. 1888, Missionary Enterprises in the South-Sea Islands, Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work, Philadelphi, pp. 267-298
\textsuperscript{283} Aiono, (Ibid) p. 34.
There is also the story of the Samoan man who occasionally ‘canoe’d from Tutuila (Eastern Samoa) to Savai'i (Western Samoa), a long and treacherous journey, to get some religious education from the ‘native’ teachers left behind by Williams. During Williams’ first visit in 1830, he left without visiting any of the Eastern Islands of Samoa. In 1832 on his second visit, he called first to the Eastern Samoa Islands of Manu'a and Tutuila before going on to the Western Islands, Upolu and Savai'i. Word of his first visit and the work of the indigenous teachers Williams left behind, spread quickly. This surprised Williams himself who did not think the Eastern Samoa Islanders could, in the two years he had left the teachers, be converted so soon. This was especially the case given the simple means of transport and the long distance between Tutuila and Savai'i. As the man excitedly said to Williams on his first arrival in Tutuila:

That is my canoe, in which I go down to the teachers (in Savai'i) and get some religion, which I bring carefully home and give to the people; and when that is gone, I take my canoe again and fetch some more. And now you are come, for whom we have been so long waiting, where’s our teacher? Give me a man full of religion, that I may not expose my life to danger by going so long a distance to fetch it.\(^\text{284}\)

The early history of the A'oga a le Faifeau is very interesting and the events certainly promoted and expanded the cause of the LMS as well as formal education. It is also very important to look at Williams’ background and the origins of LMS. These have particular significance because they have their own story to tell about why and how Williams and the LMS missionaries sailed to the South Seas. As the analogy of the Samoan proverb in the previous chapter presumed, ‘there is a cause and reason for everything.’ (The coconut tree does not necessarily sway unless a wind blows).

**The Origins of the London Missionary Society (LMS)**

**The Historical setting for discovery, exploration and evangelisation**

**The Industrial Revolution**

Two important processes gave rise to the growth of The London Missionary Society. These were the Industrial Revolution and the development of the social classes in England. The exact starting point of the Industrial Revolution is a subject of debate by...

\(^{284}\) Williams, (Ibid), p. 270
economic historians. It is generally held that the Industrial Revolution was preceded by revolutions in almost all areas of life in pre-industrial England; in population, in agriculture, in commerce and the manufacturing industries, in the roles of labour, of capital and banks. These revolutions provided not only the changes, which encouraged separation from the old methods but also started and sustained growth towards industrialisation.285

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, especially with the discovery of iron and coal, there was increased wealth, the growth of commerce and urbanisation increased, agriculture and industry became increasingly mechanised, health and education greatly improved, and more money was available for investment, discovery, exploration and evangelisation of the ‘heathens’, including the Pacific Islands.

It was also a time of new discoveries outside of England as methods of transport, communications and navigation increasingly improved. Sailors explored new oceans and came home with tales of people with strange customs and languages. Captain Cook had explored the Pacific and his reports were printed in England. Carey read them and asked the question – “We have found new seas and new races of people who had never heard of Christ, What does this mean to Christian people to whom God has committed the Gospel in our day? What does the Great Commission mean for the Missionary Society (WMS) and the Church Missionary Society (CMS)?286

**British Society and the Development of Social Classes**

English society of the time was described by Perkin287 as an aristocracy, a hierarchical society in which men took their places in an accepted order of precedence, a pyramid stretching down from a tiny minority of the rich and powerful through an even larger and lesser wealth and power to the great mass of the poor and powerless. At the top of the pyramid were the aristocrats of noble birth, such as the sovereigns and peers, the dukes, the barons, the earls and viscounts. They were also the owners of huge land estates like

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285 Taase, (Ibid), p.80-87
286 Tippett, (Ibid), p.3
mini kingdoms and magnificent mansions in the country where their land was. Below those were the gentry who owned land, but who through their accumulated wealth from trade and industry bought their way into the high echelons of society. These classes controlled the government as hereditary members of the House of Lords and elected members of Parliament.

Occupying the middle ranks of the pyramid was a wide range of people collectively called the middle ranks. These included those engaged in agriculture, like the yeomen, those involved with industry and commerce like the merchants and manufacturers and those employed as professionals like engineers, lawyers and the clergy. This rank was distinguished from the nobility by lower and earned, rather than inherited income. At the base were the lower orders in which the artisans, the country poor and the miserable were classed. The poor working classes were distinguished by very low or no income at all. They depended on the charity and generosity of the rich for work and food.

The division of society into ranks was defended with the argument that it was the 'Architect of the Universe' who distributed men into different ranks and at the same time united them in society. By divine degree rather than by human contrivance, the poor, the greater part of society, were placed under the superintendence and patronage of the rich.288 As previously discussed, Hannah More a missionary who taught the children of the coal miners in England during the late 18th century held such a view and said that the social order was beautiful when each person according to their place paid willing honour to their superiors, when high, low, rich and poor sat down satisfied with their own place. She argued that this was where religious doctrine came in, because it taught that the existing social order was God's will and plan.289

The Evangelical Missionaries in the Post Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution brought changes especially to the poor people's way of life. They became increasingly less reliant on the nobles and landed gentry for work. The industries offered them better deals and if they worked hard and saved they could better

their lot. This was the beginning of a "working class consciousness" when the lower class rose above their poverty line to a working class status, and kept rising in the social hierarchy to middle class status as long as they worked hard, saved enough to get a good education and increased their wealth.

The bulk of the Evangelical missionaries to the South Seas with few exceptions, according to Gunson, belonged to the lower middle classes. He argued that even though their origins were sometimes very humble, they were quickly drawn into middle classes because they began to acquire skills, began to save and they cultivated middle-class attitudes. They were not content to remain labourers. Gunson said the best word with class connotations that described them, but which has now lost its 19th century meaning, was the word 'mechanic'. The early 19th century was very much the age of the mechanic class, the latest addition to the lower ranks of the middle classes.

The goal of respectability, so long the prerogative of the middle classes of the 17th and 18th centuries, was postulated as an ideal for those who had been less fortunate in their birth but who had the character to rise above their origins. In one sense, the Evangelical Revival was responsible for this social emancipation of the lower classes. Evangelical religion had a greater appeal to the labouring man and simple artisan than had the Puritan 'revival' to the 'lower orders'. The emphasis of the Revivalists on the right use of time and on stewardship was naturally compatible with the attempt to move into another social scale. Men accepted their social vocation very much as a task imposed by a higher religious discipline. If a man was a steady, industrious worker he might be regarded as one favoured in the sight of the Lord, and his outward well-being, provided he had faith, would show that he had attained the perseverance of the saints. Religion, in being applied to business life, the Protestant work ethics, had come to make rules for it. The effect of this doctrine of the calling on the missionaries was not only to confirm them in their own vocation, but also to give them a more exalted opinion of the dignity of labour and the rightness of trade. It gave them the feeling that material prosperity would be conducive to good living and a proof of spiritual progress.

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291 Gunson, (Ibid) p. 38
In summary, with the development of industrialisation and the spread of scientific knowledge in the 16th century, people in Europe especially were driven to explore and investigate lands for different reasons. There was the scientific motive for exploration. Out of curiosity people wanted to know more about the earth, the origins of man, other lands and people and so on. Captain Cook was sent by the British Navy to discover the Great South Land that lies between South America and South Africa. Because of economic motives, people wanted to sell and buy surplus goods and to acquire more wealth by trade. The Dutch were eager to develop their trade so Abel Tasman was sent to discover new lands where spices and precious metals could be found.

People with political motives wanted power, to rule over more people, to make their countries and empires more powerful. Europeans were able to invent new weapons and later gunpowder. Power was increased and it became easier to overcome new found lands and add them to their empires. Some people also had religious motives and felt it was their God given duty to spread the gospel to the ‘heathens’. For the above reasons the Pacific was discovered, explored and colonised. According to Wallerstein, from the 16th century onwards, a “World System” had developed which was a series of economic and political connections stretching across the globe. The Pacific region was not drawn into this World System until the 18th century.

Before the arrival of the first Europeans, Samoa’s knowledge of the outside world extended only to nearby islands inhabited by people whose social and cultural attainments were similar to their own. For example, Samoa sent parties to Tonga and vice versa, to secure fine mats and other goods, to contract marriages or to wage war. Samoan and Tongan legends, oral traditions, names and descendants of both islands go back for many generations. Some of the Samoan matai titles originated in Tonga. Samoa also received and assimilated settlers from other islands like Wallis and Futuna and Fiji. There are Samoan legends that tell stories of these contacts. There is a village in Savaii, the big island that lays claim to the ‘spiritual’ presence of Tui Fiti amongst them even today.

294 Tui Fiti or Tuifiti – Tui=King/royal/paramount chief. Fiti=Fiji. The story goes that every time there is a collection of mats, food, and even today of money, there is always something extra. If for example, in this village there are 21 matai, and each has to contribute a dollar for something, the total usually comes to
If there were any changes because of these interactions, they were minor and slow paced, and more evolutionary than revolutionary. Any major and dramatic changes came about with contact with the Europeans in the 19th century. The missionaries, especially of the London Missionary Society, first brought about these more dramatic changes. The arrival of the LMS missionaries marked the steady beginnings of the Christian era in the life and history of the people of Samoa. It also marked the inevitable development of the encounter with western civilisation and culture.

The London Missionary Society (LMS) in Samoa: Its Beginnings

The LMS is a Protestant interdenominational body formed in 1795 in the Savoy Hotel in London. According to Aiono, she did not find any record of the Society's original constitution or philosophy. What was foremost in the minds of the Board of Directors of the Society was to send out missionaries to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the four corners of the globe. A set of instructions from the Board of Directors was given to the missionaries. I make reference to these instructions also in Chapter 1.

In compliance with the instructions from the LMS Board of Directors, the missionaries first of all learned the languages so they could speak, write, and communicate in the indigenous languages of the respective societies they worked with. The effects of educational policy decisions made during the early period of the missionaries' work are still being felt today. One of these policies had important implications for the Samoan language. The Samoan alphabet was developed and Samoan Readers were soon printed and used in missionary schools. These resources are still being used today. Copies of these are documented in Chapter Eight.

The LMS influence in the South Seas began in 1796 when its missionary ship took missionaries to Tahiti, Tonga and the Marquesas. This was the first group of missionaries that arrived in the Pacific Islands. It was not until the 1820s and thereafter however that

$22.00, and no one claims to have given the extra dollar. They usually say it is Tui Fiti's contribution. The village always reserves a seat for Tui Fiti in theirfono (meetings), in the belief that he would be there even if they cannot see him. The story goes (way back) that one Tui Fiti swam all the way from Fiji to Samoa seeking the hand of a Samoan maiden for marriage.

295 Tanielu, (ibid) p2
missionary work became more prolific, especially with John Williams as the leading missionary. Williams was neither a scholar nor a scientist, but he brought with him to his work in Samoa in 1830 his wealth of experience acquired in his work with the Society Islands (Tahiti) and Rarotonga.296

After the Initial Contact

After the successful initial contact, Williams and Barff left the eight ‘native’ teachers from Tahiti and Rarotonga with Fauea and Malietoa after three weeks in Samoa. It was the responsibility of the native teachers to spread their knowledge and understanding of Christianity amongst the Samoans and thus prepare the ground for white missionaries to follow later on. Williams visited them in 1832, and Barff and Aaron Buzacott, from the LMS Mission in Rarotonga, visited in 1834.

The word spread quickly and in no time it had reached the four corners of Samoa. Within two years of Williams’ first visit to one part of Samoa, the whole society was practically reached by the news of Christianity. Even the remotest one from Savaii (Manu‘a) was not spared. In the absence of Williams or any Palagi missionary, Fauea the Samoan matai who converted to Christianity in Tonga, and the teachers from Tahiti and Rarotonga had done what they were left to do and more. The work of the LMS in Samoa in those two years (1830-1832) may be summed up by the story of the man who went to fetch ‘some religion’ for his people in Tutuila.

The quest for the new knowledge in Samoa was so great that people risked their lives, as the man in the story did, to receive it. Savaii is about 600 km from Tutuila, and is about 20 hours travel by boat. By canoe it would take about twice as much time. It is a dangerous journey in a small canoe, and to do it often would be quite a feat. People that go to Savaii from Tutuila today have to go to Upolu first. The way this man explained it is very touching and talked about religion like it was tangible wealth, “Get some religion which I bring carefully home and give it to the people, and when that is gone, I take my canoe again and fetch some more.” A man all alone out in the deep blue sea carefully guarding his knowledge, making sure that his little canoe would not capsize or the

296 Aiono, (Ibid), p.31
knowledge would go to waste. He made it his calling and obligation, risking his life to fulfil it. If he had ulterior motives apart from a genuine concern that his people have this new knowledge, the story does not reveal. He laid down his life to acquire this for his people and such benevolent and noble reasoning is the most important human or Christian motive that any one can engage in.

In 1836, the LMS Mission in Samoa was established with the help of six missionaries from Britain, five of who were married. From this point onwards, according to Goodall, the history of Samoa became the story of a people’s development from barbarism to civilization, chiefly through the impact of Christian missions. This statement by Goodall may be disputed, as it was from the earlier point when Williams and Barff and the native teachers first met with Malietoa that this history really began.

The Three R’s Education: An Indispensable Feature of the LMS Work

Education was always a fundamental feature of the London Missionary Society work in Samoa. In order to achieve their goal of converting the Samoans to Christianity, the Samoans needed to know how to read and write so that they could understand the religion of the LMS missionaries. Educational activities were begun, not for their own sake, but in order that the Christian message might be understood and heeded. The ready response of the Samoans to the missionaries’ evangelisation efforts, lead rapidly to the establishment of schools and classes. These not only provided the further opportunities to impart knowledge en masse, but were also places where the Samoans could also be taught some of the useful arts enjoyed by ‘more advanced civilizations’ such as reading, writing and arithmetic.

In order to facilitate the spread of Christianity throughout Samoa, the missionaries engaged the help of Samoans willing to undertake teaching duties. These were selected from the more able students as assessed by the missionaries. Initially these teachers had little training and limited knowledge to impart but without them, missionary work would have been seriously impeded for many years since the missionaries were few in number.

297 Carson, (Ibid), p.14
298 Goodall, (Ibid), p. 352
299 Carson, (Ibid)
and the Samoan people lived in many villages scattered throughout several islands. Under the missionaries’ leadership, within six years, the number of schools introduced by the native teachers increased markedly from a mere handful to over two hundred. These early missionary schools were described as:

Primitive in methods, subjects and teachers, and above all in buildings. They did not aim very high either in scholastic standards, but they did blaze the trail for most of the modern educational systems.

Such were the humble beginnings of the A’oga a le Faifeau. Christianity had brought dramatic changes to the Samoans’ worldview and ideology and the resulting A’oga a le Faifeau was to become the most important agent of change in the training and education of future generations of Samoan children.

With the arrival of the permanent missionaries from London, each respective island, Savaii, Manono, Upolu and Tutuila, was divided into various mission stations each to be occupied by a Palagi missionary. Every Palagi missionary was given a Samoan name, for example, Mr Ellis was known by Misi Elise, Mr Newell as Misi Neueli and so on.

The Infant School System

John Williams had felt the need for more efficient training of the very young in the islands. During a stopover in Capetown in 1838, he took to Samoa Ebenezer Buchanan, a ‘normal’ schoolmaster involved in infant school teaching. Dr Philip, a missionary in Africa who prioritised establishing first a theological seminary, tried dissuading Williams from carrying out his plans. Williams maintained that training in the infant school system was preferable to training received in a theological college and so took Ebenezer with him to Samoa. Williams looked to the future generation as the key to the success of Christian missions. The younger generation could be moulded to the desired ends. Ebenezer’s father, James Buchanan was one of the pioneers of the Infant School System.

Carson, (Ibid), p 8
Carson, (Ibid), p. 120. A normal school was a Continental development, which was introduced into England in the nineteenth century. The term was used to denote a school specifically established to train students in the art of teaching and to provide them with practical experience in the classroom. A ‘normal schoolmaster’ was thus one who trained others in the art of teaching.
in England. Buchanan introduced the Infant School system in Samoa and other islands like Tahiti and Rarotonga and trained teachers to introduce infant schools in other Pacific Islands. His experience in teaching both European and native children and his familiarity with his father’s teaching methods were of great benefit to the LMS mission. Buchanan was assigned to establish an Infant Model School to which the missionaries sent people from different villages to train as infant school teachers. He began a very intensive programme at the LMS station at Falealili, about 40 kms south of Apia, where he conducted five schools each day, and gave his teaching instruction in English in the afternoon for two months. He was also employed in making ‘arithmeticians’ and lesson boards for the use of the schools. During his first year, twelve schools were established on Upolu and the same number on Savaii. He continued his duties of training infant school teachers and opening schools in Samoa until 1841 when he moved to Tahiti to set up similar schools there.

In 1844, the year the Samoan Missionary Seminary was founded in Malua, Buchanan returned to Samoa. On his return he trained twelve young men in the Normal School at the LMS station at Saluafata, 30 kms east of Apia, in a course of reading, writing, arithmetic, astronomy, scripture and natural history. He made counting frames, blackboard and maps and other aids to teaching. He conducted a Normal School, a boarding school and an infant and day school in Apia.

The missionaries who were conducting the Theological Seminary at Malua, to give theological training to Samoan teachers though, did not appreciate Buchanan’s good work. They tended to be jealous of Buchanan’s separate institution and wanted the two merged at Malua. It was intended that Buchanan should join the staff at Malua but he decided to leave the mission and return to England. With Buchanan’s departure, educational work in the LMS missions once again came under the more exclusive control of the ordained missionaries.

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303 Gunson, (Ibid), p.121
304 Gunson, (Ibid), p. 43
305 Carson, (Ibid), p. 28
Buchanan’s work was hampered by the lack of teaching resources. These had to be sent from London by boat and often arrived much too late and were not near enough for the number of children that needed them. Carson referred to these difficulties saying:

Following requests from Buchanan the LMS Board of Directors sent out supplies of materials and Infant School lessons, but they were inadequate to the need and so long in arriving that Buchanan must have wondered if education really was as important to the Directors as they claimed. The pleas from Samoa for more people like Buchanan who could set up model schools on the British and Foreign School design or the Infant School System appeared to go unheeded yet the Directors saw Buchanan’s work as one essential means under the Divine blessing, for elevating the social and moral character of the people.306

Buchanan brought to the educational scene in Samoa valuable experience and skills in a specialised area. Labouring under many difficulties he sought to impart both knowledge and training and thereby laying a solid foundation for the advancement of Samoan education and no doubt of the A’oga a le Faifeau. His work gave the village school teachers the much-needed knowledge that formed the basis of the A’oga a le Faifeau infant syllabus.

The educational work of the missionaries was ‘dogged’ by problems of the lack of teaching resources as well as trained teaching personnel right from the beginning. While the ‘native’ teachers had done the foundation work, those resources were not forthcoming in a manner as to satisfy the quest for knowledge of the Samoan people. The original enthusiasm and pride in learning to read and write that were there in the beginning began to wane in the wake of these problems. Buchanan’s good efforts were thwarted by these very same problems as referred to earlier in the discussion of his work.

Despite the many requests to the Society’s Directors for supplies and teachers, adequate support could not be offered from the LMS Directors in London for several reasons. The Society was dependent on the generosity of its supporters for its financial income and there was never enough money to satisfy all the demands of the missionaries since the limited finances had to be spread among many missions and not just those in the South Seas. There were also just not enough schoolmasters coming forward for overseas service to fill all the requests for teachers. Furthermore, India and China, with such large

306 Carson, (Ibid), p. 28
populations still unconverted, demanded a lot more of the LMS resources than the Society could cope with. As a long-term solution to the problems, the LMS Directors sought to encourage the raising of a ‘native agency’ in Samoa.

The Samoan Missionary Seminary (SMS)

The missionaries, dissatisfied with the relatively slow progress in the education of the Samoans, decided to set up an institution to raise the educational standards of the Samoan teachers, and ultimately through them the Samoan people in general, and to provide a trained, educated ministry for the developing church. In other words, the missionaries trained a native ministry to give the trainees an education designed to make them not only evangelists but also teachers. When the Samoan Mission Seminary was set up in Malua, the curriculum featured two main aims. One was to teach a religious content since it was necessary to furnish the students with a sound knowledge of the Bible and Christian doctrines before sending them to the villages to preach and teach. The second aim was the promotion of the arts associated with a literate society and civilization, with subjects of a more secular nature such as writing, geography and arithmetic. The idea was to produce well-educated Samoan pastors and teachers through a course of mental and moral training. The curriculum was weighted in favour of the inculcation of facts, moral habits, right principles and religious feelings. As Carson reported:

The Seminary played an important role in providing men to spread an English-style education amongst the Samoan people.

The Samoan Missionary Seminary was established at Malua in 1844. It later became the Malua Theological College, as it is known by today.

Eventually every village was given its trained pastorcum teacher to spread the gospel and to teach the Samoans the print literacy, reading and writing in the vernacular. Meleisea, a Samoan historian, argued that the missionaries saw the pastor’s school as a

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207 Carson, (Ibid), p. 46
208 Carson, (Ibid), p. 51
209 Carson, (Ibid), p. 47
210 Rowe, (Ibid), p. 120
main agency for training oncoming Samoan generations to the type of moral and practical life, which they conceived to be desirable.³¹¹

The original syllabus

The original syllabus of the pastor’s school was based on the syllabus taught at the Samoan Mission Seminary (SMS) at Malua. The syllabus at the SMS included reading, writing, composition, arithmetic, geography, astronomy, natural history, church history and biblical or systematic theology and scripture exposition. The secular subjects were included in the curriculum from the very beginning since mastery of the arts of reading and writing was essential to the purpose of offering an advanced education. Without these two skills, students would have been unable to progress with their studies. Other secular topics such as geography and natural philosophy were included because they were means of broadening the students’ outlook by introducing them to the knowledge of civilisation. The men were also taught carpentry skills and their wives learned how to sew and do crochet as well as cooking the Palagi way. As each graduate pastor was appointed to a village, he and his wife taught these subjects at simpler levels in their A’oga a le Faifeau.³¹²

Trained pastor cum teachers eventually replaced all the ‘native’ teachers who were looking after the schools in the villages. Many of them went to the Seminary to train and later went back to the schools as trained pastors and teachers. This was the beginning of the ‘proper’ A’oga a le Faifeau. I do not want to make too much of this in my study because literacy education in the villages did not start with the trained faifeau from the Samoan Mission Seminary. It was the teachers with very little training that kept the light glowing in the wake of severe educational difficulties.

A syllabus for the year was printed and circulated by the missionaries throughout Samoa. The students in the A’oga a le Faifeau were examined at the end of the school year in oral and written Samoan Grammar, simple arithmetic and scripture. Later on other subjects like geography, maths and church history were added to the syllabus. It was

³¹² Carson, (Ibid), p.56
expected that every child should have a minimum of 50 marks in each subject in order to be promoted to the next class. The Palagi missionary in charge of each particular district held the examination, and the results were carefully tabulated and announced (the marks and places of all who sat) at a public meeting of villages in each examination centre. There was keen rivalry between the villages. Individuals were played off against individuals, village against village, district against district and to a lesser extent, island against island.  

The missions that came after the LMS, the Methodists in particular, basically followed the LMS example, much of which continues today. The content of the present curriculum of the pastor’s school remains basically the same. The changes have come about mainly in the use of resources. For example, books have replaced the slates. There are more books to go round and there is supplementary reading material available in Samoan. The formal atmosphere of old has become more relaxed and informal. The use of the strap and the stick are confined to more serious misdemeanours. In most instances the stick is only a symbol of authority, carefully displayed for all to see beside the teacher.

The early schools were either conducted in the compounds of the local pastor or in the church. The pastor’s house became a very important focus for the education of the people. The opportunity to serve in the pastor’s house was a great privilege because it allowed one to witness ‘civilised’ behaviour and living first hand, and thereby to acquire the social skills and graces befitting a good Christian woman. The skills of carpentry were taught to the boys for the purpose of building European type houses as well as other types of buildings. The houses had walls and rooms walled off from each other. Ideas of privacy and later of private property were thereby introduced. The house was for the nuclear family consisting of a man and woman, married in the eyes of God forever, with their own children. The teaching of domestic and carpentry skills has phased out from the present curriculum of some of the Pastors’ Schools, with the convenience of buying ready-mades and the introduction of these courses in the Palagi schools. Some still practise these skills today. Two of the pastor’s schools interviewed include sewing in their syllabuses.

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313 Rowe, (Ibid.), p.126  
314 Mara, Foliaki, Coxon, 1994 (Ibid.) p.188
Each village school was thus named, **O le A'oga a le Faifeau**, translated as the School of the Pastor, because the pastor was the head teacher, the only trained teacher, and the only teacher. The pastor’s wife was his assistant. While the missionaries selected the first teachers from more able students, with the opening of the Samoan Missionary Seminary, graduates from the seminary became the teachers.

The early history of formal education in Samoa, especially from 1830 to 1919, is the history of church run schools. Even with formal political colonisation beginning in 1889, with the annexation of Samoa by Germany, the latter left the schooling of the Samoan children to the pastors. The Germans built only a few schools\(^{315}\) in Apia for their own children, and half-caste children with Palagi surnames.\(^{316}\) When New Zealand took over the administration of Samoa, in 1919, she eventually took over the running of the schools from the church in 1920. It was a slow start though as the older students were taken over first while the infant classes were left with the pastors. School buildings had to be built and furnished before a full takeover and this was a slow process.

Whereas the ministers used to conduct their schools in the first half of the day, with the takeover by New Zealand, the ministers then ran their schools in the afternoons, carrying on the tradition, except for the **Vasega Faitau Pi** (Alphabet Reading Class, preschoolers) which was and still is held in the morning. Preschool education is not new to the Samoans. This is traditionally the pastor’s wife’s special class and it is still the practice in the **A’oga a le Faifeau**. It is one reason why the pastor’s wife in Samoa is not allowed to work outside the ministry. She has a preschool to run in the morning and assists in the teaching of the **A’oga a le Faifeau** in the afternoon.

The situation is different in New Zealand. The pastor’s wife here is permitted to hold a job outside the ministry for several reasons. Many of the parishes in New Zealand are relatively recent ones, and while some are paying off loans for their church buildings, others may be working towards building their own churches. The wife’s job would provide the much-needed financial assistance given that the faifeau’s ‘salary’ is not set.

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\(^{315}\) These schools were a bone of contention for many Samoans because they were elite schools better resourced with highly qualified teachers.

\(^{316}\) Rowe, (Ibid), p. 126
but depends on the 'love' of the church members. The donated money is called alofa (love) for that reason. It has been a church tradition since the first missionaries arrived that the pastor is to be 'paid' this way. The donation is never called totogi (salary or wages in Samoan). It is also referred to as the faifaeu's peleti (plate), because some churches take the plate around like during the offering on Sunday.

The Samoan alphabet

The Samoan alphabet has fourteen letters. A E I O U F G L M N P S T V. Later on the missionaries added on H K R. The Samoan phonological system does not have phonemes (k, h or r sounds) corresponding to the English ones. These are introduced sounds. The alphabet introduced by the missionaries which is still used today, allowed adaptations of English words into Samoan, such as rabbit, rapiti, cricket, kirikiti, and Herod, Herota, keke for cake, kapisi for cabbage, karoti for carrot, araisa for rice, risiti for receipt, rosa for rose and so on. The use of the letter h is not as common, except for names of people especially biblical ones like Hamo (Hem), and some Samoan names that people have substituted the 'r' for the 't', to make them sound Palagi.

With the introduction of the letter k, the t in many Samoan words has been substituted with a k. Speaking with t is referred to as tautala lelei (good speech), and with k as tautala leaga (bad speech). An example of good Samoan is: Ua tele le timu, and of bad Samoan, Ua kele le kimu. Note in the second example the t is replaced by the k. Most Samoans today speak the k language, with the use of the t language confined to formal occasions, reading, public speaking, newspapers articles and so on. Children are taught in the A'oga a le Faifaeu to speak good Samoan, but outside of the A'oga a le Faifaeu they cannot keep it up because most other people speak the k language. It is relatively easier to speak with the k than it is with the t, and for this reason a lot more people choose to speak bad Samoan. It is considered a lazy way of speaking.

The n and g, r and l letters are also often mixed up as well. Where words are supposed to be spelled with n for example, the g has often been substituted and vice versa. The same goes for the r and l letters. This is part of the A'oga a le Faifaeu work. In New Zealand, it is not only teaching children how to speak and write Samoan, but also to speak and
write proper Samoan. The name Tamafainga is spelled above Tamafaiga without the n before the g in the Samoan language and Samoan books. While other people, like the Rarotongans and Maori, were taught to sound and spell words with g with the help of the letter n, this was not the case in the introduction of education in Samoa. Aiono said:

O loo tusia i Fa'amaumauga a le CWM (Council for World Mission) ia minute o le fono na usua i luga o le vaa, i gatai o le Ava/Taulaga i Apia “Dunnotar Castle” 3 June 1836 ao lei tuu taula upu ia: “Ua Fa’aiugafonoina e le Komiti a Misionare o le misiona i Fa’amataitusi ai leo ma iu leo e Fa’aleo i le isu pe peseai e Fa’aifoaluga (C). (O le upu Peretania o le nasal).” Sa Fa’alautele le iugafono i le tusi i lalo ina ia maotia ma manino, o le mataitusi e tusi lava na o ia “g” , e le tusia i ona luma po o ona tua se isi mataitusi, e le se “ng” po o “gn” . (It is written in the minutes of a meeting held on 3 June 1836 at Apia Harbour, on the missionary ship the “Dunnotar Castle” before it anchored, these words: “The Council of Missionaries of the East-West Mission have resolved that the letter ‘g’ would be used for sounds and end sounds that are made through the nose (nasal).” The resolution made it very definite and clear that the letter “g” would be used by itself without another letter in front or after, it is not “ng” or “gn” respectively.

Aiono argued that the Samoan alphabet was constructed before the missionaries actually landed on Samoan soil during their second visit. She describes in her book from which the above quote was taken, how the Samoan alphabet was written and constructed by the LMS missionaries.

People who have not learned to read Samoan or have not been told of this rule would pronounce the letter ‘g’ in Samoan words as a hard sound such as the letter g in words like logo or piggery, almost like the k sound. The words A’oga (school) and aiga (family) for example would then sound like aoka and aika respectively. The latter actually sound ‘insulting’ because the first word does not exist in Samoan vocabulary while the second word means something else and not family. In Williams’ writing like the above, he uses ng such as in the name of Tamafainga perhaps for the sake of non-Samoan speakers so that the Samoan words are not pronounced in a ‘corrupt’ and ‘insulting’ way. The Samoan words A’oga and aiga that are frequently used in this study should be pronounced as aonga and ainga respectively. (Some people have speculated that the letter ‘n’ was probably missing from the keys of the missionaries’ typewriter). The ng combination has never been used in the Samoan language except as instructions, to show how these words should be pronounced, for non-Samoan speakers. Every

217 Aiono, (Ibid), p.32
Samoan word with a letter g has an ng sound. Samoans have learned to read and write using this rule since 1836, when a proper Samoan alphabet was written and given to the early teachers.

**In Summary**

The first part of the chapter has provided great insight into what might have been if the initial contact process between people of different cultures had not been of a peaceful nature. It would have been a different story. The rest of the chapter is a success story as it relates the development of the institution of the A'oga a le Faifeau that so depended on the success of the initial contact between the LMS missionaries and the Samoans. The historical contextual conditions were right. Based on a phonetic and phonemic approach to teaching reading and writing, literacy spread quickly. The novelty of the new form of education might have worn off but still people came from six miles away to be taught their letters. Lack of resources and poor teachers did not deter the LMS missionaries and pastors from running their schools making the most of what they had.

The alphabet charts, the primers and readers that were used then, are still being used today, with revisions, because their successes have withstood the test of time and 'criticism'. I reiterate here that the primary purpose of the study is to argue, and show, that the A'oga a le Faifeau played and still plays a significant role in the education, socialisation and enculturation of those Samoan children in the CCCS in Samoa and New Zealand. The A'oga a le Faifeau has profoundly significant educational content and impacts. It has helped in the maintenance of the Samoan language and could address the reading writing and numeracy problems encountered by many Samoan children.
Chapter Five

The Research Methodology

Introduction

When I was deciding on a topic for this study, I was very much influenced by three issues of equal importance to me. These are: Samoan education, the church and the Fa’a Samoa. I wanted to research a topic that would encompass and address these three issues in a more positive way than they have been ‘treated’. I was aware that the Fa’a Samoa has been blamed for the underachievement of Samoan children who constitute many of those who underachieve in New Zealand schools. I was also conscious of the fact that there is an anti-church feeling among those who blame the church for ‘exploiting’ the Samoan people. I was not blind either to the fact that Samoa was bringing up the rear in reading literacy in a ‘queue’ of Pacific Island nations. In my writing, not only do I expose the positive roles played by the church and the Fa’a Samoa, I also attempt to make more explicit some of the contributing reasons for the underachievement of Samoan children.

Even before embarking on a ‘topic search’, I had more or less made up my mind that I would look at Samoan stories, and try to revive the art of legend-telling that is practically lost now among Samoan families. I have great pride in the knowledge that bedtime stories are not new to the Samoans. I wrote about it in my Masters dissertation,318 and the particular chapter that includes this was published in 2000.319 Although this was and still is of great importance to me, the pull of the three-fold issue as referred to above became the stronger force in choosing a topic. I settled for ‘Literacy education in the A’oga a le Faifeau (Pastor’s School) of the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS).’ The A’oga a le Faifeau addresses the education of Samoan children, the Christian–Protestant ethic that was behind its introduction and which has driven the A’oga a le Faifeau up to now, as well as the Fa’a Samoa and the teaching of Samoan Language in particular. My original interest in the revival of legend telling is not lost in choosing such a topic. Indirectly the A’oga a le Faifeau addresses this art. If children can read and write

319 Jones et al., 2000. (Ibid), p. 54

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Samoan well, they can ‘hear’ those stories again. The A‘oga a le Faifeau provides the means through which children can enjoy those stories, by teaching them to read and write in Samoan. One of the pastors in my study (the Aisa Sisifo A‘oga a le Faifeau) uses the Samoan pedagogy of Fa’amatala Fa’a fagogo (legend-telling) to tell bible stories in his A‘oga a le Faifeau. As he said:

Mo le Faitau Pi-E lagi le pi Fa’atasi pe a uma ona faiatau Fa’asolosolo. E fai fesili ma tali mai le Tusi Paia. E Fa’amatala Fa’a fagogo tala o le Tusi Paia. (In the beginners’ class, the alphabet is read in a ‘chanting’ way after the children take turns reading it. Questions from the bible are given with answers for the children to learn. A bible verse is given to be memorised and a selected bible story is told, legend-telling style, for the children.) (Narrative Three).

My topic can thus be referred to (justifiably) as an ‘all encompassing’ one, because it addresses all those important issues referred to before, and for me personally it encompasses my work as a pastor’s wife in the A‘oga a le Faifeau.

The present chapter focuses on a study of A‘oga a le Faifeau in practice, carried out largely in Samoa and to a lesser degree in New Zealand.

Methodology

The system of methods and principles used in a particular discipline is referred to as its methodology.\(^\text{320}\) My methodology is necessarily eclectic; I use several methods and principles, styles, approaches and processes, both in my actual research and writing. Interviews and questionnaires, a critical analysis of historical and contemporary literature, personal critiques, personal narratives, a historical and geographical approach, and a Fa’a Samoa approach in conformity to the necessary face to face ‘ritual’, the ‘reciprocal exchange’, and the ‘oratorical’ exchange, are all part of my research methodology.

Qualitative empirical research is the dominant methodology in this study. As well as conducting interviews with the pastors and their wives, I was an active observer in two of the schools as a participant observer taking part in the actual teaching process. I took a preschool class for reading from the Pi Tautau, the Samoan Alphabet chart, during a

visit to one school. For another A'oga a le Faifeau, I took Class 2, a mixture of six and seven year olds, for Tusilima (writing and dictation). In this class the children were just learning to write simple words from the reading book, Tusi a Tamaiti (the Samoan Primer). My role of participant observer also extends to my involvement in our own parish A'oga a le Faifeau in Auckland, New Zealand, where I teach the Vasega Faitau Pi (Alphabet reading Class/Preschool) as well as assisting in coordinating our A'oga a le Faifeau program.

My review of the literature on the A'oga a le Faifeau forms a significant part of my research. The historical evidence is pertinent, firstly because it supports and authenticates my research, and secondly because it has offered material from various sources that needs to be integrated under one document. The documentation of this historical evidence is a most necessary part of the methodology.

A good part of the study is given to a critical analysis of educational and literacy practices in the schools in Samoa and in New Zealand, practices I claim to be responsible in some ways to Samoan children underachieving in school. This has necessitated a much wider literature review. Evidence and material to support my arguments are both from 'contextual' and international sources.

The interviews and observations and the historical material on the A'oga a le Faifeau are mostly in Samoan. Much of this material has come from the official journal of the CCCS, O le Sulu Samoa (The Samoan Torch), published monthly by the CCCS Printing Press in Apia. This Journal publishes church news in Samoan. Their English translations are necessary to effect a wider dissemination of this information for the purpose of the study. Translating is part of the methodology for this study; very time consuming but absolutely essential.

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321 By this I mean local, referring to Samoa and New Zealand as the context of my research.
The “Lived Experience” Approach

The study is basically a history of the A’oga a le Faifeau that focuses more on educational behaviour than on educational structure, more on the lived experience of the A’oga a le Faifeau than on a chronological order of past events. Past events are included as re-lived experiences because they have links with the present. The approach is both narrative and evaluative with emphasis on interpreting - the difficult, controversial and interesting part of history. According to Meleisea, “nothing is more boring (or uninformative) than lists of facts without interpretations.”

Interpretations are the parts of history that live on. The ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of the event constitute its interpretation. Historical facts and events can be verified and examined by looking at various written works, or by asking people concerned with those events, so that they can be put in “truthful” contexts. It is the interpretation, though, that adds quality and ‘finesse’ to any historical writing. The study attempts to do that. The documentation of data collected from history books, church official journals and documents and church archives are not just a mere collection of information on the A’oga a le Faifeau. While some of the information documented offer their own interpretations or are interpretations in themselves, I also include my own.

Researching the Contemporary A’oga a le Faifeau: The ‘Lived Experience Approach’ in Action

Finkelstein, an educational historian, advocates the ‘lived experience’ approach. She critiques the traditional focus of educational history as overlooking the inner individual processes that lead to the shaping of consciousness and how education is used in everyday life beyond the pursuit of power and status. She addresses the need to ‘diversify’ the method and methodology of our research to include the lived experiences of our subjects. She also goes on to say that the reigning myths of education history – benevolence, paideia, oppression, and modernization - had all favoured elites because they focused on the centralizing tendencies of modern urban life, linking education to the

evolution of economic, political and intellectual macro structures, revealing the evolution of high rather than folk culture, of large educational traditions rather than small ones.324

Finkelstein’s argument has clear implications for my study. What she says about the traditional focus of educational history is also true of the history of Samoan education. I critique this history for being one-sided, for failing to recognise that Fa’a Samoa literacies contribute positively to Samoan children’s schooling and instead blaming the Fa’a Samoa as the inhibiting factor in their educational progress. This history fails to recognise the part played by the church in the education of the Samoan child, in particular the role of the A’oga a le Faifeau as the provider of necessary literacy skills that have some spans with school-based literacies. As well, this history concentrates on demonstrating the ‘reification’ of the notion that Samoan children are more suited to ‘manual’ labour than ‘mental’ labour. This history is about maintaining the power and the status of the Palagi as superior. It is about favouring ‘elites’, the respective educational echelon and government officials of Germany and New Zealand. While this history recognises that the LMS missionaries introduced formal education in Samoa and that the church played a part in the education of Samoan children; that was about all it said about the educational mission of the church. In some historical accounts as I mentioned in Chapter One, the church is described as ‘exploitative’ and oppressive.325 My study provides a closer examination of the positive side of this history through analysis of what actually went on and still goes on in one important aspect of church life.

With Finkelstein’s advocacy, my study uses the ‘lived experience’ approach, focussing on the lived experiences of pastors and their wives. The CCCS pastor and wife spend a lot of their time with the A’oga a le Faifeau, yet the latter is a relatively unknown phenomenon. The school has been paid little attention. My study brings to attention the important contributions the A’oga a le Faifeau makes to education, especially that of Samoan children.

The A’oga a le Faifeau may be categorized as a small educational tradition rather than a large one, considering the fact that it has not been written about in any lengthy detail.

324 Finkelstein, (Ibid)
325 Barrington 1968, Keesing 1942, Ma’ia’i 1957
except for brief passing comments in theses and dissertations by CCCS theological students and church historians who are mostly non-Samoan. The A'oga a le Faifeau is an institution in itself and one that has developed its own culture that has survived as a traditionally powerful but relatively quiet and unassuming practice within the work of the CCCS. It has developed ‘folk culture’ characteristics, as its values have become a way of life for many Samoan people.

The A'oga a le Faifeau is an institution that has been taken for granted throughout the years because it is compulsory for a pastor to have a school and therefore the school has a ‘permanent fixture’ status in the pastor’s calendar of duties. If there is any activity the pastor and his wife are totally involved in, it is the A'oga a le Faifeau. The pastor and his wife are the principal teachers. The CCCS ministry has always been regarded as a joint responsibility between the pastor and his wife. Candidates for the Malua Theological College are always encouraged to bring wives to the College to learn and familiarise with the roles of a Samoan pastor’s wife. As Dr Fairbairn-Dunlop, a Samoan educator, said:

Ministry was regarded as a joint responsibility, thus as the pastors were trained for their ecclesiastic duties, their wives were taught to be role models and leaders of village women. The pastors’ wives followed a rigorous training in community leadership skills, housekeeping and agriculture.326

Their ‘team ministry’ is most obvious in their joint role as teachers of the A'oga a le Faifeau. They may call upon the assistance of members of the parish, as done in New Zealand, for the A'oga a le Faifeau is mostly held on Sundays because many children live far from the churches. In Samoa the village children go to the A'oga a le Faifeau most days of the week because their homes are within walking distance of church. The pastor and his wife very rarely leave the running of the school to others except when they are on furlough for three months after every six years, or are away for longer than two weeks, the duration of time that the pastor is allowed to be absent from the parish at any one time. One measure of a good and hard working faifeau (pastor) is his dedication to his A'oga (school). This is revealed in the pastors’ stories and my analysis where some parents and ‘school teachers’ evaluate the outcome of the pastors’ teaching that includes

turning out good readers and writers of Samoan and well disciplined children. (Narratives One and Two).

While the pastors are accorded a relatively high standing in the Samoan society and thus have power and status, they are not expected to exercise these for their own ends, as this would defeat the very purpose of why they are faifeau. They are not to take advantage of their ‘honorary’ high status. To pursue power and status goes against Christian principles of humility and love. The Protestant work ethics (the desire to achieve and persevere, hard work and mental toughness) instilled in Samoan pastors during their theological training do not include seeking power and status for themselves. Instead they are to demonstrate dedication and perseverance, honesty and humility in their work. This is one reason why from the very beginning Samoan pastors were not permitted to hold matai titles and consequently cannot become members of Parliament, although with universal suffrage introduced in 1992 they could vote. They were not to be involved in government politics; instead they were to demonstrate their own calling as astutely as possible. Pastors’ wives in Samoa are not allowed to work outside of the ministry because they have duties and responsibilities that includes running the Vasega Faitau Pi in the morning and helping their husbands prepare for the A'oga a le Faifeau classes in the afternoon during the A'oga a le Faifeau term and to help plan and teach Sunday School and Children’s Sunday activities.

Multiple Realities of a Common Experience

Human beings, according to Jack, an educational writer, create their own reality through language and therefore lives may be read as text. He argues that in turn, the ebb and flow and the tensions between discourses, create humans who therefore have variable agency

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327 The word faifeau is formed from two Samoan words, fai which means to make, to do, to carry out and feau, which means message, work or task. The word describes the pastor as the doer of the task or work of spreading the Christian message or the Gospel.

328 Theological students spend four years in the Malua Theological College. The first week of every term (usually three terms) is referred to as o le vaiaso u’amea (the iron week) when students and their wives go through a programme of intensive physical work, cleaning up the campus, doing renovations to living quarters, planting (and weeding) taro, bananas or coconut saplings in the plantations or cleaning out the swimming and fish pools. The College aims to give (ideally) a balanced programme of physical, social, intellectual and spiritual activities for the students and their wives. This training is essential preparation for the CCCS ministry. It is also one of the reasons why it is extremely rare to call Samoan graduates from other Theological institutions of the same Protestant faith (Eg. Presbyterian or Anglican) to CCCS parishes. While those other theological institutions may fulfill the social, academic and spiritual side of the training, the physical component does not usually measure up.
in constituting themselves. Jack refers to these as ‘multiple realities’ of a common experience. The \textit{A’oga a le Faifeau} is a common experience in which the pastors, wives, students and parents create and develop multiple realities through their interactions, relationships, the various perspectives and expectations.

A characteristic feature of the study is its promotion of the diversity of meaning for individuals, about a common experience. The pastors, wives and students each contribute to the complexity and multiplicity of meaning of the \textit{A’oga a le Faifeau}. According to Lankshear and Lawler, “different people come to understand reading and writing in different ways from the very beginning and to have these uses reinforced in their daily experience.”

The multiple realities that the pastors, wives and students create and develop within their common experience of the \textit{A’oga a le Faifeau} are their “lived experiences”. Finkelstein argues that those lived experiences emphasize the context in which they occurred as well as relating and explaining how and why people interact as they did and still do in the \textit{A’oga a le Faifeau}.

The word ‘lived’ as a past tense verb connotes finished or past. The word in the context of the study is interpreted to mean showing the results or the ‘scars’ of work well done, and that would live on. Those lived experiences have left their mark and models for generations of \textit{A’oga a le Faifeau} participants to carry on.

Students and others involved with the \textit{A’oga a le Faifeau} also bring their own ‘cultural’ characteristics and informal values into the school. In the institution of the \textit{A’oga a le Faifeau}, cultural connections are strong and are therefore of great consequence. There are for example, indigenous Samoan values at stake, Samoan language, respect, generalised reciprocity, the introduction and acceptance of religious and ‘civilised’ values like privacy and private property, and those associated with the print literacy, that is,  

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\item Finkelstein, (Ibid), p.257
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knowing how to read and write opens doors to other 'lives'. There are also 'cultural' connections among the pastors and children, Samoans and missionaries and so on, which make up the A'oga a le Faifeau's own culture.

Several educationists have pointed out that liberals and revisionists had too often utilised only official accounts and official syllabuses, with the result that the voices of both teachers and children have been rarely heard. Openshaw et al. and Moss have argued that educational historians have all but ignored the teachers, children and the classroom setting and instead focused almost exclusively upon the pronouncements of politicians and administrators. The old and new historical writing have tended to neglect the 'living' and the 'lived,' the more active part of education. The practice of the A'oga a le Faifeau is the result of actors' value-laden interpretations of their world and as Robinson argues, “we cannot understand practice without understanding these interpretations.” What went on in the classroom was often not written about because educational historians tended to focus on material from official sources and policy documents rather than on the dynamics of the classroom and the relations between the teacher and the learner. Information from official sources and policy documents is important, but equally significant are the lived experiences of the teachers and learners. An over-emphasised structural methodology leads to the acceptance of a simple linear relationship between attitudes and performance. A mere description of the structural elements of any education system ignores the lived experiences of the people directly involved in it. The lived experiences are the actual social interactions and educational outcomes that teachers and learners would demonstrate while engaging in and with the structural elements of an education system.

My study is not only about the pastors, wives, students, parents or the CCCS accomplishing independent or personal objectives in the A'oga a le Faifeau. It is about achieving 'interpersonal' goals to do with teaching and learning. It is also about the


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calling of the ‘pastors cum teachers’ to carry out their double mission of spreading the gospel and teaching the print literacy. It is about fulfilling the expectations of parents about their children’s education. There are multiple realities created and developed by those people in constituting themselves, within the A’oga a le Faifeau. It is about their visions and transformations, exchange of ideas and beliefs. It is about cross-cultural and intra-cultural exchanges and their experiences as the ‘converted’ from a so-called ‘heathen’ existence into a ‘civilised’ one. It is about how the Samoan learners coped with a relatively revolutionary rather than an evolutionary change and how they responded to the changes in roles, for example when being slotted into predetermined Western gender roles. It is about their thoughts on changing from an oral literacy to the print literacy. It is also about a most important opportunity for students to free their own intellects and to learn necessary skills that would prepare them not only for school but also for life.

Researching in Samoa

I have summarised the general methodological procedures above as well as defining the type of approach that I take in my thesis, which is manifest especially in my actual research that follows. The following account pertains directly to my visits with the A’oga a le Faifeau in Samoa, when I arrived in Samoa on Friday, 5th of March 1999 to carry out my research.

A blessing: Getting permission from the Chairman of the CCCS Elders’ Committee

The CCCS Elders’ Committee is seen as the top ‘political’ body in the CCCS. It is made up of all elder ministers in the church. Each elder minister heads each subdistrict or pulega. According to the CCCS records,336 in March 2001, there were 42 pulega, including overseas ones; 25 in Samoa, 8 in New Zealand, 4 in Australia, 2 in Hawaii and 3 in the USA. The last Fono or Annual General Meeting, in May 2002, approved the formation of two more pulega in Australia. The actual figure now is 44. The pastors of each pulega appoint its elder minister either by vote or consensus agreement.

336 Semau, T M. March 2002, Personal Communication. (Motavai T Semau is administrative assistant responsible for the collecting and recording of CCCS statistics. He sends out forms to the pastors every year to update church records. These statistics are for the year 2001).
I could not carry out this research without making a formal request for permission from the Chairman of the Elders committee at the time. On March 9th of 1999 three days after arriving in Samoa, my husband and I went especially not only to ask for permission but also for his blessing, which would also be given on behalf of the CCCS. He was more than pleased that I was embarking on a study of the A’oga a le Faifeau, an important part of the ministry in which he and his wife were also directly involved.

He gave his blessing for my research and was looking forward to reading the end result. It was essential that I went through this formality for several reasons. Firstly it was culturally appropriate. I had to do it out of respect for my elders. There is a Samoan proverb, which explains the necessity of this process. ‘E manuia se faiva pe afai e tapuaia,’ which means, ‘any task or work that is ‘blessed’ will succeed.’ In the Fa’a Samoa, before embarking on an undertaking of great importance, one must be given the blessing of either the aiga, the matai or the nu’u (village). Secondly, it was politically correct. I went to the Chairman of the Elders’ Committee first before making any contact with the pastors. All the pastors in the CCCS are under the Chairman’s ‘jurisdiction’. I was indirectly asking for protection, along similar principles perhaps as getting a University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee (UAHSEC) approval. Thirdly, it had spiritual significance for me as a pastor’s wife. As my research as well is church-based the blessing had to come from the ‘auauna a le Atua’ (servant or man of God).

The Initial Visits: Getting to know the ‘researched,’ the pastors and their wives and the schools in the study. Doing it the Samoan way

I spent seven weeks in Samoa during this initial visit, three weeks doing my preliminary contacting and familiarising and devoting the last four weeks to observations,

338 This means, servant (auauna) of (a le) God (Atua), which is another, address for the minister or pastor.