

Family tradition, curriculum and voices – Road to success.

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Abstract

This paper elaborates on the significance of family tradition on the students' successful achievement in education. This factor was highlighted as one of the indicators for the students' educational success in Lipine's (2010) research and recommended as an important area to be exploited for cultural and educational development. In New Zealand, changes are being made to assist education of Pasifika students and those were significant to success of some students. However, the failure rate of Pasifika students is still higher than that of the other ethnic groups, and the need to investigate resolutions for this trend is seriously considered. The literature indicates the need for educational systems to be responsive to the multiple worlds of minority students. Thirty six Samoan students from high schools were interviewed and their views were analysed to verify factors that are important for academic success. Thematic analysis identified three themes; First, the passion to achieve. Second, the capacity to deal with inconsistencies. Third, the importance of a holistic orientation. Each of these rests upon a strong family orientation as being important. Recommendations arising from the study are outlined.

KEY WORDS: Family, Tradition, Culture, Learning, Samoa

INTRODUCTION

High failure rate of ethnic minority students in education is a concern for education authorities in many communities. Indians in Great Britain and Canada (British Educational Research Association [BETA] 2014), Latinos and the Afro-Americans in the US (Sparks 2011), Aborigines of Australia (Schwab 1998) and of course the Pasifika students in New Zealand have been dominantly occupying the lower end of the scale (from fail to average grades), a trend according to Lipine (2010), it has been evident for decades. Although research (Fortuny and Henderson 2009) in this area have prompted numerous recommendations, the problem remains un-resolved. Some improvements in examination results and tertiary entry (Fox and Ramani 2010) have indicated that progress has been made but this has been considerably slow compared to results by other students. In New Zealand, almost half the number of secondary students who failed year 12 and 13 examinations in the past five years are those with Pasifika orientation, and more than 50 percent of these students are Sāmoans (New Zealand Education Review 2012). A similar trend has also been experienced in other ethnic communities. For example, the Afro-American and Latinos of the US (Sparks 2011) have shown significant improvement in educational performances but relatively lower than those of caucasian or palagi (also known as white/European) orientation. Researchers (e.g. Villegas et al. 2012) pointed at cultural mismatch as a potential cause for the increasing failure in education for these people, but Lipine's (2010) findings reveal that Sāmoan students have their own views of their culture's, that can be utilized to enhance their education. He added that these views are influenced by family values which are driven by circumstances. According to the students, they have their own perspectives of fa'asāmoa that are different from that of their village and church communities. This article discusses the influence of student's perceptions of their culture on learning.

Literature review

Methodology

The research is primarily based on the voices of the students. It is essential that the views of the individuals are heard because no-one else understands them (Hunkin 2015). A group of 36 Sāmoan high achieving students were selected for the task, nominated by their school principals and senior teachers. The schools were selected from the various communities in the North Island of New Zealand. These schools were carefully considered for a fair representation of the various areas of New Zealand. Two sets of interviews were used, group and focus group. Thematic analysis procedure was used for the data analysis—all data was transcribed and sorted into codes and then themes. Three themes, the passion to achieve, capacity to deal with inconsistencies, and the importance of a holistic orientation, each resting upon a strong family orientation were recognized. The themes were further analyzed to determine a mega-theme—this theme entails diversity and individuality within culture and viewed as an entity of truth.

Theory

Culture

A number of relevant theories supported the findings for this research. These theories provided a detailed explanation of the factors impacting students' perceptions of their culture, and successful achievement in education. The cultural, socio-economical, religious, family and political influences will be exploited to inform the various approaches to achieve success.

Theorists (e.g., Brown 1998; Enayati and Sayyadi 2012; Bowels 1998; Sodowsky et al. 1998; Frey 1998; Osborne 2001) have conceptualised culture as a way of life conceived of multiple/diverse concepts. Formally, the same notion was conceptualised by Bronfenbrenner (1994), indicating culture as a system shaped by various ecological forces—his concept provides insight of why people sometimes have diverse perceptions of their cultures. Other theories (Strawson 1989; Schatschneider et al. 1999 and Villegas 1999) indicate that diverse perception of culture can be caused by reason steered by intention which derives meaning, thus people's perceptions are shaped accordingly. So, diversity in perceptions of culture depends on people's intention. The cultural difference and mismatch theories (Stephens et al. 2012) support that appropriate approaches are necessary to enhance learning, but they add that educators can assume other peoples' cultures wrongly, particularly when they do not fully understand the impact of change on individuals. These theories have been used to describe academic and socio-cultural issues within the schools, particularly those with diverse cultures in them, but, education systems have not acknowledged diversity within the cultures and school teachers themselves have continued to assume students' learning needs.

It could be argued that failure to understand student's cultures can lead to cultural mismatch. In New Zealand, cultural mismatch has led to many students failing education (Lipine 2010). Assuming that all Sāmoan students have the same concept of fa'asāmoa is wrong, and Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese's (1999) theory, 'fue lavelave' has provided a relevant explanation of that. In fact, he cautioned that fa'asāmoa is more complex than just a culture with rules and traditions. Tupua Tamasese added that fa'asāmoa is construed of the various forces such as religion, politics,

economic, education, cultural etc., that change from time to time (1999)—and he argued that all these factors will impact on Sāmoan’s mentality. He also pointed at the pattern of development of fa’asāmoa in the past and said that, changes have and will always be accepted as part of fa’asāmoa as many Sāmoans see it as a positive aspect of life for them. Turner (1983) has indicated in his research that the Sāmoans have formulated rules and traditions to adapt to change which means that traditional thoughts will be changed. Emulating Bronfenbrenner, Tamasese and Rolff (1978) believe that Sāmoans would surrender their traditional fa’asāmoa and adapt to changes as circumstances continue to change.

Change in fa’asāmoa cannot be viewed as subsidiary, in fact, this should be known as part of cultural-evolution as emphasized by Hofstede (1980) and Sailiata (2014): They referenced Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher who researched culture and argued that it will transform as people continue to interact with the ever-changing forces such as politics, education, religion, family, religion and community. These interactions could be understood by Piaget’s schemata theory which he proposed that, stimulus is determined by a combination of senses and innate forces such as visual, brain, nerves and mind—these forces interact to process information that are aligned with desire. Meanwhile reaction to what we want is being characterized as instinct, a process described in Bruner’s (1991) physicalistic human development theory. Apparently, Bruner supports cultural evolution and he was not alone. In Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) framework, he outlined the reasons why people are diverse in their views—he indicated that cultural change is motivated by fluctuating circumstances and people would have to adapt to those changes or face difficulty in life, adaption therefore depends on situation and purposes of the individual.

Piaget (1958) and Bruner (1957) have also described in their theories the causes for cultural diversity, stating the various forces such as family, food, health condition, economic, peers, media, technology etc., as prompting stimulation. They added that creativity is part of human development - people create ideas through borrowing, adaptation, assimilation and observation. These ideas vary from time to time depending on the individual (Rutherford 1990). However, some people align perception with traditions/values of the culture they are exposed to. The theories discussed have indicated that, people’s perceptions of their cultures are entirely dependent on interaction with environment.

Cultural variation

Cultural variation is one of the issues arising from Lipine’s (2010) research. He found that, students have diverse views of their culture because they are in conformity with family traditions. In Kagan et al. 1984 research they found that people have diverse views of their cultures because of interactions with other cultures—again, they supported that interaction with environment influences belief/perception, and they believed that this process is fundamental to cultural understanding. These commentators are evolutionists but, they are more flexible in concepts of culture, they believe change can happen any time depending on need and circumstances, meaning that they do not observe patterns to verify a point after a significant period of time like the typical Darwinian’s (1859) evolutionary idea of human life. Other researchers (Karagiorgi and Symeou 2005; Piaget 1958) believe diversity in people’s views/perceptions of their cultures is a result of people being stimulated by intention. This process is dependent on the state of consciousness the individual has, which also means that not everyone has the same view of things. For example, some people deviate from their culture because of the need to adjust to change, and while environment continues to

evolve, people will be more creative in their views/ideas of their cultures (Gassmann et al. 2010). Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory system has provided a detailed explanation of the basis of this creativity, indicating that innate stimulation is influenced by initiation, exploration and creativity. According to Bronfenbrenner, humans make changes to their ideas when they encounter unfamiliar circumstance/systems. Humans will continue to vary their cultures as they continue to encounter change (Bronfenbrenner 1994). All these researchers unveil an important area to be considered for educational development. That is, interaction with environment causes cultural perceptions. For education, what is being advocated is that students will be successful if they are left to construct their learning and be self-regulated. Teachers therefore must understand and be able to provide adequate assistance to motivate students (Reeves 2006). In the context of this study, being able to utilize student's perceptions of their family traditions in classroom learning will ensure students approach learning more readily. For didactic and clinical experience, learners are active constructors of knowledge and the locus of knowledge is based on social interaction within their families (Prawat 1996).

Cognition

For cognition, people manipulate environment to suit them, and form the learning strategies to make sure new discoveries are catered for. One of those strategies Hofstede (1980), Fryer and Jackson (2008) and Jones (2002) is being demonstrated in classroom setting—these commentators believe that innovation is the result of an individual understanding of information, meaning that we are more creative when we are familiar with information and in facilitating this need, it requires familiarity, comfortability and self-reliance. The underlying philosophy underpinning these theories is that cognition depends on who we are. The implication is that teachers' thorough understanding of the students is paramount (Hattie 2003; Partington 1998; Pasikale 1996; Pasikale et al. 1998).

The advantage of such an approach is that it enables creative thinking and positive learning behaviours (Strauss et al. 1998). As indicated by Jonassen and Grabowski (1993), students prefer their own learning methods, and are more creative when they are given the opportunity to create learning for themselves—teachers can assist by allowing students to use their preferred learning methods. In Piaget's concept known as schemata, he outlined a cognitive process involving assimilation, adaptation and accommodation—these processes involve learner's discovery of new ideas through immediacy, creativity and transliteration. They (Jonassen and Grabowski 1993) argue that creative learning can only be successful when learners understand what they are doing. Piaget's theory is being used as the basis for student centered learning approach for it supports creative learning/thinking as well as teacher-centered cognition.

However, a teacher centered learning method, which emphasizes rote-learning can be as effective as independent learning. Lipine (2010) has found that teachers stimulate interest if they are creative, friendly and caring, which means that learners sometimes copy what they see or hear if the methods of teaching appeals to them. In the context of Sāmoan students in New Zealand, some participants adjust to changes through instantaneous copying/adoption while the others maintain their traditions to assist their schooling, both students have successfully achieved the result. Theorists and many others have agreed that being flexible and considerate of modern conditions broadens the learner's concepts of his/her culture and ideas which is important for enhancing learning.

Result and discussion

In the context for this study, the influence of Sāmoan students' family traditions has impacted on their learning. Like any other culture (where change has resulted in people being creative and or selective in ideas), the respondents have chosen to abide by family traditions which made them successful learners. The data has shown that not all the families practice the traditional fa'asāmoa as such. Many families form their traditions by blending some Sāmoan traditions with the New Zealand cultural traditions to adapt to the conditions of New Zealand. Others however, sustain the traditional fa'asāmoa as tradition. Ironically, despite variation in traditions, all the families maintained Sāmoan values (respect and love) which according to them are the basis for successful achievements in education. The following factors (from this study) are the key to the subjects' family practices which are the indicators of the participant's concept of fa'asāmoa and the Sāmoan values. They include communication, the church, traditional fa'asāmoa, community, discipline and cultural pride. Several of these indicators will now be discussed in detail.

Communication

In the traditional fa'asāmoa, respect and love are reflected upon leadership, direction and decision-making which are the responsibilities of matai (also known as chiefs), parents, pastors and the elderly (Aiono 1986). Family members would only have to listen and do what they are told meaning that, decision-making within Sāmoan families/community is the responsibility of particular people. Meanwhile, some participants for the study have indicated that communication within their families is different from that of the traditional fa'asāmoa. For example, their families share ideas and the parents are flexible/considerate in decision making. They stated that:

It is good to have a balance and parents just have to understand the things their children had to do.... Like, if they have school work then they do not have to go to church.

I do not participate in the church and community activities that my parents are involved in, but they encourage me to do well in school, like telling me stories about the struggles they went through.

I reckon that there are some things that you are not allowed to do, that you should do, like for example, if I disobey my mother, it's like disrespecting the culture, but in the long run what I am doing, I know is helping me becoming what I want to be.

Basically, the stuff you do at home can relate to school. For example, I questioned things (i.e. my parents' instructions) if I did not understand them. Sometimes I disagree with my parents say with regard to things such as family policies, and I have always suggested what I believe in. My parents respect me and they listen to me when I voice my opinions.

Being considerate has resulted in a better understanding between all family members. The students and their families through mutual understanding worked cooperatively to achieve tasks—the parents and students listened, acknowledged, respected and were considerate of one another's needs. This form of communication is not foreign to them because it has always been the way these students communicate in their families. Catherine et al. (2008: 3–22), have earlier noted that it is natural for people to be influenced by the communication style of their society. And, for the successful Sāmoan students in New Zealand, the majority of them are New Zealand born and they practice open communication and share ideas like many papālagi families. Although some participants were born in Samoa, they lived in Apia where the fa'asāmoa is slightly different from that in the villages—communication between parents and children are open, meaning everyone has a say in family matters. Communication within these students' families is understood by the tradition of their society (Apia), a reflection of Vygotsky's (1962) concept of human development. It

is ironic though that when some of these students immigrated to New Zealand, they did not need to readapt to the new condition. Their traditional communication style (as they did in Samoa) was still valid in New Zealand and they preferred to sustain it because they believe it made them successful.

It is apparent that both students have adopted a Western style to enhance their learning and at the same time, preserve their values, but more significantly, engage in the preservation of Sāmoan values.

Jonassen (2012) and Piaget (1958) have conceptualized how information is processed in the mind, and while these theorists have studied two different people/cultures, they both agree that people shape perceptions based on intention. The intention, as discussed earlier in the literature review is stimulated and triggered by desire which could be attributed to practice/culture. The students for the research have clarified their true intention which is to utilize the fa'apapālagi (also known as the European style) to convey the Sāmoan values which is truly, their family culture/culture.

Apparently, the rapid development of other ethnic cultures in New Zealand could be another reason why many Sāmoan students (such as these students) held onto their traditional values under a different culture (Lipine 2010). The Ministry of Education has included in the curriculum cultural studies. Many secondary and even university institutions have established various related activities to encourage ethnic students' participation (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2011) and Samoa is an active participant of that. In Axelrod's (1997) concept of culture, he pointed out that people's cultures/perceptions are formed via cultural infusion, the process he believed involves culture as agent, meaning that we use our culture as a means to convert new ideas prior to being accepted. Although he was a bit vague about the definition of culture, his concept fits in the context of this study. That is, the students were aware about the values of the fa'asāmoa as demonstrated through their family traditions, and they perceived/behaved accordingly. Many Sāmoans believe that, allowing foreign traditions in fa'asāmoa would distort the Sāmoan values, but, for these students, adopting foreign ideas/traditions in New Zealand encourages them to keep the Sāmoan values, a notion supporting Jonassen and Grabowski (2012) findings. Moreover, Piaget indicates that humans have instincts that are further developed throughout our journey in life, which means that we tend to change from time to time as we continue adapt to the modern world. But according to Tamasese (1999), Sāmoans are proud of fa'asāmoa and that they would apply exotic ideas to enhance their values as they did in the past, and he referenced the events leading to the Mau and forming some Sāmoan traditions such as tatau (also known as traditional tattoo) and ava ceremony. There is no doubt that the students for the research were being nurtured the way their families believe would make them successful in New Zealand. The students themselves confirmed that, and stated how important it is to their educational development. Obviously, they have always communicated with their families in the more Western style but the intention is to maintain the Sāmoan values. The key to all their success however, are the parents being considerate and having a better understanding of their children. In fa'asāmoa, there is proverbial saying that; A a'oa'o le tama e tusa ma ona ala e le toe te'a ese ai lava—If a child is nurtured according to the culture, he/she won't deviate from it. It means that no matter what changes we make in life we will always remember our values.

In education, the cultural difference theories have showcased effective communication to foster success for multicultural orientation learners. Many New Zealand schools now require the local knowledge (in the form of locals such as teacher aides, parental help, community leaders and

stake holders) to assist with students' academic development. These people can provide teachers with insight into the students' mindset. The students themselves stated that their parents have been considerate of their needs, and that motivated them to do well in school. The teachers therefore must show tolerance and respect to their Pasifika students by listening to them. This approach is significant for both the students and teachers' development particularly in complex situations such as that involving these students.

Meanwhile, the other respondents have indicated the importance of the traditional communication practices of fa'asāmoa to them. They said that:

The traditional fa'asamoa gives you the respect that will lead you to better things.

We are taught to listen to our parents, matai, the elderly and pastor, because they have the wisdom and better understanding of life. I believe listening to their ideas will assist in terms of direction and understanding of the world.

I guess I was quite fortunate that my parents have always advised me about the importance of education.

The findings have illustrated how communication is being carried out within some Sāmoan families. It could be argued that modern ideas determine cultural direction (Axelrod 1997) but, the respondents have indicated the opposite of that. Apparently, these students have been conservative with fa'asāmoa and that reflected their preferred communication style, quite the opposite of Meleisea (1987); Mageo (1990); Pasikale (1999), Openshaw et al. (1993), Pasikale et al. (1998) who believe in cultural evolution. The assumption underpinning these commentators' concept is that all cultures must be subject to change or face extinction (Inglehart and Wolzel 2005). Some students for this study however, pointed out that communication within their families has always been one dimensional—their role is to listen to parents and matai and do what they are told, and through that they became successful learners. An important indicator from this section is that traditional communicational methods in fa'asāmoa are more effective to some students because they are being practiced in their families, the notion that was conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner's (1994) microsystem concept. The unfolding possibility from these findings is that students will be successful as long as they accept and appreciate communication within their families. The New Zealand Ministry of Education has considered the importance of students understanding of teacher and vice versa and thus decided to include teacher aides in the payroll. The aim is for these helpers to assist with class programmes, those with language difficulty and cultural misunderstanding. Schools counselors have also been part of the school programmes to counter the various problems relating to student learning which has helped improve communication links between students and their families.

Discipline

Some are aware that some Sāmoan traditions are not recommended by the New Zealand authorities but they still believe these are appropriate to them. The Sāmoan traditional disciplinary methods such as spanking or verbal abuse are not recommended by the New Zealand authorities but these are still practiced in some families. The students believe that these are appropriate to them.

My parents spank me because they want me to become a good person. They do not hit to hurt me physically but to make me realize there are consequences for unaccepted behaviors. I also feel that it is love why I sometimes get spanked, so why not.

According to the fa'asāmoa you get the strap from your parents if you misbehave repeatedly, like you get the hidings from your parents because they want you to live a better life. When you get older you will learn more about respecting other people.

Whenever my dad gives me a hiding he tells me that the reason why he does that is because he cares about me. This makes me realize that it is important to listen to parents.

Sometimes I get told off for misbehaving. My parents often raise their voices and used some harsh words and I understand that they do that because they want me to be good.

The traditional fa'asāmoa gives you the respect that will lead you to better things.

We are taught to listen to our parents, matai, the elderly and pastor, because they have the wisdom and better understanding of life. I believe listening to their ideas will assist you in terms of direction and understanding of the world.

These students are Sāmoan born and they lived in the village areas of Samoa where traditional disciplinary methods are practiced and perceived as the only means toward a better and successful life—'spanking' and 'telling off' are some of these methods. It is common knowledge in Samoa that many Sāmoan students in New Zealand have failed in school and ended up being unemployed or imprisoned because they opted to live the fa'apālagi that they do not fully understand. And so, these students' families have decided to stay with the traditional fa'asāmoa rather than the New Zealand culture, an exploration discussed by Prawat (1996) in his concept of knowledge. An important consideration from this finding is that *sasa* or spanking combines with counseling enable these participants to accept their parents' reasoning and the advantage for this approach to them being that they are being punished twice (physically and mentally) making them aware of the consequences of unacceptable behaviors, whether this is recommended in the New Zealand law is something to be considered for the future.

Furthermore, these students believe that senior people are leaders because they are knowledgeable and wise and they would accept whatever they are endorsed to do. In fa'asāmoa, Sāmoans are taught about the ways to obtain knowledge and for those who are exposed to the culture, they would have the first-hand experience of those teachings and not questioning their relevance. In Piaget's (1958) concept of perception, he indicated that perception is the result of ideas being restored and processed in the mind, and he used the three processes (assimilation adaptation and accommodation) to illuminate his concept. For the Sāmoans in the research they were literally being disciplined in the Sāmoan traditional methods and they have experienced the advantages of these approaches to them. There is no secret that, these students also understand that some secondary schools in Samoa (after the continuous violence in the streets of Apia) have reinstated *sasa* to discipline Sāmoan students because there is a belief that the fa'apālagi approaches are not effective anymore and because of the increase in fights amongst some schools. For some Sāmoans, the culture of New Zealand has created issues for them and hence they had to do what would benefit them, which is staying with the culture. The participants said, it is their family traditional discipline methods that made them who they are.

Cooperative Effort

Another significant tradition to the students schooling success is cooperative effort. This approach can be linked to fa'asāmoa. That is, it is traditional for Sāmoans to work in units (Tupuola 2004). And, there is proverbial expression in fa'asāmoa to confirm this; *a limalima faatasi ua mama se avega* meaning that; more hands make a task easier to achieve (ibid). Apparently, the cooperative tradition

of fa'asāmoa reflects the traditions of some families. The participants from these families stated that:

Sometimes my uncles gave me money for my schoolwork

My dad checks my work from time to time. He keeps a record of my test results. He's concerned when my results are down.

We are not rich of course and we are also not poor like the people in the remote areas of Africa and China. But, my parents made sure that I have all that I need for school. I understand that they want us to have a better future so I studied hard and aimed for higher things.

We are proud of our families, and we would like to do our best in our schooling to give our families better names.

I come from American Samoa and the expectation of my family and the community is pretty high on me. I mean that when they see me leaving the country for education they expect much higher things when I return, and if I return a failure the word goes out very quick, and that would give my family and I a very bad name. It's like an embarrassment to you and your whole family especially your parents.

I need to have better education to score a better paid job to help out my parents. They have been struggling to provide for my education, so I need to help out.

The participants have indicated the importance of family supportive roles to their schooling. Their families have contributed by giving moral and material support. Cooperative effort is viewed by these Sāmoans in New Zealand as a way to promote family which is different from that of the many Sāmoans in Samoa. Success in education is a step forward in life and that is achieved through working cooperatively to support the educational needs of the young Sāmoans. Piaget's (1958) scaffolding idea is relevant to describe this approach by the Sāmoans. He believed that the support by more experienced people would encourage/motivate learners. But that is not all; Sāmoans are proud people, and they would support education for they believe that success would give them a good name as well. The students however, stated the importance of nuclear family to them and indicated an awareness of some extended family members' agenda. That is, not everyone is as generous as the parents. For these students, loyalty is attributed to those who assist with love and they pointed at their parents and nuclear families. So, being loyal and caring for their parents, these students made sure they do well in schools.

Fa'asāmoa (culture)

Fa'asāmoa has rules and protocols like any other culture. The words, traditions, sounds, expressions, intonation and symbols convey meanings that only the Sāmoans are familiar with (Hunkin 2015). In the New Zealand context, the fa'asāmoa may not be as effective as it is in Samoa because of the of the host country's culture. But, some participants pointed out how they managed to weave their way through using the language.

I suppose I pick up different traits from different cultures, I mean if it is not gonna help me do better in life then there is no point picking it up you know it's kind like pick and mix.

I think if Sāmoan students do as I am doing they will be much better than the palagi students. I am saying this because I also apply my knowledge of fa'asāmoa in my English expression, which has been a big advantage I have over my palagi peers.

Many senior Sāmoans are opposed to the idea of language/cultural adoption. They believe that many young people have adopted the ideas, words and other cultural aspects from fa'apālagi to express meaning in fa'asāmoa but, these do not possess the true meaning of traditions and expressions. These seniors believe that it is imperative that the formal culture and language must be

used at all times otherwise the culture will disappear (Lipine 2010). Research (Tui Atua 1999; Pasikale et al. 1998), however indicates that, change has always been part of fa'asāmoa, from its beginning until now. In support for this claim, certain words, practices and artifacts are referred to as being borrowed from the other cultures, which Sāmoans claim as theirs. Notably during the pre-colonization/colonization eras (John Williams...), *major changes occurred to the culture and these were masterminded by both the foreigners and senior Sāmoans* (Moyle 1984). The transitions were smooth as the Sāmoans blended to the changes undisrupted (Tupuola 2004). Now, Sāmoans are encountering many challenges in life and influences of other cultures were part of that, notably for the young generation. Like the past, many foreign ideas, words, traditions and traits were adopted (Pasikale 1996) and many of these changes have not been utilized properly unlike what the forefathers did. This behavior pattern continues through many generations as the Sāmoans continue to encounter new ideas/changes.

The literature has indicated that changes can be incorporated into culture as long as they are being utilized properly. In the past, it took the senior members (who are wise and knowledgeable) careful consideration to mastermind the transitions and the people fully appreciated it because they were done with good intention. Like Jonassen (1991) pointed out that we borrow ideas because we intend to use them. It is more or less what is happening to many Sāmoans today. New ideas are being borrowed and while some have resulted in people being successful, some have landed others in unpleasant destinations and that justifies the concern of the senior Sāmoans. However, where survival is vital we need to accept change. The participants themselves have indicated how they weaved their way around to adapt to the conditions of New Zealand meaning that they altered some Sāmoan traditions through borrowing/adoption. To these students, their practices not only made them successful in their schooling, they also made them proud Sāmoans.

These students have stated the significance of fa'asāmoa on their success so far in education despite being exposed to New Zealand culture. To weave their way through the two worlds, they altered some traditions which are not often accepted by their elders. But one cannot say that we do not react to change—it is natural instinct to react to stimuli (Buper 1992; Inhelder and Piaget 1958; Vygotsky 1962). One reaction of interest is cross-bordering (Chatterjee et al. 1992), this has been the tactic the students' families used which involves interaction and consideration. The students had to adapt to the culture of New Zealand because it is far superior in New Zealand than the fa'asāmoa (Lipine 2010), otherwise they hold on to their culture and risk losing it. How these students reacted to change is a complex issue—apparently they adjusted via an understanding of space, mobility and other forces accumulating the New Zealand culture and they effectively used these forces to consolidate the Sāmoan values by their families. Researchers (Ryba et al. 2016) have theorized this type of movement saying that there are forces concerning cultural transition and these are crucial to immigrants' lives. These people will assimilate to the new culture because they interact with them all the time. What is more unique about the students for this study is that they assimilate the New Zealand culture but still live the Sāmoan values. The study has revealed the importance of understanding—that is, when students, parents and educators understand each other, students will not fail examinations meaning that families and authority must cooperate with the students to make them successful learners. It needs to be highlighted that in many Sāmoan families/communities misunderstanding has resulted in many students failing school examinations. But, these communities have shown significant improvements due to educators, community leaders and parents being responsive to the needs of their young people's educational needs. Some

improvements in the areas such as NZEA examination results, university and polytechnics enrolment for Pasifika are shown (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2011), but still, the success rate of Pasifika is relatively lower than other groups which is a concern for educators and government leaders. Many end up playing rugby hoping that this would provide a better future for them. It could be argued that many Sāmoans are successful in rugby because of family/community support. In fact, rugby is part of 'āiga, church, community, work and everywhere else for these people meaning that it is traditional for e many students. Like the saying; not every player is a good player and unfortunately only a few make it to the professional level.

This finding will make parents and decision-makers aware about the significance of family traditions to students' learning. They will also be encouraged to listen and acknowledge the views of their young people to really understand these young people's learning needs. Moreover, it adds to the literature of existing education theories.

Conclusion

The varying nature of the Sāmoans students in New Zealand is an indication of the growing diversity of cognitive learning even amongst those of the same culture. What is being indicated from these findings is the importance of family culture, developing related literature to cognition. And, even more so, the need for constructivist teachers (Bandura et al. 1996 and Vygotsky 1978), those who understand the composition of students' mind set. The key to effective teaching/learning therefore rests solely on the teachers' understanding of social/cultural influences pertaining to students' perceptions (Jonassen 1991).

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