

**Education of Secondary Samoan Students in New Zealand: The Road to  
Success**

**by**

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## Abstract

This research was undertaken under the framework by Bronfenbrenner (1990). This study was carried out in six secondary in New Zealand to identify the factors that successful Samoans students believe have contributed to their educational success. A phenomenological approach was adopted for the research and a constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm was used for data collection. There were four phases used in the data collection. In phase 1, the researcher identified low decile schools that could be part of the research. Phase 2 consisted of pilot interviews. In phase 3, focus group interviews enabled the identification of 49 significant factors related to the respondents' successful achievement in education. All factors identified in phase 3 were discussed and verified in the individual interviews, which made up phase 4 of the research. The respondents gave detailed descriptions of the factors they believed to have influenced their schooling achievement and success. All factors identified in the interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis procedure, and this was significant in the identification of three important themes – the passion to achieve, the capacity to deal with inconsistency and a holistic orientation to *fa'asamoa* as perceived by the students' *aiga*. The key finding related to the students' *aiga*, which played a significant role in their lives and impacted positively on their educational achievement. The influences of culture, church, community and change were important to the students and these were central to the development of the themes in the context of New Zealand. This research has identified the complexity of the factors which contribute to the understanding of how best to meet the needs of Samoan students in the New Zealand context. The factors by the students are perceived by the researcher as important factors and direction for future educational development for Samoan students. This research has also provided another dimension to Bronfenbrenner's (1990) theory, which is important in the understanding of educational development of other ethnic groups such as the Pasifika students.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIMHI	Achievement Initiative in Multicultural High School
BOT	Board of Trustees
CCCS	Congregational Christian Church of Samoa
EFKS	Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa
ESL	English as Second Language
MOE	Ministry of Education
NBA	National Basketball Association
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
SC	School Certificate
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SPBEA	South Pacific Board of Education assessment
TNLT	The National Literacy Trust
UE	University Entrance
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WW 1	World War One

## Glossary of Samoan Words

<i>aganu'u</i>	tradition or custom
<i>Aiga</i>	Family
<i>ala</i>	way or method
<i>Olaga</i>	Life
<i>Alofa</i>	Love
<i>amata</i>	start or begin
<i>a'oa'o</i>	teach or train
<i>Aoga</i>	School
<i>Ua</i>	Precious
<i>aualuma</i>	unmarried young women
<i>ava</i>	Respect
<i>avega</i>	Burden
<i>ese</i>	Different
<i>fa'aaloalo</i>	Respect
<i>fa'aleaiga</i>	family tradition
<i>fa'alelotu</i>	church tradition
<i>fa'amatai</i>	chiefly customs
<i>fa'apalag</i>	English language
<i>fa'apapalagi</i>	European or Pakeha culture or traditions
<i>Faifeau</i>	Pastor
<i>fa'alelotu</i>	church affairs
<i>fa'asamoa</i>	Samoan culture/language
<i>Faletua</i>	wife of a chief
<i>Fanau</i>	Sibling
<i>Fono</i>	Meeting
<i>Lavalava</i>	Clothing

<i>Le</i>	The
<i>Lima</i>	Hand
<i>Ma</i>	And
<i>mama</i>	Light
<i>matai</i>	chief or leader
<i>Matua</i>	Parents
<i>Ona</i>	Because
<i>palagi</i>	Pakeha or European
<i>papalagi</i>	more than one Pakeha or European
<i>poula</i>	social dance
<i>Taiala</i>	Indicator
<i>Tama</i>	male or son
<i>Taule'ale'a</i>	unmarried young man
<i>taumafai</i>	Trying
<i>tautalaititi</i>	Cheeky
<i>te'a</i>	deviate or back-out
<i>Tele</i>	Many
<i>Titi</i>	traditional Samoan leaf wrap-around



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## Introduction

Over the years student success and failure issues have attracted considerable attention. How these issues are defined affect in the way in which the educational development and concerns are considered and acted upon. It might be expected that the views of students should be universally accepted as a fundamental aspect of defining learning. However, many education systems have not been able to utilize student contribution and this may be detrimental to student progress. Related to this is the notion that researchers had been focussing mainly on identifying the causes for students' failure rather than identifying factors that are important for their success (Barrington, 1990; Podmore & Wendt, 2006). Accordingly, an important approach to understand student success is to examine the foundations of success from the perspective of the students themselves.

Since the late 20th Century investigations of issues relating to students' development was the focal point of researchers and educators (Tinto, 1975) and one of the dominant researchers in this field was Bronfenbrenner (1990). His theory (the ecological development system theory) outlined family, school, friends, churches, culture, law and so on as the fundamental forces influencing human development. He argued that these forces are crucial in understanding students' learning needs (refer to chapter four). Bronfenbrenner's theory further encouraged the notion that the individual student knows more about his/her learning needs than teachers. Teachers therefore were encouraged to focus solely on students' interests and plan accordingly. Teachers' understanding of the forces influencing students became a very important part. His theory is still crucial in education today and some adaptations have been made to it to suit certain circumstances. For example, the educational developments of ethnic minority groups in England (The National Literacy Trust, 2005 – TNLT), the USA (Rodriquez, 2002), Australia, (Ciarochi, & Billich, 2006), the education systems of Zimbabwe (Kanyongo (2005), Cook Island (Barrington, 1992), Tonga (Hao'ofa, 1993) and New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2007) have outlined some of these issues. Some modifications to Bronfenbrenner's theory were apparent because of the different nature of the cultures within these ethnic

groups which also gave dimension for further investigation. The groups that have been chosen for this research were selected because of their similarities with that of the Samoan educational system – that is, the influence of family, community, church, cultural, modern change and so on.

This research supports Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological system theory, however, modifications have been made in some aspects due to the circumstances of Samoans in New Zealand (refer to chapter eight). The theory for this research has *aiga* as the primary force (the microsystem level) in the educational lives of many Samoans and this is significant in the development of the other levels (refer to chapters three, six and eight). Bronfenbrenner's theory also emphasised that the individual has a much clearer understanding of the forces that influence them. What this means is that the students themselves have a better understanding of the forces that influence their development. It seemed to the researcher that Bronfenbrenner's concept would be the best approach for this research because recent research by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2006; 2007; 2008) has emphasised the need for teachers/parents to understand students to assist their educational development. However, despite the efforts by New Zealand teachers many of these students have continued to fail academically (Ministry of Education, 2003). This may suggest that the best answer is probably within the students and the forces affecting these students.

Another theorist who has been dominant in phenomenological research is Reeves (1996). His models have been most popular amongst qualitative and quantitative research particularly those who work with human subjects (phenomenological research). One of these models is the constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative (CHIQ) paradigm. The model has been used by researchers to deal with complex issues such as diversity of views and varying circumstances (Reeves). The researcher also viewed this model as more adequate for this current research because it supports the notion of truth by the individuals and deals with complex issues relating to the Samoan students in New Zealand.

## **Research Study Outline**

This section presents an outline of this thesis. Chapter one is the overview of the problem relating to Samoan secondary students in New Zealand and the context of the study which outlines the issues relating to the nature of the study – Samoans in the New Zealand context, their cultural life-style and the importance of economic wellbeing. Finally in this chapter, consideration is also given to the research being undertaken.

The second chapter is a literature review and outlines the success in education for ethnic minority students. The issues relating to ethnic minority groups (Asians, Afro-Americans, aboriginals of Australia and Polynesian groups in New Zealand) are briefly discussed. These issues were similar to those of Samoans in New Zealand and the researcher believed this discussion will assist in the understanding of educational development for Samoans in New Zealand.

The third chapter reviews the cultural and educational issues and includes discussions of historical events (migration, political administrations), educational developments, cultural and church influences. The researcher believes understanding these issues will assist in the understanding of the circumstances of Samoans in New Zealand.

The fourth chapter is an investigation of educational theories and approaches. The theories and approaches (assimilationist, deficit, cultural reproduction, cultural difference, interpretive ethnography, motivational, attribution and critical theories relating to success, multicultural and second language learning approaches) describe the various influences (socio-cultural, personal, and political) on educational development of many Samoan students in New Zealand.

The fifth chapter outlines the research methodology for the study and the models of inquiry associated with the phenomenologically oriented approach with particular reference to the constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative (CHIQ) paradigm (Reeves, 1996). A model based on Reeve's (1996) was established to assist in the understanding of the information

gathered. Reeve's model outlines four steps, which were arranged in hierarchal order:

- Fundamental philosophy
- Inquiring paradigm
- Model for research
- Participants.

Chapter six discusses the interview data outlined in four significant patterns: Teacher-School influence, socio-cultural influence, student/teacher's learning characteristics and personal psychological qualities. Having arranged the data into patterns assisted in the understanding of their meaning and context.

The seventh chapter outlines the results and discussion. This chapter is about the themes that emerged from the findings. There were three themes identified (passion to achieve, capacity to deal with inconsistency in their status and holistic orientation. These themes provided a deep understanding of the students and more so, how success can be achieved for Samoans in New Zealand. The eighth chapter is the conclusion.

The eighth chapter is the summary of the thesis.

# CHAPTER ONE

## **Overview of the Problem Relating to Secondary Samoan Students in New Zealand**

### **Introduction**

This chapter gives an overview to the issue of the influence of the New Zealand context (political, socio-economic and educational influences) **on Samoan students** and the utilisation of the perceptions of the students in the understanding of success and achievement. Description of Samoans in New Zealand will also be discussed to assist in the understanding of this problem. Finally, this chapter discusses the research study and methodology including the fundamental philosophy, inquiry paradigm, model for the research and participants.

### **Overview of the Problem**

Change in the New Zealand education system resulted in the increased number of successful Polynesian/Pasifika students. For example, 63% Pacific Islanders achieved NCEA level 1 qualification or higher in 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2006). Whereas the Ministry of Education reported that in 1988, almost 70% Pacific Islanders gained the lowest grades (C1 and D) in both school certificate (SC) and university entrance (UE) examinations (Ministry of Education, 1990). However, some students appear to have been disadvantaged by the changes, particularly at the university level, for example some Samoan students who achieved secondary qualifications via internal assessment could not cope with examinations at the university levels (Tupuola, 1996). This would suggest that university practices need to be reviewed in the area of assessment for students. Furthermore, changes to society in New Zealand could be an influence so educators need to consider the impact of changes on students' lives to determine effective teaching strategies (for example growth of technology, and sports).

Nevertheless, according to the Ministry reviews (2007–2008), the rate of failure for Pasifika students increased from 60% to 72%, which is much higher than that indicated by the Ministry's report in 2006. These reports

revealed that the higher failure of Pasifika students continued to increase as their population increased. The only improvement recorded was the increased number (from 40%–52%) of the students who achieved average (C) pass in SC and UE examinations (Ministry of Education, 2008). It could be argued that the increased pass rate recorded in 2006 (Ministry of Education, 2006) were those of an average pass rate.

The change in the system emphasised the importance of student-centred approaches and many students seemed to enjoy this because their ideas became recognised as part of their learning. This meant that students were familiar with the teaching contents which are the keys to their understanding of subject areas (Piaget, 1950). Another change was the introduction of internally assessed subjects where students do not necessarily have to sit examinations to pass but internally assessed based on their performances in class. These changes had to be made because of the consistent high failure rate amongst Polynesian students (Ministry of Education, 2003).

However, the continuing high failure rate amongst Polynesian students indicates that further changes are needed in the education system of New Zealand. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2003; 2005; 2006; 2007) advised that for educators and teachers to understand the students' learning needs, they need a better understanding of the students' socio-economic, cultural, religious background and personal characteristics. Some researchers have focussed on identifying students' learning needs based on gathering information from parents and their general understanding of the students' social and cultural influences and have over-looked the perspective of the students themselves (Baba, Mahina, Williams & Nabobo-Baba, 2004). Generally, Polynesian students are not regarded as similar to learning needs of other groups and have not been accurately described by many researchers due to the general understanding of culture (Barrington, 1990). Often educational approaches are based on limited understanding and these are insufficient to meet the educational needs of the students. The current student-centred approach in New Zealand schools can be viewed as an example of this for Samoans. Indeed the New Zealand Ministry of Education has recommended research focussed on observing Samoan and other



Polynesian student behaviour and culture in New Zealand schools as a better way of understanding the student.

Methods and approaches were also established based on the findings from the New Zealand Ministry of Education investigations, but these did not help reduce the failure rate of Polynesian students. Earlier research by Carew and Lightfoot (1999), Jones (1991) and Sullivan (1998) found that understanding by teachers of Polynesian students in relation to culture and lifestyle has not helped to advance the education of these students. This is despite the extensive professional development of some teachers, and it is suggested by the Ministry that further changes need to be made to cater for these students' learning needs (Ministry of Education, 2003; 2007; 2008). Educators believe that one of the approaches is for the Polynesian parents and students themselves to contribute ideas and initiatives to education and schooling.

This research focussed on the success factors identified by Samoan students. The failure rate of Samoan students in New Zealand has always been high compared to other ethnic students despite the changes in the education system of New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1999; 2002; 2003). It was believed that the students' views could assist in the development of educational approaches and that would assist many Samoans. In understanding of the nature of the problem for these students, this investigation is framed around a number of key factors that underpin the study. These are:

- The influence of the New Zealand context
  - Political
  - Socio-economic
  - Educational
- The utilisation of the perceptions of the students as a key factor in understanding success and achievement.

## **The Influence of the New Zealand Context**

### ***Politics***

In education throughout the world, considerable interest has been focussed on educational methods and theories related to ethnic minority groups. It

could be argued that part of the problem facing Samoans and other Pacific Island students in New Zealand was that educational reforms and changes in New Zealand were motivated by political desires and interest and did not focus on students needs. For example in the late 20th Century, attempts by the New Zealand government to promote new educational methods/approaches for Pasifika students in New Zealand was made by promoting New Zealand's image in the Pacific (Sullivan, 1998). Many Pasifika nations in the 1980s and 1990s decided to form their own education system because their children did not excel academically via the New Zealand new approaches (Sullivan). However, part of the problem is that many of these students continue to immigrate to New Zealand and they were not familiar with the New Zealand educational approach.

### ***Socio-economic***

Another influence of New Zealand that affected the Samoans and other Pacific people was that these people considered New Zealand a better place for their socio-economic well-being. The economic status of these people (and in particular Samoans in New Zealand) impacted largely on their mindset – some have been motivated by their low socio-economic wellbeing while the others are being discouraged by it.

According to Leota Pita, a former member of parliament of Samoa many Samoans and other Pacific Islanders viewed the lifestyle of New Zealand as a better choice for them (personal communication, June 17, 2006). Many migrated to New Zealand for economic and educational purposes (Meleisea, 1987; O'Meara, 1990), but according to Spoonley (1993), many of Samoan students failed in New Zealand schools because of low economic status. He added that the lack of achievement was becoming more of a problem to the educational authorities. It was recognised that a number of initiatives (New Zealand Ministry of Education 1999; 2003; 2005; 2006) were necessary to work towards solving the problem.

### ***Educational***

Another significant factor in the success/failure of Samoan students has been the question of the appropriateness of the educational system and effectiveness of the teachers' teaching approaches. In attempting to create

more success for students, teaching and learning strategies were developed and specific changes made but this did not reduce the high failure rate of Samoan and other Polynesian students in examinations (Ministry of Education, 1999; 2000; 2002; 2003; 2006; Mitchell, McGee, Moltzen & Oliver, 1993). One initiative was the establishment of the Tomorrow's Schools in the 1990s which encouraged a partnership between government, schools and parents (Barrington, 1992), but for Pasifika students the results once again were unsatisfactory as many Pacific Islanders still failed. Thrupp pointed out that this reform would have been inappropriate for many Polynesian students in New Zealand because it was based on New Zealand's past experiences – that is, the base teaching and learning approaches were determined by teachers/educators' general understanding of students. The future was considered bleak for these students if no further changes were made to assist them in their development (Ministry of Education, 1999).

### **The Utilisation of the Perceptions of the Students as a Key Factor in Understanding Success and Achievement**

This research indicated that recognising the views of the students could assist their development. Sometimes we hear students saying unusual things, and may immediately perceive that as childish thinking, immature or inappropriate. Traditionally, many Samoans believe that they know what is best for their children (in education) because they think they have had more life experience, and they tend to dominate decision-making. It could be argued that this has led to many Samoan parents actively dominating decision-making. Fereni Ete, a leader of the *Mafutaga a Tina o Ueligitone* (Samoan's women society of Wellington), outlined to a women's meeting in Wellington in 2005 that the Samoan parents' dominant role in decision-making has led to their children becoming failures in their schooling (personal communication, July 28, 2005). However, there is some literature (e.g., Kestenbaum, 1977; Lieberman, 1993; Ministry of Education, 2003; Podmore & Wendt, 2006) that suggests children themselves have a better understanding of what is relevant for their own development. As indicated by Curtis and Mays (1978), Hastie and Kumar (1979), Liebermman (1993) and Stranger and MacMillan (1992), it is important to obtain an understanding of an individual's viewpoint to fully understand that person. Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological system theory has effectively described the factors and

forces that influence human development (refer to chapter four) and his theory was crucial in the understanding and interpretation of the factors relating to this research. This research has found that the voice of successful Samoan students regarding their own educational development is important because these are genuine descriptions of their thoughts and beliefs about the contextual factors relating to their success. It is hoped that this idea might assist the development of approaches to maximise the achievement of Samoan students in New Zealand secondary schools.

There is other literature about successful achievement for ethnic students that can assist in the development of educational approaches and practices for Samoan students (e.g., Chin, 1995; Hattie, 2005; Ministry of Education, 1999). This will be discussed in detail in chapter two.

## **Context**

In New Zealand in recent times it has been recognised that changes were needed in educational approaches/methods for Samoan and other Pasifika students. The change was required because of the consistently average to poor achievement by these students in examinations (Ministry of Education, 2003). These educational approaches and practices focussed on the factors most likely to have dominant influence on these students' lives (family and church life, economic well-being and culture) – it is believed that these are important variables in defining their progress (Ministry of Education, 2002).

This study involved Samoan secondary school students in Auckland and Wellington. These cities were chosen because the majority of Pacific Island people live in these areas (Livingstone, 1991; Ministry of Education, 2000; Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The voices of Samoan students are prominent in this research in relation to their educational progress, and their views have been taken into consideration to identify the best educational method and approaches for them. All students for this research were selected by their schools, and a major criterion for selection was that they were considered to be successful learners. For the purposes of this research, success is defined in specific terms in chapter four.

## **Description of Samoans in New Zealand**

Research (Fuimaono, 2001; Iata, 2001; Levine, 2003; O'Meara, 1990; Pasikale, 1998) has clearly indicated a range of inter-related factors that influence the development of Samoans in New Zealand. These are:

1. family and church
2. economic well-being
3. *fa'asamoa* (culture & language).

### ***Family and Church***

Many Samoans are identified by their family and churches and they perceive and behave according to these family and church values (Levine, 2003; Tiatia, 2001; Tupuola, 1996). Their life, aspiration and characteristics are determined by family and church values (refer to chapter three for detail discussion).

### ***Economic Well-being***

O'Meara (1990) indicated that it is a general belief amongst many Samoans that New Zealand is a place of economic growth and can provide for a better future. He found however that many people, when they migrated to New Zealand, had to adapt to the varying conditions. MacPherson, Spoonley, Anae (2001) and Jones (1991) stated that many Samoans struggled in New Zealand and that impacted negatively on their children. Some people however were very successful despite such difficulties and were motivated by a desire for a better life. As a result these students have always wanted to assist the economic development of their families.

### ***Aganu'u Fa'asamoa (culture)***

Another important factor contributing to the understanding of Samoans is *fa'asamoa*. There are two important aspects of *fa'asamoa*, culture and language and each of these are significant in the lives of many Samoans. Sailau Sua'ali'i Sauni (cited Lolohea, 2007) clearly identified the meaning of *fa'asamoa* and its implications in New Zealand in the following personal communication:

Fa'aSamoa is generally translated as: faa meaning 'to be' or 'in the manner

of' – Samoa or Samoans. Faasamoa, as a concept when articulated by most Samoans, often refers to 'traditional notions of Samoan culture and customs or traditions originating from the homeland – Samoa. Moreover, those who speak of 'the fa'aSamoa' tend to understand their engagement in the fa'aSamoa in terms of engaging with traditional notions of being Samoan or with traditional practices or behaviours suggested to be 'authentically Samoan'. In this sense the fa'aSamoa can be expressed as both an institutional and cultural thing. Implicit in these understandings of fa'aSamoa is the suggestion that the fa'aSamoa (or at least what is suggested to be 'real' or authentic Samoan) derives from Samoa the place. This fixing of the fa'aSamoa to Samoa is being challenged today by Samoans living outside of Samoa (especially in New Zealand) whose practices of 'traditional' fa'aSamoa rivals those who practice 'fa'aSamoa' in Samoa proper. What this means is that while having origins in Samoa, the fa'aSamoa may in fact be more adaptable and transportable than might otherwise be expected or assumed.

Samoans are diverse in their views regarding their culture (Levine, 2003; Tiatia, 2001) and that diversity is crucial to their thinking. A discussion of *fa'asamoa* in chapter three by Tupuola (1996) and Tiatia (2001) reveals that *fa'asamoa* is an important part of the life of Samoans – it is crucial in family and church life. This discussion shows that many young Samoans in New Zealand have their own view of *fa'asamoa* due to the influence of modern ideas and the culture of New Zealand, which is also significant in their mindset (Tiatia, 2001). The parents on the other hand also have their own views of the culture – that is, some are conservative and prefer to follow the traditional practices of *fa'asamoa* while the others are open to modern ideas (Anae, 1998). Although these people are diverse in view of the culture they all hold the *fa'asamoa* value of *alofa* (love).

### ***Gagana Fa'asamoa (language)***

Tupuola (1996) defined *fa'asamoa* as a language based on the history of the land and seas of Samoa. He pointed out that the word *fa'asamoa* is a term originated by the Samoan ancestors to confirm that the language belongs to Samoans. Certain aspects (intonation, pronunciation, tone, punctuation) of the language express unique meanings that only the Samoan can understand. There are two dialects of *fa'asamoa*, the general and the

oratorical. Both dialects are different in intonation, expression, application and meaning. The general dialect is what many Samoans understand – this is also known as the mother tongue of Samoa. The general dialect explains many Samoans immediate interactions with the forces surrounding them. The aortal dialect on the other has many words of multiple meanings and only those who understand the history of Samoa understand the context in which these words are applied. According to Tupuola, certain aspects of this version of *fa'asamoa* (e.g., intonation, pronunciation, facial expression) vary depending on the manner in which they are applied (sad, happy, normal). He argued that only the *matai* (chiefs) and the elderly Samoans communicate via the aortal dialect (Tupuola because they have a deep understanding of the history of traditions, the land, seas, ancient occasions relating to Samoa and chiefly titles. This language only applies in special occasions and only the *matai* are entitled to speak it. Although both versions of the language are different, they both make Samoans realise the importance of keeping Samoan values which are love and respect (Tupuola).

*The aganu'u and gagana fa'asamoa* as viewed by these researchers, impacts largely on the preferred learning approaches and other personal characteristics related to education of many Samoans. Tupuola indicates that many of these Samoans favour their traditional learning approaches because they are part of a very identifiable culture/language.

## **The Research Study**

Mindful of the concern about failure, there have been a number of investigations concerning the education of Samoans and other Pasifika students in New Zealand schools, and these have contributed to the general understanding of issues such as the changing circumstances of economic well-being, religion, culture, social life, family customs, ideologies, personal views, desires and ambitions. This research, undertaken in the context of these developments was aimed at assessing the development of the Samoan students. Furthermore, it was hoped that such an approach could make a direct contribution to understanding the problem better so that other Pacific Island students in New Zealand could also benefit.

In suggesting that the views of successful Samoan students on their schooling achievement might contribute to the development of more appropriate education, this research had two major objectives:

1. to identify what the students consider to be relevant for their success at school
2. to identify the theoretical implications of these findings so that there can be a contribution to the international literature on ethnic minority students' success.

### **Fundamental Philosophy**

According to Reeves (1996), the most important part of any research is the fundamental philosophy. This aspect determines the nature of research – that is, it outlines the philosophy and framework of research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) (refer to chapter five). The fundamental philosophy for this research is that truth is located within students' interactions with the forces in their environment and only they have a clear understanding of the impact of these interactions in their lives. In education, students have the best view of what is relevant for their learning.

### **Inquiry Paradigm**

The second step of Reeves (1996) model is the inquiry paradigm. The inquiry paradigm is based on the fundamental philosophy. This is where an inquiry is made about how information is considered and processed (gathered, interpreted, analysed) in research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm (CHIQ) sets a framework for this current research (refer to chapter five for detail discussion). An important consideration arising from this is that researchers' fundamental philosophies dictate frameworks for research or inquiry paradigms and should be closely associated as they relate to one another.

### **Model for Research**

The third step according to Reeves (1996) is the model for research – this aspect relates to approaches for data collection. He believed that understanding participants is important in identifying models for data



collection (interviewing, fieldwork). He indicated that participants are more comfortable with the approaches they are familiar with – the information obtained via the approaches/methods used and as a result researchers and participants and understand are more thorough and detailed (Reeves). Participants could also be diverse in backgrounds and researchers need to understand them to apply adequate approaches for data collection (Reeves). This was crucial in the data collection for this for this investigation – that is, the researchers understanding of the culture/language (*fa'asamoa*) was important in motivating the respondents. They (students) were open to each other and the research.

### **Participants**

The fourth step in the hierarchy is the participants (Reeves, 1996). This step indicates the source of information researchers require to gather information from (for example individuals or groups). The purpose for specifying participants is that it assists researchers' understanding of their thoughts/views. In this current study, the researcher understood the participants (circumstances and background) and that assisted in his understanding of the participants' views influences that they understood as on their lives. This step is also a confirmation of data – that is, it showed where and how data was collected.

Reeves (1996) described this paradigm as an approach for investigating complex social issues. He pointed out that people are sometimes diverse in views of the world and life which means truth can be hard to understand if researchers have a biased view of it. He argued that truth is socially constructed and only the individual understands it, meaning that the individual has the best understanding of truth. Reeves is aware that truth can be tampered with and distorted by researchers' bias or misunderstanding. In considering such complexity, Reeves constructed a paradigm upon which truth can be verified – constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm (CHIQ) – this approach encourages reality from individuals and not from spectators (refers to chapter five for detailed discussion). The approach indicates that all views are valid representations of truth as it appears to the individual. All views must be dealt with cautiously for example, they must be thoroughly interpreted, analysed and categorised into patterns and themes).

This research acknowledges that truth is within the Samoan students' views and hence a constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm (CHIQ) was required.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has outlined the research needed to investigate the significance of exploring Samoan students' views regarding their own schooling development. It has indicated the reasons why this should be viewed as an important area of research. The research was conducted in New Zealand and as such local contextual factors must be taken into consideration, but some findings on aspects of life in Samoa can also contribute to the understanding of Samoans. The literature and experience of many researchers suggest that there are a number of significant factors to be considered for the educational development of Samoan students in New Zealand. These include the recognition of:

- *fa'asamoa* (i.e., Samoan culture and language)
- the parents' understanding of their children's learning needs
- the Samoan community and church contributions to education
- the student's family values
- Samoan traditional learning methods/approaches
- the influence of change on Samoans
- the personal views of students relating to their own educational development. Greater recognition of, and attention to these factors, could assist the confidence of many Pacific Island people as well as providing educators/educationists with a variety of possible options to positively meet their learning needs.

The first research objective – to identify what Samoan students believe to be important factors for success - could contribute not only important practice ideas but also advance the international literature on ethnic minority achievement.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review: Success in Education for Ethnic Minorities

#### Introduction

Literature suggests that students can contribute significantly to their own educational outcomes. There is a history of teachers and educators' thinking dominating educational approaches and methods, and as a result the student views being overlooked. It must be noted that although existing educational theories (refer chapter four) apply in many areas of learning, they may not be applicable in all situations and may not always account for particular students' success, in this case Samoan. Furthermore, in some cultures (e.g., Tongan, Samoan, Fijian), the views of the parents and senior members of that society dominate the development of individuals. There is a belief that the views and experiences of the senior members of their families and communities are important because they are more knowledgeable in their cultures than the young people (Wendt, 2006). This often means that the children's beliefs and experiences are either negated or become of secondary importance. Research by Kestanbaum (1977) claims that the voices of students are also important to their development. He suggests that their views show what they understand most and could assist in the development of teaching and learning approaches for the students. He pointed out that children's needs must be heard because they have genuine explanations of their thoughts and beliefs about the world which can impact upon their success. This perspective can contribute to the growing interest in educational approaches and policies to improve the educational success for ethnic groups in many societies. For example, research (Chaplan, Choy & Whitmore, 1991; Maclean, 2005; Moffat, 1995) relating to Asians in the United States of America, (Harris, 1990; Partington, 1998) relating to the Aborigines of Australia, or (Livingstone, 1991; Macpherson, Mataafa, 2003; Podmore & Wendt, 2006; Spoonley & Anae, 2001, Ministry of Education, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006; Wendt, 2006) about the Pacific Island people in New Zealand have all supported the importance of appropriate approaches to facilitate children's education.

The literature review for this research is in three sections. The first section (chapter two) discusses the educational achievements of minority groups, the second (chapter three) discusses Samoans and education (i.e., Samoan culture and history of traditional approaches, Samoan education past and present; and Samoans in the New Zealand education system.) and the third section (chapter four) discusses educational theories relevant to this research. The literature review includes an exploration of the literature concerning the education of Samoan students in New Zealand and these studies are drawn from both academic and non-academic sources and include published and unpublished material. There are also cultural, religious, political and personal values relating to educational development of other minority students that are similar to Samoans. It needs to be noted however that, there is a lack of material on this topic and so a cautious interpretation of the information was needed.

This chapter consists of four sections. The first section is the overview of the literature in the area of educational development, and in relation to this three associated issues were explored – the students' culture, the students' economic wellbeing, and adequate approaches for the students learning needs. The second section discusses the growing interest in the perspectives of the students. To assist in the understanding of this issues educational development in England after the World War Two (WW2) and the link to New Zealand education are explored. It is argued that New Zealand, being a Commonwealth country, is influenced by England hence the similarity in these countries' education approaches and cultures. It is suggested that the education culture of England after the war has influenced many New Zealanders and such influence would continue in the 21st Century (Sullivan, 1998). The third section explores minority groups in education and six related issues related to them are examined – these are, family support, cultural influence, the effect of low economic status, educational approaches, the students' positive attitudes toward learning and political influence. The fourth section is the chapter summary.

## **Overview of the Literature**

The primary sources for this research are the Samoan secondary students' perspectives of success. The literature (Baba, Mahina, Williams, & Nabobo-

Baba (2004), Ministry of Education, 1999; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; Melville, 2003; Tiatia, 2001; Tupuola, 1996) provided a background view of Samoan students' education to assist in the understanding of their circumstances and directions for future developments. One of the key components for their development was culture.

## **Culture**

The New Zealand Ministry of Education (1999, 2001) reports indicated that many Pasifika students failed because they did not understand their own cultures. The report was based on student observation and student assessment (academic performances) which led to reviews of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2002; 2003, 2006; 2007; 2008). Many problems were identified and some solutions suggested (Ministry of Education, 1999). For example, emphasis was placed on the importance of recognising the students' cultures as part of learning because these are what the students know best (Ministry of Education). It could be argued that the other researchers (Baba, et al.) who also found that many Pasifika students struggled in their schooling because they did not understand learning content stimulated such an emphasis. These academics suggested that the best option for Pasifika students would be the application of their cultures as part of learning. That is, when students are familiar with their own cultures they can utilise such an understanding to explore learning contents. Piaget (1950) argued that students are thoughtful and imaginative when they are allowed to use their cultural ideas to explore learning contents. All these academics agreed that the students' cultures can be a useful aspect of learning when teachers apply them adequately in learning (Baba, et al.).

Research by Maclean (2005), Osborne (2001), Podmore and Wendt (2006), Steinberg, Kinchloe and Kinchey (1999), Sullivan (1998) and Wendt (2006) also provided important information about Samoan and other Pasifika students. According to Maclean understanding Pasifika students' cultures is important in the understanding of their learning needs. He maintained that there are unique meanings of Pasifika cultures to students and that teachers must understand those meanings because they are crucial in motivating students. For example, a research by Osborne reported that Samoans and other Pasifika students are generally shy to voice their views or ask question

because they are not used to it in their cultures. He indicated that many of these students were disadvantaged in learning because their teachers equated the students' quietness as evidence of their understanding and that impacted negatively on many. A research related to Samoan/Pasifika students by Jones in 1991 also revealed the same attitude/behaviour of Pasifika students and indicated the need for teachers to have a clear understanding of these students' culture. Another example of teachers' lack of understanding of the students is the application of teaching approaches based on their general understanding of Pasifika cultures. This suggests that many teachers were not aware that many Samoan and the other Pasifika students have diverse views of their own cultures which also influence their individual learning needs.

Sullivan (1998) who also researched the lives of Samoans and other Pasifika people indicated that changes in the Pacific Rim have impacted largely on many Pasifika students. He noted that the influence of modern ideas on these people's lives has been the reason why many Pasifika people are diverse in views of their own cultures, and suggested that teachers must understand that. He pointed out that educators must be well equipped to meet the learning needs of these students. The findings from these investigations (and many more) prompted the government of New Zealand to promote a student based instructional approach for all students (Ministry of Education, 1992; 1996; 2000; 2003; 2005). The individual's perspectives became important considerations for development of teaching and learning approaches and the basis of New Zealand education in the 21st Century (Ministry of Education, 2003, 2005, 2006). As a result this meant that assuming the conventional approaches for students may not always be appropriate.

### **Low Economic Status**

Another key component that contributed in the understanding of Samoans students low achievement rate was their low economic status. The Ministry of Education reports in 1999, 2001 and 2003 indicated that many Pasifika students in New Zealand are from families of low socio-economic status and that impacted negatively on some students' performances. Many students did not have all the resources (for example stationery, and school uniforms)

required for their learning because their parents could not afford them. They also did not understand or complete educational tasks because they had to undertake other responsibilities such as housework or even work part time to help their families and had no time to do their homework (Jones, 1991). Many of these students failed their school examinations. They also had low self-esteem, were not attentive in class discussions/activities and were not as enthusiastic as the other students. The reports concluded by suggesting that students do perform well in school when their socio-economic conditions are stable.

These reports have been critical of the students' low economic status and they focused only on those who have suffered from this but, they overlooked those who succeed despite having low economic status (Iata, 2001). According to Iata, many Samoans from Samoa immigrated to other countries such as New Zealand because of the need to have a stable life. In New Zealand many of them are motivated to do well at work, in sports and education to achieve their goals. For many of these people low economic status has motivated them to work hard. Iata's finding was supported by Podmore and Wendt (2006) who researched the life of Samoans and other Pasifika people in New Zealand and found that peoples' main goal was to improve their economic status. Research (Moffat, 1995; Chaplan, Choy & Whitmore, 1991) when researching other ethnic minority groups indicated that low economic status has also motivated many students elsewhere. The Asian communities in the USA did not have stable economic conditions but many Asian students succeeded – it is believed that low socio-economic status motivated these people to find ways to improve their economic standard (Moffat). Other Asian communities in other parts of the world also did not have stable economic conditions but their children have been successful in education (Caplan, et al.). Many Tongan families in Tonga were not as economically stable as many *papalagi* families in New Zealand but their children have been successful in education. Many Tongan students were motivated to study hard because they were encouraged by family members and had a desire to succeed for their families (Hao'ofa, 2000). These findings indicate that low economic status can be used as a mean to motivate better outcomes for some.

Another way in which having low economic status can affect people is that it motivates them to find an alternative approach toward life improvement. For example, some Samoans have changed their perceptions regarding some traditions of Samoa because they viewed that as a path toward economic improvement for them. That is, some young Samoans relinquished their traditional responsibilities and concentrated solely on their studies while some preferred private spaces to study. Some of these changes have also been accepted by parents and community leaders (Podmore & Wendt, 2006). It can be argued that these people understood the price for being successful in education and they made sacrifices such as altering some of their cultural traditions and so on in their desire to achieve that. These findings indicate that not all students failed because of their low socio-economic conditions. The approaches many Samoans and the other ethnic groups used to adapt are worth exploring and that (refer to chapter three) they may suggest that low-socio economic status also plays a positive role for educational development.

### **Education Approach**

Research by Pasikale (1996) and Mitchell, McGee, Moltzen and Oliver (1993) related to educational approaches in the past noted that many students failed because educators have commonly established approaches to education based on the teacher-centred approach which emphasises teacher assumption rather than on the views of the students themselves. The teacher-centred approach is often viewed in terms of teachers assuming an understanding of approaches for the students (Piaget, 1950). It means that the teacher assumes he or she knows what the learning needs of students are. These researchers all agreed that cultures are affected by change and people's perceptions of their cultures are also affected by modernisation. This view also supported by Bronfenbrenner's (1990) concept of human development (refer to chapter four). According to these researchers, it is not adequate for teachers to assume an understanding of students' learning needs based on the general understanding of students' cultures. Teachers must recognise that the changes in cultures often lead to people being diverse in their perspective/views of their cultures, needs and desires. This means that recognising the students' views regarding their own educational



development will provide the best result for them. According to Tinto (1975), some teachers often fail to contribute greater success for ethnic minority students because they prescribe the learning approaches for these students based on their general understanding of students. Review reports by the New Zealand Ministry of Education in 2003–2008 revealed that such an approach was still the basis of many school practises and claimed that this could have been one of the causes for high failure in education for Pasifika students.

These reports could show accurate findings for some students. However, they have overlooked the advantage of the teacher-centred approach for some students. Instead of investigating the advantages of such an approach, the researchers focused on the disadvantages only and concluded that the teacher instructional approach does not fully recognise students' cultures and hence limits the opportunity for students to broaden their views of learning contents, meaning that the teacher-centred approach does not assist the students' lateral thinking (Ministry of Education, 1999). However, according to Mata'afa (2003), many Samoans have been successful via the teacher-centred approach and she attributed that students being diligent and competitive in their schooling meaning that these students succeeded because they worked hard and did not want to fail. Some teachers initiated teaching/learning approaches that were teacher-centred and many students have been motivated to study diligently. In New Zealand, some Samoans achieved results via the teacher-centred approach (Mata'afa). According to Aiono (1996), some Samoans failed because they did not study as hard as the others. Aiono argued that it is not the approach that causes failure amongst the Samoan students, rather it is the students' lacking willingness and desire to succeed meaning that students study diligently when they have the desire to succeed (Aiono).

Many Pasifika students passed their school examinations despite being educated via the old system (teacher instructional approach or system dictated by the New Zealand culture) (Pasikale, 1998). According to Aiono (1996), many Samoans and other Polynesian students were used to the old system (teacher-centred) because they have always been exposed to it in Samoa and many succeeded through that. Furthermore she stated that the teacher-centred approach often introduced foreign learning ideas and

concepts and many Samoans in the past understood these concepts because they had a strong desire to succeed. Aiono summed up by saying that a desire to succeed leads to hard work which means that the teacher-centred approach can still be as effective as the student-centred approach if students have a strong desire to succeed. This could be one of the main causes of failure amongst many Samoans in New Zealand today – that is, many are not working as hard to understand teachers as those in the past probably because they view success from a wider perspective and that successful education is not the only way to have a better life for them. Tupuola (1996) also supported the teacher-centred approach stating that many Samoans in the past were educated via the New Zealand education culture (teacher-centred) and they adjusted to it. He noted the teacher-centred approach was introduced to Samoa when Samoa was administered by New Zealand and Samoans students had to follow the New Zealand education model. Many Samoans students worked really hard via this approach and many had been successful. Tupuola also believes that success in education is not so much about the approach and that success occurs when a learner wants to succeed, meaning it is up to the individual. While the student-centred approach is most needed in today's education (Ministry of Education, 2008) educators must realise that the teacher-centred approach is still applicable for some students and should be able to apply it where possible.

It could be argued that many Samoans in Samoa succeeded via the teacher-centred approach because it is practiced in their *aiga*, churches and communities (villages) (Meleisea, 1987). According to Mata'afa (2003) this approach will always be the main part of *fa'asamoa* because it holds a unique significance which is meaningful to many Samoans – that is it confirms the legitimacy of traditions and nations. This suggests that the teacher-centred approach is still a significant force in educating some Samoans and may still have a role. Teachers therefore must fully understand their students to be able to utilise the teacher-centred approach.

Some New Zealanders educational researchers (Ministry of Education, 2003) viewed the student-centred approach as the appropriate approach to cater for students' needs. The approach allows students to explore learning

content from their own perspectives, which is believed to motivate students more than the teacher-centred approach (Piaget, 1950). Also, that the student-centred approach provides a non-intimidating environment for students (Ministry of Education, 2003). In such an approach, the students can use their preferred language, dictate pace/time duration for lesson and choose the peers they feel comfortable to work alongside.

Many changes have been made since 2003, most notably the recognition of Pasifika students' cultures in their learning (Ministry of Education, 2003). Despite the changes, the Ministry of Education report (2006) noted that the failure rate of Pasifika students was still rising. One of the causes of failure could be linked to restlessness and boredom particularly amongst the knowledgeable and gifted students. For example, according to Aiono (1996), Iata (2001) and Tupuola (1996) not all Samoan students are the same. Some students are bored and feel restless when they are not paid attention to by the teachers. These researchers noted that many gifted Samoans could not be bothered with schoolwork because their teachers' attention was more focused on the less able students. These students needed to be challenged and to be motivated and to achieve that teachers must be alert and creative in their approach. What this implies is that not all the students are the same and teachers must work to understand what motivates them.

Ziva (1999), an educational psychologist, has an important contribution to make here. She argued that a student's success depends on teachers – that is, teachers who understand their students' learning needs can apply suitable teaching/learning approaches to meet those needs. She added that in order for teachers to obtain a better understanding of the students, they must fully understand the students' cultures - in some cultures there are cultural aspects that could become obstacles to learning if teachers do not fully understand them. For example, in *fa'asamoa*, generally the voice of students is neither recognised nor encouraged and this has influenced many young Samoans. This means that some Samoan students are likely to be reserved in class/group discussion (Tiatia, 2001). Tiatia suggests that others (for example, the younger generation and those who are more exposed to the New Zealand culture) have their own views of *fa'asamoa* because of the influence of the New Zealand culture. What this implies is that the educators

and teachers need a deep understanding of the students to develop adequate teaching approaches for them.

There have been successful developments in education in other parts of the world, which have been significant in the success of many ethnic minority students (Chaplan, Choy & Whitmore, 1991). According to Gardner (1993), the psychological, socio-economic, cultural and political environments as well as the spiritual dimensions are significant factors in these developments. He pointed out that these are the important forces in peoples' environment interacting with them and influencing perceptions/beliefs of the world. These factors are also considered to be important and relevant for the greater success of Samoan students in education – that is, they provide a platform for new educational ideas and approaches, and more significantly they open the minds of educators and Samoans to the experiences of other people. In this research, the focus is upon the views and education success of Samoan secondary students in New Zealand.

This section has highlighted important issues related to impacts of culture, low economic status and adequate educational approaches on many Samoan students. Firstly, the Samoan culture impacts positively on many Samoan students if it is adequately applied in their learning (Mataafa, 2003). Secondly, low economic status impacts positively on some students and negatively on others (Anae, 1998). Finally, Samoans are motivated when teachers/educators understand the approaches appropriate for them – that is, teachers/educators must understand the cultural and economic status of students to be able to establish appropriate teaching practices for these students. These issues are linked to an understanding of *aiga* where family is the key determinant of *fa'asamoa*, economic wellbeing of the students and educational approaches (Hao'ofa, 2000).

## **Growing Interest in the Perspective of the Students**

### **The Education System of England**

An individualistic viewpoint regarding educational approaches in New Zealand has been considered important since the early 20th Century (Keesing, 1937). According to Keesing, England set up its education system which emphasised the importance of the people's voice (community and

individual) in 1923, and he believed that many other commonwealth countries would have been influenced by England's education system. Six years later such an approach was also recognised by many colonies of Britain including New Zealand. Modifications were made during the next fifty years appropriate to the circumstances of these colonies (Silver, 1983).

### **Education System of New Zealand**

In the late 20th Century in New Zealand there has been a resurgence of interest amongst educators and government officials in the perspectives of the student because the teacher-centred style was not producing the results (Hattie, 1999; Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2003; 2005; 2006) and changes were made to the existing approach. One of these changes was the expansion of the approach to include parents/community role (refer to chapter three). It is believed that parents had a clearer understanding of their children and their views and influence were better representations of their children's views. However, it was believed that the voice of the people was misrepresented and some parents and representatives' views were influenced by the government dictating the education objectives and direction for the students (Scott, 1996). As a result many students failed their school examinations because these objectives were not related to students' interests. For example, the system failed many Māori students and early Polynesian immigrants (1960–1980) to New Zealand (Barrington, 1992), and that led to a need for a more representative system. The education reviews in the 20th Century by the Ministry of Education of New Zealand (1990; 1992; 1999; 2000) indicated the importance of the individual's view on their schooling and the development of education methodologies based on those views. These reviews also demonstrated that students themselves must show a willingness to be successful by thinking and behaving positively towards their schooling (Choat, 2001). These ideas were significant in the change imposed by the government of New Zealand on its education system. The administration of schools became the responsibility of the communities in 1997 (Sullivan, 1998; Thrupp & Pyne, 1999) and the government viewed communities as a vehicle to transmit the students' views and needs on education.

Other changes in 1997 include the establishment of school charter allowing New Zealand and Pacific education stakeholders to run schools (Livingstone, 1997). This charter resulted in the restructuring of school policies in New Zealand addressing the needs of the many Pacific Island students (Livingstone). There were more changes occurred in the late early 21st Century in the New Zealand education system. For example, reviews of the New Zealand curriculum in 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2008 revealed the importance of the involvement of parents in the education of their children, the recognition of *fa'asamoa* and other Pacific Island language/cultures within the school curriculum and providing relevant courses for those who are struggling in English (Ministry of Education, 2003; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008). Failure to achieve in English was revealed by Field (1984), Pasikale (1996) and Robert's (1999) research and related to Pasifika students. These researchers indicated that the inclusion of Pacific Island cultures/languages in education would help improve the success rate of the Pacific Island secondary school students in New Zealand. These researchers argued that students are more confident in their own cultures/languages because they understand them well.

The emphasis by the New Zealand Ministry of Education in 1997 was to encourage community involvement in education (Ministry of Education, 1999; 2000). However, such an approach did not affect the failure rate of many Pasifika students (Ministry of Education, 2003; 2006). Misrepresentation that emerged in the late 20th Century was also causing the high failure rate amongst Pasifika students in the early 21st Century also. The voice of parents/communities did not always represent the needs of the students. It can be argued that the approach was unsuccessful as the system did not produce the expected result because the representatives may have their own agendas (Barrington, 1992). The answer may be located in the students' views because they know what is best for them (Ministry of Education, 1999).

### **The Importance of Students' Views of Success and Education Development**

This research is designed to explore the students' views about their schooling, and contribute to the understanding of education for Pasifika students in New Zealand by building upon existing theoretical constructs. The

researcher is aware that the impacts of some aspects of *fa'asamoa* may have mixed consequences for Samoans – that is, they prevented some Samoan students achieving (e.g., Aiono, 1996; Tupuola, 1996). For some Samoans they utilised *fa'asamoa* to enhance their understanding of learning contents (Taulealeausumai, 1997). In addition, for some, the modern *fa'asamoa* (Pasikale, 1996; Pasikale, Wang & Apa, 1998; Tiatia, 2001) has impacted positively on their educational development. The degree of the significance of *fa'asamoa* on Samoan students' education has been the reason why this research has explored the area of the students' views.

Low achievement has been a significant focal point for educational theories (Ministry of Education, 2003) and the issues relating to the education of Samoans and other Pasifika secondary students generally in New Zealand schools and these need to be considered. Educational theorists (e.g., Huitt, 2001; Piaget, 1950; Ziva, 1999) have outlined why low achievement occurs and have discussed ways to improve educational achievement. They have noted that low achievement in education is caused by the application of inappropriate approaches and practices by teachers. As discussed earlier, many teachers applied the teaching/learning approaches based on their general understanding of the students' cultures which failed to facilitate the students learning (Huitt). According to Ziva teachers' lack of awareness of students' cultures, economic backgrounds, spiritual and personal lives leads to the implementation of inadequate approaches. Furthermore, he pointed out that it is important to understand students' cultures and backgrounds because these characteristics are indicators of students' desires, identities and learning needs. However, according to (Piaget, 1950), understanding students is more complex than just knowing their cultures/language – understanding how students apply their cultures to different contexts and adjust to various circumstances is very important. He argued that the world changes and this impacts upon circumstances and human perspectives. He indicated the importance of teachers being alert to these changes and circumstances. He pointed out that sometimes individuals' perspectives were hard to understand and only the student can explain their own views (Piaget). These arguments suggest that teachers' choice of approaches depends on their understanding of students. Such an understanding requires a deep

understand of students cultures. One method to achieve that is through listening to students (e.g., Livingstone, 1997; Thrupp & Pyne, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2003).

Another method to assist educational development for the Pasifika students is the acknowledgement of their cultures and languages in learning. Research (Aiono, 1996; Harold, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2003; Pasikale, 1996; Sullivan, 1998) related to Pasifika students in New Zealand, all agreed that there is a need for teachers to understand the traditional cultures of minority students in relation to education, particularly those who have not been so successful in New Zealand schools. These researchers indicated that Samoan and other Pacific students could be more imaginative, thoughtful and motivated when their cultures and languages are recognised as part of their learning. Kornadt (2002) investigated the influence of students' native cultures and languages in cognitive learning and found that students tend to remember and understand learning content when their cultures and languages are part of learning. He believed that the students' culture and language as part of their consciousness and therefore is part of their long-term memories. Students' cultures and language could be used to broaden their knowledge of ideas and learning concepts and also make them remember these concepts (Kornadt). Other researchers (e.g., Hunkin, 1988; Itzin & Newman, 1995; Tupuola, 1996) have also noted that students are motivated when their cultures and language is acknowledged in learning. According to Hunkin, students' culture and languages are associated with their learning needs and desires. He also pointed out that understanding the students' language and cultures involves fluency (speaking and understanding), participation in cultural activities and accepting cultural beliefs and notions. He added that an individual's mindset can be understood via his/her words and culture. For example, in *fa'asamoa*, there is a proverb that *e iloa le Samoa moni e le na o upu ma tala, ao ana tu ma aga* (a real Samoan is defined not only by words but also by the culture). This implies that Samoan students' needs and desires can be identified via *fa'asamoa*.

But according to Bronfenbrenner (1990), students have their own views of their cultures and this is important in the understanding and development of educational approaches appropriate for them. He argued that individuals'



cultural beliefs are sometimes determined by their interactions with the forces around them. His theory acknowledged that an individual's mind can only be understood by the individual and only he/she can explain this. This implies that the students have the clearest view of what is relevant for them – and that no one understands the mindset of another person unless that person explains it (Kestnbaum, 1977).

Important ideas arising from the literature for this research assists our understanding of the appropriate educational approaches for Samoans. That is, Samoans are motivated when their culture is accepted as part of their learning as it corresponds to their learning needs, desires and identities (Tupuola, 1996). Likewise some students are traditional in nature while others are influenced by the New Zealand culture. Students succeed in their schooling via their most preferred approaches. This means that *fa'asamoa* and *fa'apalagi* can both be recognised as a means to achieve success for Samoan students. This research emphasises the need to learn from students about their view of their culture, language, lifestyle, and environments because these are considered important indicators. Understanding the students' viewpoints would direct attention to their learning needs as well as giving a broader understanding of appropriate educational methods for Samoan and other Pacific Island secondary students in New Zealand.

There appears to be other philosophical, psychological and spiritual influences that impact the achievement of some Samoans in schools and little is understood about the impact of these influences (that is the influence of parents/family, low economic status, politics and churches) on the students. Accessing what the students themselves understand is therefore important (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Kestnbaum, 1977). An understanding of these influences from the students' perspectives can contribute to the identification of suitable education approaches and practices for them (Ministry of Education, 2003).

Recognising the views of students in education has raised a number of very important questions: What educational theories explain Samoan student learning? Are there any necessary refinements to the existing theories suggested by the students' voices? It is believed that the educational life of

other ethnic minority students can provide some framework for better understanding of Samoan students' learning and the development of education for Samoan students in New Zealand. A consideration of this follows.

## **Minority Groups in Education**

The following literature has emphasised the development of education in various communities that could be helpful to the understanding of education for Samoan students. These developments identify a number of key issues:

- family support
- cultural influence
- economic influence
- educational approaches
- the students' positive attitude towards learning
- political influence.

## **Family, Community and School Support**

There is considerable literature relating to the importance of family, community and school support in relation to achievement outcomes. The literature for this research indicates that support in terms of providing financial assistance, sharing responsibilities, giving spiritual advice to students are significant factors for successful achievement in education.

### ***Financial Support***

Research by Kessarlis & Lenoy, 1994; Maclean, 2005; Shotton, Oosahwe & Cintron, 2007, related to ethnic minorities and education in the USA, has identified family support as one of the main factors contributing to students' success in their schooling. Kessarlis and Lenoy (1994) noted that many ethnic students in the USA were encouraged and motivated in their schooling because their families assisted in terms of providing financial support. They noted that many ethnic students' families in the USA were of low socio-economic background but they prioritised the schooling needs of their

children because they viewed education as the gateway to a better future for them. In many of these families, their primary concern was education and as a result most of their earnings were spent on meeting the educational needs of their children (for example school fees, uniforms, stationeries, school trips, lunch and library fees. Other family needs were regarded as secondary. Many students from these families were aware of sacrifices by their families for them and that motivated them to work hard to succeed for their families (Kessar & Lenoy). For example, low economic status motivated many Indian students in the USA to study hard and hence became successful in education. According to Rindone (1988) many Indian students understood their limited financial circumstances and the sacrifices their families have made for their schooling. Rindone noted that some parents discussed with their children their financial circumstances which motivated and encouraged many to study hard and succeed for their families. It was also believed that many Indian students in the USA were motivated by a desire to become successful in life because of what they saw as the need to improve their economic lives.

### ***Sharing Responsibilities***

Moffat's, (1995) research with Hamong students in the USA noted that adapting to the lifestyle of the USA was not easy for many Asians because they were not used to it. However, family support in terms of sharing responsibility encouraged many people and support many to succeed. The USA educators established the student/parents cooperative learning approach which many Hamong students benefited from. The approach encouraged parents participation in their children's schooling by taking part in their learning. According to Moffat many Hamong parents and students shared schoolwork by working (studying) alongside each other in the classrooms and home. Having parents study alongside their children in the classroom and sharing homework made parents' understand their children's learning needs and develop approaches to assist them. In addition, such an approach made many of these children realise their value to their parents, which many of them were motivated by. Moffat pointed out that in relation to this, the Hamong group were generally categorised as the most successful ethnic minority in the USA in terms of educational achievement. Their

success can be attributed to the family support that is parents and other family members.

Shotton, Oosahwe and Cintron's (2007) research related to the Indian students' in the USA noted that many of the students succeeded because of family support. Like the Hamong people, many Indian parents and relatives from India assisted their children by working alongside them (both studying and completing homework) and sometimes participated in school activities or administration roles which the students appreciated it. By being close to their families many Indian students understood the sacrifices their families had made for them which motivated them to study hard and be successful for their families (Shotton, Oosahwe & Cintron). According to Rindone (1988), many Indian students are motivated to excel academically because their families often share the workload (for example schoolwork and other responsibilities). Rindone noted that many Indian students particularly the Indian born were not as socially outgoing as most of the American born Indians and European students. These students relied mostly on their parents. Most of the time they worked cooperatively with their families in search for better ways to life improvement. For these students, their parents were the mentors and teachers. Rindone believed that this concept was traditional to many Indians.

While many Hamong and the other Asian students succeeded because of their families' positive attitudes and support, some also failed (Lawrence, 1992) and the above-mentioned commentators overlooked these. According to Lawrence, not all Asians succeeded in education in the USA; some could not finish secondary school because they believed they were not good enough and so they searched for opportunities somewhere else (for example, work). This was particularly so for those students who were born in the USA, and they were viewed as successful. Some students failed their school examinations and decided to drop out of school. Some students moved out from their families and joined gangs (Lawrence, 1992) because they disagreed with their family rules and protocols. These students believed that their families (parents and relatives) had stopped them from doing what they wanted. Lawrence gave the example of some Asian students wanted to pursue a sporting or singing career but couldn't because traditionally, many

Asians perceived success in terms of academic excellence. These findings revealed that not all Asian students are the same – some believe in traditional Asian approaches/beliefs while some hold a different view of success. The problem that led to the failure of some Asians according to Lawrence was the conflict of views in these families. An important consideration arising from this is that children have their own views of success and they are motivated when parents/relatives recognise those views.

There is evidence (Shotton, Oosahwe & Cintron, 2007) to suggest that some Indian students lacked motivation to succeed because of their parents' influence. According to these researchers, some Indian parents were traditional in their views and their children disagreed with some of their views. For example, some students had to undertake the subjects suggested by their parents although they did not like them, while some (although their native language was their second language) were not allowed to communicate in English (their first language) at home which led to communication breakdown and misunderstanding amongst many Indian parents and their children (Shotton, Oosahwe & Cintron). Allowing only the Indian language for communication in these students' families restricted these students from expressing their views/needs which also led to lack of communication between the parents and the students. According to the researchers, these students lacked motivation because they were forced to do the things they did not want. An important consideration arising from these findings is that sometimes parents need to be mindful of their children's views for they are also important for their development.

### ***Giving Advice to Students***

Other researchers (Lee, Lorenzo, Lutosado, Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002) who researched the educational life of other Asians groups in the USA noted that the influence of other family members in the children's education impacted positively upon the students' attendance, behaviour, schoolwork and desire to continue education at the tertiary level. They noted that the relatives of Asian students also contributed by giving spiritual advice (religious) to which assisted many Asians in education in the USA. Many of these people belong to various religions (e.g., Buddhist, Hindu, Christian) and they advised their

children based on their church beliefs. An important consideration arising from this is that family influence (immediate and extended) is important and should be encouraged for the sake of the children. This type of family cooperation is something that needs to be considered for Samoans because it has always been a recommended practice of *fa'asamoa* and Samoan churches (Aiono, 1996). This approach could support many Samoan students if the parents are encouraged to communicate with their children. Educators and Samoans themselves would have to find the most effective ways to make this work in New Zealand.

Research by Fluigni (1997) and Schwartz (2005), about the causes for success for many Latino, East Asian, Filipino and European background students in the United States of America revealed that family influence and advice motivated many of these students in their schooling. Fluigni noted that positive attitudes and behaviour of Latino students' families motivated the students to study diligently and become successful in their schooling (Fluigni). Like the Hamong, many Latino families supported one another, and many students succeeded both economically and educationally as a result. Many of these people had recently immigrated to the USA and they have adjusted successfully to the condition of the USA using their traditional approaches. That is, it is traditional for young Latinos to listen to parents and senior family members' advice and directions and many Latinos adjusted successfully to the condition of the USA using such tradition (Fluigni). What is more is that although many young Latinos had a different view of their traditions they held a strong sense of identity and were proud Latinos (Rodriguez, 2002). An important consideration arising from these findings is that family support is important for students' educational development and teachers/educators and students' families must work together to find ways to utilise such support.

### **Cultural Influence**

Cultural influence has also been a significant factor in the achievement of many ethnic minority students in the UK. The National Literacy Trust (2005) (TNLT) reported that ethnic minority students in England such as those from Bangladesh, China, India and Pakistan have made the biggest improvement in their examination results compared to that of the English students. The

report indicated that the cultures of these students have been significant in the learning of English. The traditional learning approaches of ethnic minority students in England have been recognised which assisted many of these students in terms of understanding of the learning content as well as improving confidence. The report indicated that many ethnic students' cultures recognise rote learning and many students utilised it in class. However, the influence of the culture of England on some has led to their failure in education for example some students applied unfamiliar learning approaches (that is English approaches) in class and could not grasp learning content. For some students (particularly the English born), their preferred learning approaches reflected some English influences and their teachers applied appropriate approaches for them.

Many Asian students in other countries have been successful by remaining entrenched in their cultures, which encourage parents/teacher instructional approaches. Kornadt (2002) noted that many Asian students lack independent thinking because of their culture. Parents assist children, particularly when they come across problems that require deep thinking. However, these people also believe that children should defer to their parents because their ideas and perspectives are broad-based. In school, Asian students tend to rely on teachers' direction for problem-solving (Kornadt). Kornadt argued that although many Asian students relied on their parents/teachers for directions and solutions in relation to educational and life developments they have been successful. These findings indicate that students are likely to do well in their schooling when their cultural approaches are recognised as part of their learning. This suggests that students become successful in life and education when teachers utilise approaches students are more familiar in.

Provision of a positive learning environment is another important factor. For example, changes made in the early-childhood education system of Australia have been significant in the development of education for the Aboriginal students. A research report (Ciarochi, & Billich, 2006) and the Research Project Report (1995) relating to education in Australia stated that the level of Aboriginal education was significantly lower than that of the white majority students and they believed that the problem started from the lack of positive

learning environment at the early-childhood level. Many Aboriginal early-childhood institutions did not have sufficient resources, trained teachers and adequate curriculum and that impacted negatively on the development of many students. Emphasis was therefore placed on providing a positive learning environment for the students, as this was likely to contribute to their educational achievement. Most early childhood educators in the K-2 (age 3–4 years) stage subsequently attempted to plan and make relevant learning environments for their students with the aim of bridging the growing gap between early childhood education and primary education, which was one of the main areas identified for the growing failure amongst Aboriginal students. Learning the Aboriginal culture in pre-school was recommended by Australian educators as an important factor for educational development for Aboriginal students (Research Project Report, 1995) The inclusion of Aboriginal cultural artefacts and activities and a parents being involved in classrooms and at school were recommended. Learning the Aboriginal culture at the early stage of students' lives was an aim for Aboriginal education, not only to maintain and promote the Aboriginal cultural traditions, but for the advantages it brought for the cognitive learning of these students (Harris, 1990; Research Project Report, 1995).

In the Pacific, native cultures and languages were identified as important factors which promoted a positive learning environment for many of Pacific people. Sullivan, (1998) in his study of the Tongan culture, indicated that many cultural traditions were part of education and that reflected in the positive attitude and successful achievement of many Tongan students. Research by Ashton Warner (1980) relating to Māori students in New Zealand has noted that there has been a growing interest amongst many Māori people to succeed in education because of the recognition of their language and culture in the school curriculum. An important point to note here is that students show a positive attitude toward learning when they understand their learning environment (Piaget, 1950) and as indicated by Sullivan and Warner, one of the best methods to achieve this is through recognising the students' language and culture in their learning. Another key point was that indicated by Podmore and Wendt (2006) in their research related to Samoa. They noted that Samoa has a specific approach for its



young people and they believe it is still applicable for some Samoans. They pointed at *fa'aaloalo* (respect) – students being loyal to parents, church pastors and *matai* because they are more knowledgeable. They indicated that many Samoans believe *fa'aaloalo* is the key to success for many Samoans – that is, being respectful leads to listening to and respecting Samoan leaders' views.

## **Economic Influence**

### ***The Influence of Low Economic Status***

Research by the UK Centre for Legal Education (UKCLE, 2004) has identified economic factors as a means to improve the achievement of ethnic minority students. While the ethnic minority students in England topped the success table in education, the proportion of failure for these people in the economic and labour markets is considerably higher than that of 'white' people and that impacted negatively on some students' educational developments. The TNLT report (2005) noted that low economic status encouraged some ethnic students in their schooling. For example, some Asian students were motivated in their schooling because they were aware that their parents have made financial sacrifices for them. According to the report, many ethnic parents spent most of their income to support their children's educational needs and that motivated many students. These students wanted to succeed for their parents and families. An important point coming from this is that not all ethnic families are economically well off, and that some families will always be better than others depending on their economic circumstances. Teachers must understand these circumstances and be able to establish approaches to encourage the students' positive learning behaviours. Like some Asian parents and students, students utilise their low economic wellbeing as a means to enhance their development (Bhatnagar, 1972; Moffat, 1995). Teachers/educators must be well equipped to facilitate the needs of students from these families and they must understand the importance of family for these people and be prepared to use it as a means to motivate positive learning behaviours.

## **Educational Approach**

### ***The Cooperative Learning Approach***

Research by Shreffler (1975) relating to education in the USA revealed that the rate of high achievers in some schools in poor areas of the USA was similar to that of the schools in richer communities. Schreffler believed that this can be attributed to high quality teaching and management, for example the most successful schools from the poorer areas have all their levels of schooling/education from kindergarten to tertiary education incorporated into one institution. Placing different sections of education together in one unit assisted teachers and students in terms of understanding where the teachers have been able to observe and note important areas relating to the students' development (from infancy to the teenage level). This allowed the students to interact and encourage one another, and many young students were motivated to reach secondary education. Many young students viewed secondary students as role models and that encouraged many secondary students to work hard to ensure they are successful and good role models for the young students of their schools (Shreffler). According to Shreffler such an arrangement was considered as one of the important approaches to assist the schools in the poor areas of the USA in the 20th Century.

More recently, Shotton, Oosahwe and Cintron's (2007) research has found that the education authorities of the USA have emphasized the importance of cooperative learning for ethnic minority students. According to these researchers, cooperative learning should include parents, community and governmental agencies/ representatives working together with schools and students to promote learning. They noted that peoples' expertise in certain areas (culture, community, school and government policies, and law for example) assisted in work discipline and understanding of learning content which supported the learning of many ethnic students. The cooperative learning approach however, was undermined by misrepresentation which has also led to some students failing examinations in some schools in the USA. According to Alba and Nee (2003), some representatives gave their own opinions at school boards' meetings and not those of the students and that impacted negatively on the schooling of many students. Piaget (1950) indicated that the best way for the cooperative learning approach being

applied in class requires teachers, students and helpers to obtain a better understanding of one another, explore learning content from a wider context (teachers'/students' experience), be compassionate and to be fair, patient, honest, tolerant toward one another. This approach is most effective when students work alongside the right peers to work cooperatively. This means that teachers' participation is necessary for such an approach to succeed.

In some New Zealand schools, the community members assisted by being involved in the teaching/learning areas. This involvement was significant in the successful achievements of many ethnic minority students. According to Scotti's (2000) research some Board of Trustees (BOT) have approved parental/community assistance in the teaching/learning areas (for examples supervision, tutoring, and teaching). Family and community assistance is also required because of their experiences and understanding of the world. This can add a broader dimension and broaden students' views of learning content. Scotti pointed at Al Madinah School in South Auckland as an example of that. She found that this school's success was a result of having family and community (BOT), the students and the school cooperating together. All members had a better understanding of the students and they contributed by providing appropriate approaches to meet the students' learning needs., Students teaming up with their parents or other students in learning has now been seen as a key goal in NZ (Ministry of Education, 2007).

### ***The Student-Centred Approach***

A study of African American students in America by Ford (1992) showed that the student-centred approach has assisted many African American students in America. Ford's research suggested that the student-centred approach recognised the students' social, cultural, spiritual, personal perspectives and other psychological influences in their life and this approach assisted many of them to succeed. He also noted that the student-centred approach was central in education in America and some teachers were critical about how the approach was applied. Some teachers pointed out some students were not honest when identifying their learning interest and desires and that misled their teachers. However, Ford argued that teachers also have an important role directing students to meet their real goals. This requires teachers to have

a critical view of their students. In another study undertaken by Zambrana, Zoppi, Lorenzo and Tosado (2005), it was found that Latino students also benefited from the student-centred approach. These researchers pointed out that many Latino students identified important areas, which assisted in their understanding of content. For example, these students identified the approaches practiced in their families as the major factors that support their success at school.

Lee, Winfield and Wilson (1991) noted that many of African-American students have been successful in their education because they showed a positive attitude toward their schooling. They suggested that these teachers conducted various tests including comprehension and fluency, and used the students' profiles which assisted in the understanding of the best ways to apply the approach for their students. The teachers provided activities and programmes such as extensive reading, homework, remedial reading, homework, peer reading and student-parents cooperative learning tasks which encouraged the students to work hard in their schooling.

Through these studies, it has become clear that the student-centred approach benefited the students who honestly identified their interests and desires. However, the approach would not have been as successful without the teachers' participation. Teachers, however need to be cautious about how this approach for example reviewing the students' educational profile/records and communicating with the parents as they need to confirm what the students said. This indicates that the teacher participation in the student-centred approach is very important.

### ***The Rote-Learning Approach***

The rote-learning approach was identified as another significant factor for educational success. A cross-cultural study by Morris (1996) of Asians in Australia identified the significance of parents' influence in preferring the rote learning approach by many students. Morris argued that rote learning supported by parents and the government of Taiwan, has also been favoured by many Taiwanese students in Australia. However, teachers were concerned that some of these Taiwanese students in Australia were not achieving good educational results possibly because they were not familiar

with the student-centred learning approach recommended by the Australian education curriculum (Morris, 1996). Murphy (1997) argued that because of the influence of rote learning on these students many of them have weaknesses especially in relationship to lateral thinking in certain subjects for example English, history and geography. He added that these students were not as creative as the European students. He noted that some Asians have been academically successful using rote learning because they worked hard. Other students learnt from their parents and family members' ideas which they used effectively to enhance their learning. This finding suggests that the rote learning approach in Australia has been effective for some students and not for the others. Partington (1998) demonstrated one of the ways the rote learning approach can be effective in class. His research shows that the use of the students' native language assists their memory and that they will remember things when their first language is part of their learning. In many countries, rote learning is recognised as an important learning strategy and many students have been successful using it (Yang, 1991). This suggests that Australian and New Zealand teachers need to gain a good understanding of the students' traditional approaches and utilise them if appropriate to assist in their educational development.

### **Political Influence**

Political influence is an important consideration that impacts on the education of ethnic groups. For example the education reforms undertaken in Zimbabwe were similar to the changes implemented by the government of New Zealand in the development of its education system. According to Kanyongo (2005), the past education policies of Zimbabwe were racist and clearly favoured 'white' students. Significant change followed Zimbabwe's becoming an independent nation and the newly established regime emphasised the importance of human rights and equality. The reformed education system of Zimbabwe supported democracy and gave choice to many African parents to select the schools they wanted their children to attend. The government also implemented a bulk-funding scheme to help facilitate the needs of all schools. It also provided quality teachers and more resources to many schools which encouraged many students in their education. Many performed well in this system because their teachers

understood them in terms of learning interest, language, culture, religion and other areas of their social life.

## **Chapter Summary**

This literature review has identified a range of factors that are relevant to the educational success of many ethnic students. These factors include family support, cultural influence, economic influence, the educational approach, students' positive attitude towards learning and political influence. The study of ethnic minority societies revealed the importance of these factors in the success in education for many of these students. For example, in some societies traditional approaches are the best method to support educational achievement for students. These include family support and students showing a positive attitude toward learning.

The economic and political links have also been significant to the success and failure of many ethnic students and this has been linked to changes in circumstances. The development of education of other ethnic groups revealed that students often become successful when their economic needs are met. Low economic status has led to some ethnic students being successful where some students wanted to succeed to assist their family economic wellbeing. Politically, some students have been discouraged by political influences and were not successful in education. Some students were motivated by political changes and became successful in their schooling. However, overall the literature reviewed for this research indicates that politics can assist ethnic students' educational development if they are properly managed. What is important is that the key factors in the success of other ethnic students has implications for the schooling of Samoan students in New Zealand. Understanding these factors is therefore a priority and how they relate to the New Zealand education system is also important. The next chapter discusses the history associated with changes in *fa'asamoa* and traditional learning approaches.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Literature Review: Cultural and Educational Issues

#### Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the influence of change and new ideas on *fa'asamoa* and the life of Samoan students. *Fa'asamoa* is the most influential factor in the life and mindset of Samoans (Meleisea, 1987). An understanding of *fa'asamoa* will assist in the understanding of Samoans' educational achievement.

New Zealand and Pacific academics (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003) have researched *fa'asamoa* in New Zealand and they suggest that the socio-economical, political, cultural and educational influences of New Zealand play a significant role in the shaping of *fa'asamoa*. Other important information that could assist in the understanding of Samoans has been gathered from a number of writers (for example, Bronfenbrenner, 1990) who have written on the subject of cultural development. Bronfenbenner suggested that cultural development involves peoples' beliefs, traditions, actions, notions, ideology and change.

Other sources of information associated with the environmental influences and the perspectives on Samoans in New Zealand, include world change, the voices of family members, communities, church groups, teachers, students, lecturers, politicians, the economic circumstance of Samoans and the education system of New Zealand. Critical issues or interests in the daily life of people such as sports, religion, personality, and school have also been examined for their relevance to the education of Samoan students.

This chapter explores the notion of *fa'asamoa* in New Zealand including the structure of *fa'asamoa* from a home, church and community perspective, and the expectations placed upon Samoans. These influences will contribute to the understanding of Samoan students' views relating to their successful educational achievements. From the educator's point of view, a better understanding of the students' mindset will support their needs (Aitken, 1996). Using this understanding in teaching should lead to positive results for

Samoan students. Eckerman (1994), an educational psychologist, pointed out that an individual is better understood by understanding the belief they hold about their culture. However, a key issue is to what extent fa'asamoa impact upon Samoan individuals in the New Zealand context does.

## **The National Character of Samoa**

### **Fa'asamoa**

Samoans are diverse in their views of fa'asamoa. Many matai and the elderly Samoans believe God created fa'asamoa. God created the traditions, customs and values that Samoans need to abide by and be part of their lives (Meleisea, 1987). Aiono (1996) argued that the Christian God created fa'asamoa and she pointed out the characteristics of God such as love, patient, humble and so on being the basis of fa'asamoa. Her argument is based on the Christian perspective that God is the controller and creator of humanity, which means that God is the key in the understanding of fa'asamoa. Meleisea and Aiono's definitions of fa'asamoa clearly indicated that the culture was established when the Missionaries converted Samoans to Christianity and they believed that that was the end of the ancient fa'asamoa because it had unacceptable traditions and values. They have attributed all traditions and values of the culture to the Christian God. Other Samoans (Taulealeausumai, 1997; Tupuola, 1996) however believe that the ancient fa'asamoa (the fa'asamoa before Christianity) and its practices and traditions were different. Many young Samoans also have their own views of the culture which are influenced by modern ideas for example the New Zealand culture and modern technology (Tiatia, 2001; Wurtzburg, 2004). It is important to note that although Samoans are diverse in views of the culture they still believe that fa'asamoa values should be maintained. Some young Samoans believe fa'asamoa is a way of life for Samoans based on traditions, rules and values that can be altered or changed overtime. Faibairn-Dunlop and Makisi (2003) believe that many Samoan traditions and values need modification to suit life today. Tupuola (1996) suggests that an important consideration arising from these findings is that there is a need to understanding the meanings of actions and tradition and that this will lead to an understanding of values.



Samuelu, a Samoan academic (cited in Araki, 2003) argued that changes have always played a significant role in fa'asamoa, however, emphasised that the values (respect and love) of fa'asamoa have always been maintained. He suggests that, respect includes being humble and modest and he believed that such characteristics should be reflected in words and behaviours. According to Samuelu love is a process including accepting another person's view and way of thinking. Araki (2003) wrote that to love and be loved, and to respect and to be respected, are indications that people are linked to one another. Love and respect are important aspects of fa'asamoa. They are the basis of families, communities and the individual's values (Tupuola, 1996).

Samoan academics (e.g., Aiono, 1996; Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Meleisea, 1987; Araki, 2003; Fuimaono, 2001; Tupuola, 1996) all agreed that fa'asamoa is the fa'avae o Samoa or a way of life for Samoans. This includes titles, land, customs and traditions. These academics believe fa'asamoa is a set of values that are transmitted through rules, traditions/customs, ideologies, beliefs and notions. These aspects can be changed or varied depending on the circumstances involving Samoans (Tiatia, 2001). Although these Samoan academics may differ in their belief about fa'asamoa, they all agree that change has always been part of fa'asamoa. These views of fa'asamoa, although they are diverse, all contribute to an understanding of fa'asamoa. Also, fa'asamoa can be linked to Peterson's (1989) definition of culture. He wrote that culture is a way of life created from different ideas that are shaped by rules and regulations. He stated that culture becomes part of our consciousness that can be varied or altered depending on circumstances. He defined cultural variation in terms of changes in traditions, ideologies, behaviour and values. For example, ethnic minority people often adjust to the circumstances of their host countries by adopting the countries' cultural traditions, language, behaviours and so on.

Peterson (1989) an anthropologist, argued that cultures change from time to time because of cultural evolution. His concept emphasised that cultural principles and values change because of changes in the environments. One of the main ideas of this change was his concept was migration where people immigrate to other countries and share ideas with other people (Barnett,

1953). Peterson's concept is recognised as part of the world literature and has been used by many historians and anthropologists to explain social, political and spiritual contexts of societies.

However, Peterson's (1989) concept can be criticised for not providing a logical explanation of why some ethnic people preserves their traditional cultural practices and values despite the changes in society (Araki, 2003). For example, many ethnic people such as the Aboriginals of Australia (Harris, 1990), Tongans in Tonga (Hao'ofa, 1993), the Taiwanese in Taiwan and other ethnic groups in other parts of the world all preserved their cultural values and practices despite the changes in technologies, ideas, economies and environments. For many Samoans, their traditional values and practices are so important to them that they preserve them although they have accepted modern ideas (Levine, 2003; Meleisea, 1987; Taulealeausumai, 1997; Tupuola, 1996). According to Taulealeausumai (1997), modern ideas are incorporated into *fa'asamoa* to enhance its values and practices in modern societies. For example, in New Zealand, young people's voices have been accepted in church decision-making, *fono* and *matai* system (Tiatia, 2001). The involvements of young Samoans in *fa'asamoa* in New Zealand (such as aortal debates and *fono*) have moved many Samoan leaders to incorporate new ideas to culture (Tiatia, 2001). It is believed these changes will assist the continuity of the culture in the future (Tupuola, 1996).

There is no literature to be found documenting when *fa'asamoa* was created except, for oral stories passed through *matai* and parents. Even the myths of Samoa do not indicate any specific dates in relation to the creation (Agafili Laau, personal communication, June 4, 2007). However, it was noted by Samoan academics (Aiono, 1996; Fairbairn, 2003; Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001; Mageo, 1998; Meleisea, 1987 & Tupuola, 1996) that the making of *fa'asamoa* can be understood by the changes in the behavioural patterns of Samoans. This implies that changes impact on the behaviour of Samoans. As indicated by Aiono (1996), Araki (2003), Tamasese, Carmel, Charles and Alister (2005) and Tiatia (2001) in their studies of Samoa, Samoans have always accepted different ideas in their journey for success. As Samoans continue searching for success, they will encounter different circumstances and ideas. An understanding of how they adjust to change will assist in the

understanding of these people and their perspective of fa'asamoa. The next section discusses the Samoan traditional approaches because these are seen as being significant in the schooling of many Samoans today, although the extent of the impact in the New Zealand setting is an important question to consider.

### **Samoan Traditional Approaches**

The significance of Samoa's traditional approaches in the development and the mindset of many Samoans can be linked to the re-development of traditional approaches of education in England in the 19th Century. Curtis and Boulwood (1960) wrote that the government authorities of England in the 19th Century considered that the traditional approaches such as farming, gardening, fishing and hunting could improve the living conditions of many poor people of England, particularly those who lived in the remote areas. Curtis and Boulwood indicated that these less time and money was required for training because people in the remote areas of England were already familiar with traditional approaches and resources. The education approaches applied by the missionaries in Samoa were similar to those in England. The missionaries who established Christian churches in the 19th Century appointed church leaders as teachers because these people had a better understanding of Samoans (Moyle, 1984). Rote learning assisted the missionaries in Samoa because the Samoans were already familiar with it as a learning approach (Moyle, 1984; Tupuola, 1996). The missionaries also encouraged a number of other traditional approaches including assimilation practices, group learning and one-on-one tutoring.

#### ***Rote learning***

Rote learning has been widely recognised throughout the Pacific because it was encouraged by Pacific cultures and the missionaries who brought the church to the Pacific (Tamati, 1983). Rote learning is an approach, which emphasizes learning through memorization, repetition and imitation (Ebbinghaus, 1913). According to this researcher, the approach involves the memorisation of information through listening, reading and observation, and that rote learning requires two senses, listening and looking. Through listening and looking (observation) the learner gathers information and often

repeats the information as he/she receives it. Often, they listen, observe, and then imitate aspects such as pronunciation, expression, word pattern and meaning (Ebbinghaus), meaning that deep thinking by students is not encouraged. The approach is commonly used to learn phonics, times tables in math, music notes and science formulas. There are advantages and disadvantages of rote learning.

According to Kreitman (1998), one of the advantages of rote learning is that it can be used effectively to pass examinations. Students do not necessarily have to understand the questions to answer them correctly; rather they only have to remember the right answers by memorizing them. For example, in multiple-choice questions, some students can answer the questions correctly by remembering the right answers and not necessarily understanding them. In subjects such as math, science and music, rote learning is the key to achieve excellence in some areas (for example, memorizing tables, sequences, formulas, patterns and notes).

The other advantage of the approach is that it holds meaning specific to some people. For example, rote learning has been widely recognised in other parts of the world as an important component of learning. For example, Caplan, Choy and Whitmore (1991) wrote that many Asian minority groups in the USA applied rote learning in education and other aspects of life because they believed the American culture and English language are a step forward in life. Applying rote learning can be easily accomplished by this. It was also noted by them that rote learning has always been required in the mainstream education of the countries of the Asian people who migrated and live in the USA. These findings suggest that some Asians believe rote learning was the way to success because they had traditionally used it, and so when they immigrated to other countries they used it to adapt and to develop to their new country.

Rote learning has some disadvantages which can hinder learning for many students. Rote learning prevents lateral thinking. Kreitman, (1998) suggests that it does mean that it students do not have the opportunity to think deeply and creatively. The other disadvantage is that rote learning encourages students to memorise learning content and not understand it. It does not

allow learners to shift learning to other contexts and to broaden their understanding of other learning content.

According to Neville-Barton and Barton (2005), rote learning could be the reason why many found the learning of the English language difficult. Like the Māori when they encountered Pakeha in the 19th Century (Rice, 1995), Samoans used English from the bible for communication, but was insufficient in fully expressing meaning (Moyle, 1984). Neville-Barton and Barton argued that English is better understood through unconscious learning involving reading, speaking, writing, listening and acting. Many Samoans however learnt English in the same manner as the Māori approach to English in the 19th Century. It is also believed that Samoans' approach to learning English is similar to learning mathematics or science, so that while many Samoans could apply the English they had learnt by rote in schools, they did not have the broad understanding of the English language required to fully express their ideas.

Rote learning was also utilised by the Aboriginals of Australia but this was to revive their traditional culture due to the dominance of modern ideas (Harris, 1990). To achieve this they observed and memorised their traditional language, songs, art and other traditional skills (Harris). Rice's (1995) study of the Māori in New Zealand also identified rote learning as the main approach to adapt to the culture and language of the Pakeha people. For example, many Māori people learnt the bible via rote learning and that was reflected in the bible English used in everyday conversation. Māori speakers who contributed to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi often use biblical phrases in their speeches according to Rice (1995).

For many Samoans they value rote learning because it is important in *fa'asamoa*. Rote learning is normally used in learning certain customs and rituals of *fa'asamoa* and is recommended as it contributes to the meanings and values of traditions. Rote learning is recognised as a Samoan tradition (*o tu ma aga fa'asamoa*). The approach according to Tupuola (1997) is an important part of the holistic orientation for many Samoans. These people believe that the Samoan ancestors, to preserve *fa'asamoa*, have used rote learning. They also believe that Samoans must pay tribute to their ancestors

by respecting the approach (rote learning) and therefore they are preserving *fa'asamoa* (O'meara, 1997). It means that rote learning to some Samoans adds meaning to traditions. For example, some traditions of *fa'asamoa* require rote learning for example there are songs and poems that must be sung or chanted to harmonize some customs (Taulealeausumai, 1997). Churches also encourage rote learning to prevent their doctrines from being exaggerated (Taulealeausumai). It can be argued that many Samoans' preferences to rote learning are due to their respect and devotion to *fa'asamoa* and their churches. This indicates that this approach is unique to some Samoans because it has cultural significance. The influences of these people can influence many Samoans.

Rote learning and modelling are the key concepts in the learning of *fa'asamoa*. For example, the learning of traditions such as siva (dance), speeches, *fa'amatai* and other aspects of *fa'asamoa* required modelling, observation and copying (Tupuola, 1996). Important Samoan links such as *fa'amatai*, land and titles, *aiga* and trade need to be remembered because they express specific meanings and values that are crucial in *fa'asamoa* and in the minds of Samoans. Samoan leaders such as Agafili Laau, Erika Etuai, Su'a Popo and Tupuola Malifa all agreed that as long as *fa'asamoa* is embedded in individual's lives traditional learning approaches will also play a significant role in these peoples' life. The expression in *fa'asamoa* – *e alu aso sau aso a'o tu ma aga fa'asamoa e tumau ia* (Tupuola, 1996) – meaning days may come and go, is believed by many that Samoans' traditions and approaches will remain unchanged.

According to Yorston (1999), New Zealand educators recommended only the teacher-centred approach when they worked in the Samoan education system, and many students succeeded because rote learning was highly recommended in schools. As a result many students preferred the approach because it is encouraged in *fa'asamoa* (Aiono, 1996). It could be argued that the teachers in Samoa had a better understanding of how such an approach is implemented because of their understanding of *fa'asamoa*, however many teachers in New Zealand have had limited understanding of the *fa'asamoa* (Ministry of Education, 2003). Like the missionaries, the local Samoan teachers understood Samoans because they lived with them and practiced it,

and through that understanding, they established suitable educational approaches for Samoans. Rote learning is linked closely with fa'asamoa and many Samoan students felt comfortable because they are familiar with it. This implies that it is important for teachers and educators to understand the significant role of rote learning in fa'asamoa to assist Samoan students in the establishment of appropriate approaches and practices for them.

Rote learning is still an important part of the life of many Samoans in New Zealand today. Many young Samoans use rote learning, to memorise the cultural traditions taught by their parents, church ministers, matai and the elderly Samoans in relation to life in New Zealand (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003) and listening is highly recommended for this approach. Samoans believe a good listener is also a successful learner (Tupuola, 1996). According to Cohen, DeLoache and Strauss (1979), listening determines behaviour or action, which means that people behave according to the messages they received via listening. Some even believe that many young Samoans in New Zealand today seem to be more involved in fa'asamoa than the past because they have realised the importance of their identity which requires the listening and learning by heart of fa'asamoa (Tupuola, 1996).

### ***Assimilation***

Ausubel (1994) believed that assimilation is a cognitive process in which new information is added to what learners already know (refer to chapter four). Assimilation, as recognised and practised by Samoans in New Zealand, has also occurred in other societies. For example, Sullivan (1998) indicated that many Pacific Island nations assimilated to the culture of New Zealand because of its dominant role in the Pacific. Many Pacific Island people viewed the culture of New Zealand as an opening to a better life. In New Zealand, Rice's (1995) research revealed that many Māori assimilated to the Pakeha culture because they believed it was a positive step towards getting a better life and this has led to many Māori traditions being abandoned. In Australia, Harris (1990) wrote that the Aborigines' education authorities assimilated some aspects of the Australian school system which assisted the development of the Aboriginal system. In the Pacific, many Pacific Islands

assimilated to the education system of England because they believed it would open more opportunities for their future development (Sullivan, 1998).

Samoans have practiced two types of assimilation in learning. The first is viewed as the assimilation of *palagi* ideas to *fa'asamoa*, (Aiono, 1996, Meleisea, 1987; Tiatia, 2001), and the second is the assimilation of *fa'asamoa* to *fa'apalagi* (Levine, 2003; Moyle, 1984; Roberts, 1999). The assimilation of *fa'apalagi* to *fa'asamoa* was identified by Meleisea as an approach by Samoans who strongly believed that Samoan traditions would play a significant role in the lives of many Samoan in the future. Meleisea pointed out that when Samoans first encountered *papalagi*, they assimilated some *palagi* traditions to *fa'asamoa*, for example, words, clothes, food, art, religion and trade. This process occurred over a long period because Samoans believed that their meanings and values should be maintained, and in order to achieve that they must be cautious about the way these new ideas were blended in *fa'asamoa* (Meleisea, 1987; Aiono, 1996; Levine, 2003). Meleisea suggested that many Samoans in the past assimilated some aspects of *fa'apapalagi* to *fa'asamoa* because they believed *fa'apapalagi* was a threat to *fa'asamoa*. This form of assimilation is also mentioned in *fa'amatai*, speeches and *fono* which are important in the history of *fa'asamoa* (Tupuola, 1996). This form of assimilation is still an important factor in the mindset of many Samoans today particularly, the *matai* and elderly Samoans (Tupuola, 1996). These peoples' influence also affects the views of their children and other family members.

In New Zealand, some Samoans assimilated many *palagi* ideas to *fa'asamoa* because they needed to enhance their *fa'asamoa* (Tiatia, 2001; Tupuola, 1996). Research by Levine (2003) about *fa'asamoa* in New Zealand indicated that many young Samoans have returned to their roots (learning the *fa'asamoa*), and in doing so, they assimilated some *palagi* traditions to *fa'asamoa*. These Samoans believed success in New Zealand is maintaining the *fa'asamoa* and to achieve that they needed some adjustments in some traditions.

However, some Samoans researchers (e.g., Aiono, Tupuola, 1996, Taulealeausumai, 1997) have noted that *aiga* (family) is the fundamental



force in the lives and mindset of many young Samoans. The influence of *aiga* to these people includes decision-making, cultural beliefs and behaviours, and discipline. Many Samoans are encouraged to respect family protocols which emphasise traditions, respect and obedience (Tupuola, 1996). Another reason why many young Samoans value their *aiga* is that they are taught that it they need to obey and respect God and their parents. Many live with their parents until marriage (O'meara, 1997). Tupuola (1996) noted that parents are the most important influence in the lives of many Samoans in New Zealand. Parents are seen as the decision makers, spiritual leaders and mentors. Respecting parents is the responsibility of all family members and protocol of *fa'asamoa* (Tupuola, 1996). Their parents and families therefore influence many young Samoans' perceptions (Taulealeausumai, 1997). This suggests that assimilation and modernisation of *fa'asamoa* is a consequence of the influence of parents and *aiga* (as pointed out by Levine, 2003) and does not necessarily result from the young Samoans themselves (Kedde, 2006).

Assimilation of *fa'asamoa* to *fa'palagi* is another approach based on the belief that *fa'asamoa* is not important for the future of some Samoans' development (Roberts, 1999). This implies that *fa'asamoa* is being abandoned. Roberts indicated that there has been a shift in the perception of some Samoans, particularly, those who migrated to New Zealand in the 20th Century. The influence of the New Zealand culture and lifestyle on some Samoans has changed their views about life. For example, the human-right policy of New Zealand (and its emphasis upon individual autonomy) has been viewed by some as a better way of life for them in New Zealand (Tiatia, 2001).

Researchers (Aiono, 1996; Araki, 2003; Levine, 2003; Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997) have noted however, that assimilation appears to have assisted in the preservation of *faasamoa*. According to Aiono (1996) and Araki (2003), many Samoans that live in Samoa and overseas respect Samoan values (respect, obedience and tolerance) although they assimilate some other modern ideas and traditions. Levine noted that many Samoans in New Zealand are encouraged and actively practice *fa'asamoa*. Taulealeausumai pointed out that many young Samoans in New Zealand are involved in *fa'asamoa* and

want to become *matai*. These findings suggest that many Samoans are not trying to avoid *fa'asamoa*; instead, they are supporting their culture.

Tupuola (1996) discussed identity in relation to *fa'asamoa* in New Zealand. He indicated that many young Samoans are motivated to learn and understand the *fa'asamoa* because of the influences of the other ethnic minority groups. They often assimilate other cultural traditions to enhance *fa'asamoa*. He added that it could be the competitive nature of these people (they did not want other ethnic minority groups to be better than them) that motivated them to maintain their identity.

The above discussion highlights an important issue. What constitutes the Samoan identity in New Zealand today? As the Samoan New Zealand population grows this becomes an increasingly important and complicated issue. There is an increasing number of Samoans who are second and third generation New Zealanders and for some, the spoken language is lost as they interact in mainstream New Zealand society.

### ***Group-learning***

Johnson and Johnson (1998) and Holubec (1998) define group learning as a group of people working together in a group to maximise their own and each other's learning. To achieve this they share ideas and learn from one another. Woolfolk (2001) viewed group learning as a group of people working cooperatively to achieve a task. Group learning is embedded in *fa'asamoa* and is also practised by other ethnic minority groups and plays an important part in the socialisation process. Moffat (1995) in his research of the Asian minority group in America indicated that these people applied group learning to adapt to the culture of America. He pointed out that through group learning many of these people learn from one another and they also helped members who needed help.

Johnson and Johnson (1998), well-known education psychologists noted the advantages of the group learning approach for students and found a number of important pointers relevant to Samoan students. According to them, group learning benefits students more than teacher instructional learning. It provides a comfortable environment and motivation for learners. For example, learners

feel comfortable when they learn and share ideas with their peers because they are familiar with each other's ideas, behaviours, needs as well as having similar cognitive levels (Johnson & Johnson).

Johnson and Johnson's (1998) concept generally describes cognitive learning however, their concept is problematic due to the lack of emphasis on cultural significance. Group learning for people such as Samoans has a much deeper meaning (Tupuola, 1996) than that explained by Johnson and Johnson. Tupuola stated that group work or group learning is part of Samoa's holistic orientation. Group learning for many Samoans is encouraged in their aiga where all members of aiga must work as a unit for the future of aiga. Members of aiga dedicate their effort, time, and services to their groups or aiga. Functioning as a unit is a very important part of aiga for many Samoans (Tupuola). It reflects peace, respect, harmony and love, which are values of fa'asamoa (Aiono, 1997). An example of how the group learning method is applied for Samoans was that demonstrated by Tamati (1983). According to him, Samoans tolerate and respect one another particularly if they belong to the same group. These people accept and appreciate the other group members' ideas because they trust, understand, and believe in them. They also take risks for the sake of their groups and not the individuals (Tupuola, 1996).

The Asians communities in the USA have demonstrated how groups assisted their developments. According to Moffat (1995), these people understood each other's needs and that was significant in their socio-economic, spiritual and educational development. Through group learning Asians shared ideas which assisted their development. Hughes and More (1993) and Harris (1990) wrote that the group-learning approach was also encouraged in many Aboriginal communities in Australia because many of these people understood it. Young Aboriginals are encouraged by their leaders and native educators to participate in group-learning activities particularly in learning the Aboriginal culture. Aboriginals believe that being part of group activities such as cultural activities indicate that members are mentally and spiritually connected (Harris, 1990).

In the Pacific, many people are accustomed to group activities and that is reflected in their approach to learning (JoAnn, Yuen, Dowrick & Alaimaleata, 2006; Sullivan, 1998). For Samoans in New Zealand, group learning is very important to them because it is part of the practice of fa'asamoa. These people are trained in their aiga from childhood to adulthood (Podmore & Wendt, 2006; Tupuola, 1996). Group learning in fa'asamoa reflects compassion, sincerity, love, cooperation and competitiveness and these are the characteristics that reflect the true values of fa'asamoa (Levine, 2003; *McCreanor, Penney, Jensen & Witten, 2006*; Tupuola, 1996). Jones's (1991) research, related to young Samoans and other Polynesian students in New Zealand, found that the lack of understanding of group learning processes was one of the reasons why so many failed school examinations. These findings indicate that the group learning approach was a factor in the poor educational success of many Samoans and other Pasifika students. An important consideration arises from these findings is that such an approach has a unique meaning to these people, and only through proper management and implementation will this approach be effective for these people. This means that teachers must obtain a deep understanding of how group-learning activities can be used for Samoans and other Pasifika people.

There is now the urge amongst many young Samoans in New Zealand to learn their traditional fa'asamoa (Levine) and the traditional learning approaches of Samoa are used to achieve that (Tupuola, 1996). It can be argued that only Samoan traditional approaches are appropriate in the learning of some aspects of fa'asamoa, because the words, expressions, traditions, customs, even gestures in speech in fa'asamoa hold specific meanings unique to Samoans (Mata'afa, 2003). It can also be argued that the growing interest of many young Samoans in New Zealand in fa'asamoa has also led to many of them favouring Samoans traditional learning approaches in education.

### **The Influence of Missionaries Schooling System to Samoans**

The influence of the missionaries in education has been the 'backbone' of education in Samoa and was a component of colonialism in the Pacific in the 19th Century (Rice, 1995). Rice's description of education in the Pacific region has elements of truth. The missionaries were the first to establish a

western education system in the region and their influences were well documented by Aiono (1996) and Meleisea (1987). They established schools which encouraged many Pacific Islanders to learn new ideas (Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997). Education in many countries such as Australia (Moyle, 1984), New Zealand (Rice, 1995), Tahiti, Tonga and Samoa (Moyle, 1984) all followed the missionary-based education curriculum, policies and regulations and English became the language of instruction. In Samoa, English was a compulsory subject for all Samoan students (Meleisea, 1987). Other developments included the introduction of school uniforms, teacher refresher courses (Tamati, 1983) and national examinations and these became significant in the mindset of the Samoan community.

The literature indicates that the missionaries made changes which had significant impacts on the beliefs and perceptions of many Samoa in the early 19th Century. However, more changes occurred when Germany administered Samoa from the late 19th Century (Meleisea, 1987).

### **The German's Colonial Administration in Samoa**

When Germany administered Samoa in the 19th Century, the missionary school systems were well established and Samoans appeared comfortable with the missionaries' approaches. Solf, the German governor in Samoa, indicated that the missionary school systems would be an advantage to the German Colonial administration so the missionary school system was accepted as a vehicle to teach and deliver the German rules and policies in the country (Meleisea, 1987).

Tupuola (1996) argued that although the German language was the language of instruction during the German administration, many Samoans preferred to communicate in English because of the influences of the missionaries and early *papalagi* settlers. He believed that many Samoans did not adjust to the transition of speaking German because English had always been the language of instruction for them and this change was not easy for them. Meleisea's (1987) however, argued that many Samoans in the past were fluent in the German language. He noted that Germany (being one of the dominant nations during the 19th Century) imposed its language, and culture to all its colonies including Samoa. He referred to the German

language and culture being the foundation of Samoa's political and educational systems/policies for over thirty years. To understand the German law and policies many Samoans were encouraged to apply Samoan traditions and language in the learning of the German language. For example, in *fa'alenuu* (village affairs), *pulenu'u* (village leader) explained the German administration's policies to villagers. The *fa'amatai* (chiefly system) was also used by the German authorities in Samoa to deliver German's political desires and other needs. Many changes generated by the Germans' administration and were significant in developing the perspectives and the attitudes of Samoans (Meleisea) and more foreign ideas were introduced, stimulating interest in future development.

Meleisea (1987) believed that the German administration used the missionaries to carry out its education policy. Many church ministers were also appointed as schoolteachers in Samoa, and they accepted changes made by the German administration. These teachers incorporated some traditional Samoan approaches in classroom learning (Moyle, 1984) to encourage all Samoans to read, write, and communicate in German. Meleisea indicated that although there were some Samoans who could not speak the German languages (they were did not have the training), most of them understood it.

The German administration raised an important issue for educators regarding the development of educational approaches and methods for Samoans in New Zealand. Many Samoans in the past perceived their host country's language as a language of instruction and for useful for future development. This belief has been passed on through generations. In New Zealand English is the language of instruction and many Samoans are encouraged to learn English. It is also important to note that the learning of English has impacted upon the attitude and behaviour of many Samoan students – that is, Samoan students who are good in English consider themselves as successful students, while the others perceived themselves as slow learners when they fail English in examination (DeSilva, 2000).

## The Influence of New Zealand

This section discusses the influence of New Zealand on Samoa and its impact on Samoans in New Zealand today. As stated earlier in this chapter, Samoans have always accepted new ideas because they have related adoption of new practices to a better life and they believed education was the best way to achieve that (Desilver, 2000; Moyle, 1984). What this implies is that the influence of New Zealand on Samoans has impacted on perceptions of success for their future development.

Samoans accepted many changes made by New Zealand in Samoa because they believed they offered more opportunities for the future (O'meara, 1990; Taule'ale'ausumai, 1997). For example, Firth (2006) indicated New Zealand provided assistance such as educational and financial aids to help the development of many Pacific Island nations. One of the major changes made by the New Zealand government in education in Samoa that influenced the mindset of Samoans and other Pacific Island people was the establishment of national examination systems at different grades (Sullivan, 1998). Tamati (1983) believed many Samoans felt that the national examinations in Samoa were important to motivate the students to study diligently. He pointed out that before New Zealand administered Samoa, *faimaumaga* (taro planter) was viewed as part of Samoa's bureaucracy in *aiga* or village – it being the responsibility of all males (Tamati, 1983). However, the influence of paid employment and opportunities overseas in the minds of Samoans has meant that it is now viewed in negative terms (Tamati). In fact, such an awareness has been one of the causes for Samoans' being so competitive in education. It is also a cause for some Samoans low self-esteem, particularly when they fail examinations. To many young Samoans, success is achieving a pass in examination.

Another influence of the New Zealand administration was the continued encouragement of English as a core subject in schools (Esera, 2001). The government of Samoa fully supported English as a core subject in education in Samoa (Tamati, 1983). This encouraged the teaching of English to spread to schools outside Apia including those in *Savai'i* and *Manono* (Derrick, 1952) but it is believed that the spread of the English language was also one of the reasons why many Samoan parents had limited involvement in school affairs

(Tamati, 1983). It was also the general belief amongst many Samoans that education was and continues to be the responsibility of selected committee members, education inspectors, teachers or those who have undergone specific training (Tamati, 1983). This is a reflection of *fa'asamoa* where leadership is the responsibility of leaders or experts, for example, *matai*, *fai'feau* and community leaders. These people are chosen because of their unique understanding of *fa'asamoa* and their ability to lead the community<sup>1</sup>. Many Samoans who migrated to New Zealand are influenced by these characteristics and undoubtedly, this will impact on their children.

### **The National Education System of Samoa**

In 1980, the government of Samoa recommended a review of its schooling system because of the need to identify factors associated with high unemployment. More than half of the secondary students in Samoa were leaving school with no formal qualification.<sup>2</sup> More emphasis was placed on investigating appropriate educational approaches to meet the students' learning needs and that was significant in the decision to implement the student-centred approach for Samoans. Aiono (1996) a Samoan academic who was influential in the decision for change recommended that the student-centred learning approach would be more appropriate for young Samoans because it had benefited minority students in other societies. The focus of these changes was placed upon monitoring the students learning needs (Aiono, 1996; Araki, 2003) and the incorporation of *fa'asamoa* into Samoan schooling (Mataafa, 2003), which meant that the student-centred learning approach required teachers to fully understand the learning approach. This indicates that even in Samoa where the traditional *fa'asamoa* is the dominant approach, the perspectives of students were now considered an important aspect in their schooling.

The change made by the Samoan national education authorities suggests that important issues were overlooked. According to Tamati (1983), many Samoan students were successful under the teacher-centred approach

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<sup>1</sup> Tupuola (1996) explained this in a lecture given at Victoria University of Wellington on the education system of Samoa after its independence.

<sup>2</sup> In parliament June 20th, 1980, the government of Samoa passed a motion for changes to be made in the schooling system of Samoa. Before any change was to be made, it was decided that a review needed to be conducted.



(Tamati, 1983). Although the Samoan education authorities recommended the student-centred teaching and learning approaches, many teachers still applied the former because it was what they understood best. Many students felt comfortable and achieved better results in the school examinations via the teacher-centred approach (Tamati). These students also had the support from parents, church and community leaders where all these people were familiar with teacher-centred approach (Aiono, 1996).

Some Samoan students failed when student-centred teaching and learning approaches were introduced (Tamati). Aiono (1996) pointed out that the new approach was only introduced to the Samoan Teachers College (TTC) but there were no refresher courses or resources available for the teachers of the schools (Tamati). Many teachers felt uncomfortable with the new approach because they did not fully understand it. Some had to follow the new approach, particularly the teachers of the Apia schools because they were closely monitored by the school inspectors, but other teachers kept to the old teacher-centred approach.

An important consideration arising from these findings is that while recognising the students' perspectives and giving greater emphasis to their learning needs it was also important that educators also need to understand *fa'asamoa* to assist their of teaching and learning approaches to facilitate Samoan students' learning needs. It is believed that many Samoans are adapted well to academic learning via their traditional approaches (Aiono, 1996). Teachers must understand how these approaches are being used in *fa'asamoa* to be able to utilise them in classroom learning, and they must understand *fa'asamoa*. There was an acceptance that other education systems might have methods that could be relevant for Samoa so understanding these methods became important.

### ***Fa'asamoa* and Education**

There are educational approaches that are unacceptable in New Zealand and other Western countries that Samoans accept as part of their culture. In Samoa *sasa* was accepted as a disciplinary approach in *aiga*, school, church and village communities (Tupuola, 1986). The term has been viewed and

interpreted by Kinloch (1976) as *fasi* (hiding) or corporal punishment which is not accepted in New Zealand.

Kinloch's (1976) definition of *sasa* is different from that of many Samoans including Samoan academics (e.g. Aiono, 1996; Meleisea, 1987; Tamati, 1983; Tupuola, 1996). He overlooked the value of *sasa* to many Samoans and interpreted it as corporal punishment which is not how it has been used in *fa'asamoa*. Tupuola pointed out that the term *fasi* involves brutality and violence and many Samoans do not accept it. *Sasa* (light smacking) has always been accepted by many Samoans as an appropriate approach for discipline and that is practised in *aiga*, churches and communities (Tamati, 1983). Aiono pointed out that *sasa* is recommended in the Bible and many Samoans accept it. According to Meleisea, *sasa* holds a special meaning for many Samoans – it is an act of care and love (Tamati). In New Zealand, many Samoans and even *palagi* believe *sasa* should be part of school discipline.

Another approach has been the involvement of village people in school in activities where support and social development were important. In village schools, the people have provided food for teachers because there it is a general belief that teachers are leaders and the teachers support a pathway to success in life for them (Tupuola, 1996). Village people were also nominated as inspectors for the development of village schools. These people reported on areas such as school building, grounds, funding, school uniform, school fees and other school facilities. These traditions are still recognised by villages outside Apia where *fa'asamoa* is dominant. However, the government's equal right policy of Samoa became an important part of its development and many traditional approaches fell away (Tamati, 1983). Many changes occurred in schools. For example, in Apia there was encouragement of positive reinforcement as a teaching approach (reward and praise) which implied that corporal punishment was unfavourable to the student's development (Schoeffel & Meleisea, 1996; Tamati, 1983).

Many Samoans believed the equal right policy of Samoa has steered their children away from *fa'asamoa*. Some students fell behind in schoolwork because they believed it is their right to decide for themselves, and students

have physically attacked some teachers (Tupuola, 1996). These negative attitudes of the students made many Samoans believe that a life of crime may follow if the Samoans are given the freedom to decide for themselves in school and society. Some Samoans believe that the human right policy of Samoa is too lenient and disrespected by many (Tupuola). Other Samoans believe that the disciplinary aspect of *fa'asamoa* should be changed because of the negative impact of it on their children's schooling (Mataafa, 2003). This difference of opinion highlights an important point, that is, not all people of one cultural group necessarily have a common belief about development.

Tupuola's (1996) report related to the equal right policy of Samoa echoed the voices of only those who believed they have been affected by it. However, his report ignored one important point. Many students have been successful in their schoolings despite being exposed to such a policy. According to Tiatia (2001), many young Samoans believe Samoa's equal right policy encouraged them to incorporate new ideas in *fa'asamoa* to enhance its values. She believed this was the key to her and many of her friends' successes. In New Zealand, some Samoans are adapted to local policies however for some, the influence of New Zealand culture and policies have made them adapt strongly to *fa'asamoa* (Levine, 2003). One important consideration that arises from this is that Samoans need to utilise the policies that benefit them.

A number of investigations relating to *fa'asamoa* (e.g., Aiono, 1996; Kinloch, 1976; Levine, 2003; O'meara, 1990; Podmore & Wendt, 2006; Schoeffel, 1996; Singh & Sinclair, 2001) all agreed that *fa'asamoa* is an important part of the development of Samoans, but changes need to be made in some aspects of it to be accepted today. It is understood that *fa'asamoa* is now accepted as an important content subject in college and university in Samoa (Araki, 2003; Mataafa, 2003). The inclusion of *faasamoa* at this level of education has made many Samoan students understand more about its importance to Samoans and the national character, and its relevance for the future development of Samoans (Aiono, 1996).

Through education, the values of *fa'asamoa* have been passed successfully from one generation to another<sup>3</sup> – and through this process the national character of Samoa has been established (e.g., Moyle, 1984; Levine, 2003; Meleisea, 1987; O'meara, 1990; Tupuola, 1996). This, however, does not adequately define the national character of Samoans. The circumstances of Samoans have continued to be influenced by change which also influences their views of life as well as *fa'asamoa*. Karl Marx (cited in Lewis, 2002) concept of cultural change can be used to explain the circumstances of Samoans. He indicated that cultural change is based on needs where people make changes to their cultures because of the need to adjust to changes. This applies to many Samoans, as they have made changes to their traditions because of the need to adjust to the lifestyle of New Zealand.

Esera (2001) pointed out another reason why Samoans are different in their views of *fa'asamoa*. He argued that people are different because of their different upbringing or background and he emphasised the importance of understanding these aspects by educators and teachers to apply appropriate approaches for these students. The difference between Samoans students can be linked with Strain's (1971) explanation of diverse views within ethnic society. Strain argued that sometimes people of the same ethnicity have diverse views and perspectives of their culture, and he attributed that to the influences of different groups these people belong to. These are the influences that are strongly referred to by Bronfenbrenner (1990) in his ecological system theory (refer to chapter four). It is important to understand the way these differences assist the development of education for Samoan secondary students in New Zealand.

### **Migration and the Lifestyle of Samoans in New Zealand**

Living in another country is a challenge because of the need to adjust to the new cultural traditions and society, and while cultural adjustment is considered a necessary step (Young, 1972), it needs to be recognised that change will occur and impact upon an individual's' self-belief, image and understanding of the world. This section outlines the lifestyle of Samoans in

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<sup>3</sup> Tupuola (1996), lectured about how *fa'asamoa* has been transmitted from one generation to the other.

New Zealand particularly how their new experiences relate to the current situation regarding the education of Samoans in New Zealand.

Rice (1995) indicated that Samoans and other Pacific Islanders have always enjoyed the freedom to migrate because it has been part of the Pacific Island way of life. Before European explorers arrived in the Pacific Islands, Samoans and other Pacific Islanders already understood migration. People had been migrating to other Pacific Islands since the 19th Century due to the need for improvement in life and as a result changes were made in their cultures (Rice, 1995). According to Rice, many Pacific Islanders had sailed the ocean to explore new lands whenever they desired a change in lifestyle, but often returned to their homelands because of the strong links they had. The work of Hao'ofa (1993, 2000), a Tongan anthropologist and director of the Oceania Centre for Culture and Arts at the University of South Pacific can be linked to this in his discussion of cultural imperialism in the South Pacific. He argued that Pacific Islanders are connected to their land in terms of rights, politics and religion which makes it unique to these people. He added that many Pacific Islanders are a proud people who also viewed their lands and ocean as part of their identity. This link is very important for this study because in New Zealand, Samoans are no longer connected to the land or ocean for identity and status but family, church and *fa'asamoa* (Tupuola, 1996).

Rice's (1995) concept concerning migration and changes in the Pacific Island cultures has partly described Pasifika people and their cultures. His theory has overlooked an important point that is relevant for Samoans. Migration encouraged many Samoans to study their roots and relive their traditions. Many Samoans living abroad understand their connections to sea and land to know their positions and place in society (Aiono, 1996). This indicates that it is important for Samoans to understand *fa'asamoa* – wherever they live the history and culture of Samoa will always be part of their mindset (Tupuola, 1996).

Meleisea (1987) argued that migration in the Pacific had been encouraged because of the experience of past encounters with Europeans. As mentioned earlier, many Samoans admired the success of *papalagi*, which motivated

them to migrate to other countries seeking a prosperous future. For example, some Pacific Islanders viewed overseas education as the best way to achieve their goals, while others (for example the Samoans) migrated because of the need to gain more freedom from the authority of *matai* system (Tupuola, 1996; Kinloch, 1996). It is believed that these people will impact on their children's beliefs and perspective of success.

One of the reasons for migration was a desire by Samoans was to improve their life and this accounts for the migration of many to New Zealand from the 1950's (Tupuola, 1996). Meleisea (1987) and O'meara (1990) indicated that many Samoans felt that they could not be successful in Samoa because of the dominant influence of *fa'asamoa*. These people believed success for them would come if they follow their own instincts rather than being dictated by *matai*, church and community leaders. Many of these people believed New Zealand would provide them the opportunity for success (Meleisea & O'meara). Tupuola (1996) who researched the lives of Samoans in New Zealand argued that many Samoan who migrated to New Zealand during that time were seeking honour and prestige because they wanted freedom from the ruling of *matai* and he believed that many Samoans in New Zealand today still have that belief (Tupuola, 1996). These Samoans had the right to speak and decide for themselves (Macpherson and Spoonley (2001). The pattern of migration for Samoans in the mid-nineteenth Century is similar to that of today (Tupuola, 1996), which suggests that the people's reasoning and logic for migration have been passed on from generation to generation. These findings provided an understanding of the influences on young Samoans' mindset which is important for understanding their motives and aspirations.

There are still many Samoans in Samoa and in New Zealand who view New Zealand as the best place for their future development and many Samoans continue to migrate to New Zealand each year, and need to adjust to New Zealand conditions. Research in this area has revealed that this transition provides mixed results for many Samoans. For example, in education, New Zealand academics (e.g., Esera, 2001; Jones, 1991; Pasikale, 1996) noted the slow progress of Polynesian students and argued that poor adjustment by

these people to the culture of New Zealand is one important reason for this slow progress.

## **The Pattern of Development in New Zealand and the Influence on Samoans**

Many questions could be asked about the continued steady flow of migration from Samoa and other Pacific Island nations to New Zealand despite the deteriorating situation of the New Zealand's economy in the 1980's: Why is New Zealand special to many Samoans? Did Samoans want to live in New Zealand because Samoa was a third world country and did not have the resources to become a developed country like New Zealand? Were the problems in Samoa and other Pacific Islands much worse than the problems Samoans faced in New Zealand? This section discusses the impact of changes in New Zealand on Samoans. It indicates that there are some negative as well as some positive impacts. An understanding of these influences will help the understanding of the development of educational approaches and methods for Samoans in New Zealand. To a certain extent the development of minority groups in other parts of the world can also assist in answering these questions.

Many Polynesian people in New Zealand viewed New Zealand as the main centre for development in areas including education, sports and work-related opportunities. There is a general understanding amongst these people that New Zealand provides the resources, financial assistance, the right environment and skills to assist in development (Tupuola, 1996). However, the relative prosperity of life in New Zealand has been a cause of concern for some Samoans (Jones, 1991). Some students have left school to work in labouring and factory related jobs while other students have fallen behind in their schooling because their parents viewed success in terms of financial self-sufficiency, and chose to spend more time working in paid jobs and less time in supervising their children (Jones, 1991).

Jones's (1991) research was based on observation and hence she made assumptions based on them. Jones's point about many Samoans quitting school because of prosperity suggests that there were breakdowns in *aiga* (young Samoan dishonouring their parents) but that is not the case according

to Tupuola (1996). Many young Samoans in New Zealand are encouraged by parents and community leaders to go to school for a better future and obedience to parents is cultural (Tupuola, 1996). To many Samoans success in education is a simple question of honour, prestige and power and many young Samoans understand that (Tupuola).

In Tiatia's (2001) research about Samoans in New Zealand, she noted that changes in New Zealand have influenced family and community links as well as the perceptions of many Samoans. She pointed out that many Samoans viewed New Zealand as Paradise and many migrated to New Zealand to seek a better future and support for them and their families in Samoa. However, changes in New Zealand's economy created problems for not only Samoans but also other Polynesian people in New Zealand. Many were unemployed and could not find jobs anywhere else but on farms that paid only minimum wages. Many were confined to specific areas such as Otara, Mangere, Porirua, and Newtown. According to Tupuola (1996), these areas were categorised by New Zealand authorities as 'D' meaning low economy. Many Pasifika in these areas were viewed as poor or the most at risk people (Jones, 1991). However, being labelled as such has made these people become more entrenched to their cultures. For many Samoans, such being labelled as such has strengthened family and community links and has also lifted many people's self-esteem and drive for success (Tiatia).

Changes in these people's lives and perceptions have also been caused by their circumstances in New Zealand (Tiatia, 2001). There are differences in views of *fa'asamoa* between the young and the old generations. Parents and community leaders believed in the traditional culture while the younger generations believed modern ideas should be part of the culture (Tiatia, 2001). Such a difference and many more have led to many young Samoans (New Zealand-born Samoans) being marginalised within their communities and families. There is a need for many young Samoans views to be recognised as part of their families/communities' developments although that might take a while to be achieved because many Samoans are entrenched to the culture. Aiono, 1996; Tupuola, 1996; Meleisea, 1987 believed the influence of New Zealand has helped the continuity of *fa'asamoa*.



One of the changes was the establishment of initiatives such as Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara (SEMO) by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to assist educational development of the Pacific Islanders in those areas (Tiatia, 2001). These have impacted largely on the passion and beliefs of many. Such an influence has encouraged many to follow their dreams for a better future through education. Successful education was also viewed by previous Samoan immigrants as an important factor for success (Meleisea, 1987). The aim of such move by the Ministry was develop education for these people for a better life and assist the image of New Zealand (Meleisea).

It is believed that many Polynesian students have been disadvantaged in education because the industrialisation ethos in New Zealand has impacted on schools which have been viewed by many as commodity-based centres. Scott (1996) commented on the education systems of New Zealand and noted that its focus was on monetary issues. He wrote that the government had maintained ownership of its education providers because it viewed that as a means for control of its financial spending on schools in other words the government decided how much fund schools needed. Schools also provided revenue via school fees for the government. This approach enables the government to monitor its spending on education. This is significant in the application of the central control system of education in New Zealand which was scrutinised because it has failed to provide adequate teaching approaches and methods, and resources for Samoans and other Polynesian students (Pasikale, 1996).

While the centrally control system of New Zealand education was criticised for not providing adequate resources to facilitate students learning needs and hence their failure (Pasikale, 1996; Scott, 1996), some Pasifika students benefited from it and that was overlooked by the critics. The New Zealand Ministry of Education reports (1999, 2000, 2003) revealed that many Pasifika students passed their school examinations under the central control system. According to Anae (1998), many Samoan students who practise the traditional *fa'asamoa* at home became more successful through the central control approach because they understood it. An important consideration arising from these findings is that students have their favourable approaches

and teachers and educators must have a deep understanding of students to enable the appropriate approaches for them.

Another event related to the development of New Zealand in the late 1980's which had a significant impact on many Pasifika students was the deportation of many of these people from New Zealand (Pasikale, 1996). According to Spoonley (1993), the negative treatment of many Pacific Islanders in New Zealand by the immigration authorities in the 1980 is impacted negatively on the schooling achievement of many of these people. Spoonley pointed out that New Zealand was facing economic problems and that led to the increased deportation of many Samoans and other Pacific Islanders. Deportation policy was encouraged to control New Zealand population (Spoonley). It was noted that such a move against the Pacific Islanders has led to the belief amongst many of these people that they are victims of racism in New Zealand (Pasikale). Many Pacific Islanders in New Zealand believe the New Zealand immigration authorities had selected them more than other ethnic minority groups because they did not have the skills (doctors, lawyers, electricians, scientist and so on) to assist New Zealand's economic development (Pasikale, Wang & Apa, 1998). The deportation of many Pasifika people is still remembered by many young Samoans today, and many are motivated to study hard to prove to their critics (*papalagi*) that they can do just as well as them.

Although the deportation of many Pacific Islanders from New Zealand in the mid 20th Century created a negative perception of many Pacific Islanders in New Zealand, many Pasifika secondary students passed examinations and continued their studies at universities (Ministry of Education, 1990). Many of these people (in New Zealand and in the Islands) felt that they were unfairly treated but that did not mean they gave up their dreams of living in New Zealand for a better life. Statistics New Zealand (2006) reported that the population of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand has increased since 1980. The deportation of many Pacific Islanders from New Zealand may have disappointed many and that may also have had a negative impact on some but, many Pacific Islanders in New Zealand continued on with life and became successful achievers (Pasikale, Apa & Wang, 1998).

Another development in New Zealand that impacted on the perceptions and beliefs of many Samoans and other Pasifika students was an increased in the economic standard. According to Pasikale (1996), the increased cost of living of New Zealand due to increased taxation, tariff and so on forced many Samoans to make changes in some of their traditions. According to Fairbairn-Dunlop (2003) who researched the lifestyle and cultures of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand and noted that the peoples' social life was characterised by family and community activities that assisted them in adapting to the economic situation in New Zealand. They have also accepted the shifting of territorial and cultural boundaries, which indicated an acceptance of changes while adjusting to the culture of New Zealand. The shifting of territorial and cultural boundaries of *fa'asamoa* is related to the acceptance of modern ideas (young people's views) which are somewhat diverse depending on the individual (Tiatia, 2001). It is believed that the views and perceptions of *fa'asamoa* (especially between the young and the old) and the move by Samoans to adjust to these changes has been a significant factor in the development of many young Samoans today (Mamoe, 1999; Tiatia, 2001).

Durie (1998) believed that the economic problem facing New Zealand also impacted on the teaching of English for minority groups in New Zealand which was significant to the high failure rate amongst these people. The changes made by the New Zealand authorities recommended that all Māori and other ethnic groups in New Zealand must learn English via the learning of particular linguistic skills such as the New Zealand pronunciation, spelling and grammar (Durie, 1998). Such an approach was significant in the increased failure amongst the Māori and Polynesian students in New Zealand where the learning needs of these students were not met. The teaching of English to minority groups in New Zealand reflects a perception by New Zealand educators that English proficiency can only be achieved via the New Zealand recommended pronunciation, fluency, grammar of English (Durie, 1998). It means that any other form of accent or pronunciation is not acceptable.

Durie's (1998) report focused mainly on the negative impact of the New Zealand approach but he ignored the advantage of the approach to some Samoans. Many ethnic students have been successful despite being taught

to learn English via the New Zealand approach. It could be argued that many Samoan students were successful because they were familiar with the New Zealand approach - it is the basis of English teaching and learning in Samoa (Tamati, 1983). The Asian communities in the United States of America adjusted to the learning of English in that country because it is similar to how they learn English in their own countries (Langer, 1987). These findings indicate that while changes are necessary for some students, traditional learning approaches (such as that recommended by the New Zealand education authorities in the teaching of English) still are valid and should be regarded as important.

Meanwhile, the increased failure in education amongst many Polynesian students in New Zealand was the reason why the government of New Zealand considered more changes to be made in its education system (Ministry of Education, 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006). According to past research, recognising the students' traditional learning approaches, culture and language are appropriate in understanding learning needs. Reports by the Ministry of Education of New Zealand (2006; 2007; 2008) have indicated that many Māori and other ethnic minority students in New Zealand were encouraged to learn and understand their native languages to assist their understanding of English and many have been successful as a result. Earlier research by Benton (1970) indicated that a native language assists the understanding of English particularly for the ethnic students who have English as a second language. This approach was significant in the success achievement of ethnic students in the USA and other countries (Richard, 1970). Richard also suggested that native languages can assist ethnic minority students in the learning of subjects such as social studies or history – that is, ethnic minority students' native languages can be used to describe cultural contexts particularly when they are studying their own cultures, and this approach motivates them in their learning. Such a development has been appropriate for many Pacific Islanders because they finally have the chance to learn their native language and culture in the New Zealand context.

Some researchers (Esera, 2001; Iata, 2001; Mitchell, McGee, Moltzen & Oliver, 1993) have investigated the role of language and culture in successful achievement and their studies revealed that students' cultures can assist in

understanding their learning needs. The teaching of indigenous languages by teachers from minority groups who understand these languages was identified as an appropriate approach to achieve this (Fusitua & Coxon, 1998). This practice has been successful in New Zealand where the Ministry of Education recommended the employment of teachers from minority groups to teach subjects such as social studies and history in their own languages (Ministry of Education, 2007) and this assisted with development of confidence and esteem. Minority students' cultures and language became part of multicultural approaches in education as these have been viewed as one option to address the difficult situation faced by many Polynesian students in New Zealand. A report by the Ministry (Ministry of Education, 2008) revealed that the achievement rate of Pacific students improved significantly. This further highlighted the need for minority cultures to be part of educational policies and practices throughout many schools in New Zealand.

The changes as mentioned earlier in this section highlighted the need for Samoan and other Pacific Island cultures to develop in New Zealand. *Aoga Amata* (preschools) was established emphasising the need for young Samoans (aged 2 years) to learn *fa'asamoa* (Livingstone, 1991; Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001). An investigation by the Ministry of Education (2003) had clearly identified that infants' communication skills can be improved if they are taught at the early stage of life to communicate in their own language in school. Minority groups' languages have now become an important part of learning in New Zealand. Bates and Codd (1980) noted that ethnic groups such as the Chinese, Cook Islanders, Niueans and Samoans in New Zealand have established their own language institutions because of the need for their students to understand them as well as their understanding of English. These training centres also help people to understand their native language and to assist them with self-esteem and identity. Benton (1970) noted that there are unique meanings of the traditions of *fa'asamoa*; only through practice can Samoans understand their meanings. For example, church and family protocols are crucial in *fa'asamoa* and Samoans must act and behave accordingly to understand their meanings and values (Pasikale, 1996). These findings imply that the students' cultural backgrounds are

important to the development of approaches and practices for Samoans and other Polynesian students.

An understanding of other factors beyond the immediate research on Samoans is also important. For example, another important factor identified by Gruber (1981) and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) for all students is teacher creativity. These commentators held that teachers' understanding of students is the key to how they approach students, which means that effective creative teachers are those who understand their students. However, according to Vialle, Lysaght and Verenikina (2005), students themselves can contribute to this by being self-regulated, and well organised. This implies that there is a link between motivation and being well organised – that is, organised and well planned work lead to positive attitudes (Bell, 2000; Mable, 1990; Pasikale, Wang & Apa, 1998).

The recognition that the Ministry of Education has given to the cultural and personal needs in education has been seen as a step forward for many learners. One of the reasons given why Samoan students continue to fail in their education was that their parents had a somewhat limited education themselves and that they raised their children according to *fa'apalagi* ways, which in some respects did not help their children (Roberts, 1999). These children were encouraged to speak English only by their parents because employment in New Zealand did not require *fa'asamoa* or the Samoan language (Pasikale, 1996).

Robert's (1999) overlooked an important point relevant to Pasifika students. Research by Meleisea (1987) indicated that although many Samoans had limited education, they understood *fa'apalagi* because they were exposed to it in Samoa. Most of these people practiced many *fa'apalagi* traditions before immigrating to New Zealand, and they understood the advantage of this culture (Meleisea, 1987). A review report by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2003) reported that many Pasifika students passed school examinations, and these students came from families who had limited understanding of English. What is unique about these students is that they were aware of their parents' limited education and were motivated to finding ways to assist their learning and developments of their families (Tamati,

1983). Robert's (1999) findings could be accurate for some Samoans however, not all Samoans are the same as indicated by Meleisea. These findings can be added to Robert's findings to be accountable for all Samoans.

Another pointer to be considered for development of Samoans in New Zealand is that some Samoan parents feel ashamed if their children are called 'ESL' (English as a Second Language) students (Woodlay, 1988). It can be argued that the influence of these parents upon many young Samoans who come to believe English is better than *fa'asamoa*, but this also affected their understanding of *fa'asamoa* and, more significantly, had a negative influence on their educational achievement (Pasikale, 1996).

### **The Impact of the Samoan Way on Samoan Students**

The Samoan way in New Zealand needs to be better understood and this would assist with the development of educational approaches and methods. Research relating to the lifestyles of minority groups in other countries can provide some guidelines on the Samoans' life in New Zealand. For example, Harris (1990), Partington (1998) and Hughes and More (1993) investigated the life of the Aborigines in Australia and found that these people had their own approaches for life improvement. Many noted that in education, they used natural resources, indigenous learning approaches, native teachers and language in subject areas. The study of the Afro-Americans in America by Patrick and Roche (1994) viewed political influence as another factor toward life improvement for these people. According to Patrick and Roche the Afro-Americans' representatives in Congress assisted in the development of these people. They voiced the need for improvement in the social, educational, economic areas relating to the life of the black communities, and that was significant in the development of the Afro-American communities. Tupuola (1996) pointed out that Samoans have their own approaches and methods of adjusting to the culture and lifestyle of New Zealand, but their approaches and methods have created unacceptable challenges for others (Tupuola, 1996). This section discusses Samoan approaches and the impact of *fa'aleaiga* and *fa'amatai* on the development of Samoans in New Zealand. However, these approaches benefited some Samoans in some areas, but also provided negative results for some.

Macpherson, Spoonley and Anae (2001) studied the lifestyle of Samoans and other Polynesian people in New Zealand and noted that many young Samoans have challenged *fa'amatai* because they believe their own views represent the modern world and that they should be recognised. However, according to Tupuola (1996), many young Samoans in New Zealand challenged *fa'amatai* because they felt left out and wanted to understand it (Araki, 2003; Tiatia, 2001). The *fa'amatai* is made up of a specific (deep) Samoan dialect and customs and only the *matai* (who are familiar with the history of traditions and their connections to land and seas) understand it. It is so hard to understand that many Samoans referred to such a dialect as the Shakespearean version of *fa'asamoa* (Tupuola). Many young Samoans have always wanted their ideas to be part of *fa'amatai* to make it easier for them to understand it (Tupuola, 1996). As pointed out by Samuelu (cited in Araki, 2003) young Samoans' views should be recognised in decision-making and other *matai* traditions because they are easily understood by many young Samoans who are the future of Samoa. Their ideas also provide new dimension for the development of *fa'asamoa* in modern society (Araki).

However, according to Tiatia (2001), the values of *fa'asamoa* are more important than the traditional views and thoughts of *matai* and many young Samoans are keeping Samoan values although they do not entirely understand the *fa'amatai*. Tiatia also pointed at how *fa'asamoa* was passed on from generation to generation. However, she lacked the understanding of how modern ideas were injected to *fa'asamoa* to enhance its values. Modernising *fa'asamoa* is not as simple as Tiatia believed. It is a process involving the restructuring of policy, protocols, history and so on (Tupuola, 1996). In the past Samoans often celebrate the acceptance of new ideas via songs, poems and customs. There are many Samoan songs, poems, customs indicating how the new ideas were incorporated in *fa'asamoa* and these were carefully undertaken because of the need to preserve Samoan values (Tupuola, 1996). Other observers including Araki (2003) and Levine (2003) noted that *fa'asamoa* has always involved changes (injection of modern ideas) but they did not elaborate on how changes occurred in *fa'asamoa* and many young Samoans such as Tiatia have been misunderstood by it. These findings imply that it is important for young



Samoans to understand the value of traditions to know how ideas were accepted and injected in *fa'asamoa* to enhance its values (Tupuola, 1996). When these are understood by young Samoans they will be aware of the value of their ideas and more so, the importance of *fa'asamoa*. Field (1984) and Fairbairn-Dunlop, and Makisi, (2003) also reported that *fa'asamoa* in New Zealand was encouraged because Samoans are a proud race and that they re-established and re-affirmed their status as Samoans in New Zealand by preserving their traditional values. This was something many were unable to achieve in Samoa because of the overwhelming power of the *matai* (Tupuola, 1996). It appears that the conflict between the *matai* and many young Samoans arise as a result of misunderstanding.

A review by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2003) and research by Keesing (1934) reported that many Samoans have faced difficulty because of the difference in circumstances in New Zealand. Many parents and *matai* retreated to *fa'aleaiga* to try and solve problems that they faced, but that has only created more problems. For example, in some families, children had little time to socialise with their friends because they were given full responsibility for cooking, cleaning, ironing and much more while their parents spent most of their time working.

The reports by Keesing (1934) and Ministry of Education (2003) did not explore *fa'aleaiga* (family customs) and hence they lacked information relating to the influence of *fa'aleaiga* to many Samoans which is one of the most important influences of *fa'asamoa*. *Fa'aleaiga* is a tradition where all family members must contribute (for example donations and time) for the well-being and development of *aiga* (Aiono, 1996). Such a tradition has special meanings to many Samoans. It involves traditions such as working together as a unit, sharing and helping one another in terms of ideas, money, food, clothes, beliefs and so on. Counselling and worshipping together encourages the following of the protocols of the *fa'asamoa*. *Fa'aleaiga* also brings members together and encourages family links, identity and self-esteem. To a casual observer, these traditions can be easily misinterpreted because other societies also follow similar family tradition. It is crucial to note the significance of *fa'aleaiga* to the lives of many Samoans – that is, such a tradition has spiritual, socio-economical, political, philosophical and

psychological links and these are unique to them factors (Aiono). This means that it is important to note in detail the significance of *fa'aleaiga* to the lives of Samoans to assist in the understanding of these people and even more so, the development of educational approaches for them. To many Samoans living abroad, *fa'aleaiga* is the foundation of *fa'asamoa* (Tupuola, 1996). This implies that *fa'aleaiga* will always be part of life for many Samoans.

It is clear that the reports (Keesing, 1934; Ministry of Education, 2003) described *fa'aleaiga* as a negative force and that is was not accurate. Levine's (2003) dissertation however indicates that many Samoans understand their roles in *aiga* – that is, young Samoans are responsible for cooking, washing, cleaning and house keeping while their parents are the breadwinners and decision-makers. Many young Samoans in New Zealand accept their responsibilities in *aiga* because it is traditional to them and as it shows respect to their parents and God (Aiono, 1996). Many young Samoans are aware of their parents' commitments and sacrifices and they undertake their family responsibilities seriously to please their parents. Many of young Samoans believe obedience and working hard in family are repayments of their parents' efforts and sacrifice for them (Levine, 2003). These traditions of *aiga* have been misinterpreted by observers as they believed many young Samoans are being slaved in their *aiga* and may not get the same opportunity as many *papalagi* because of that. As stated earlier, it is important to note that for many Samoans, their family and cultural traditions are important to them. They can be of great assistance promoting self-esteems and educational approaches to motivate Samoans.

Even some New Zealand authorities, they believed that *fa'aleaiga* had a negative consequence in some areas of life for Samoans in New Zealand. For example the New Zealand government established a housing policy enforcing a limit on the number of people living in a house (Morrison, 1995), one family per house. However, many Samoans and other Pacific Islanders appeared to rely more on their *fa'aleaiga* despite the change and many benefited from it for example they visited each other to offer assistance and so on. The researcher noted that in his *aiga* in South Auckland, many of his aunts and uncles have shared food, clothes, money, housing and ideas when they encountered economic difficulties. He has also noted that many of his

church members have done the same. This may imply that *fa'aleaiga* is still a significant force in the lives of many Samoans in New Zealand. *Fa'aleaiga* is indeed the approach many Samoans understood and they utilised it to resolve the difficulties they have encountered (Tupuola, 1996). It can be argued that some parents who could not provide lunch or other requirements for their children as pointed out by some observers did not function within their *fa'aleaiga*. They would have been helped out by other family members had they been functioning as part of their *fa'aleaiga*. This has also been experienced in America when migration to America increased, creating major economic and educational problems forcing many immigrants to be separated from their extended families to live in ghettos and the poorer suburbs of American cities. The children's self-esteem was severely affected by their low standard of living (Chester & Cave, 1981). Many Samoans would have faced the same problems as the Afro-Americans if they had not used the *fa'aleaiga* (family ties) to solve the problems they faced in New Zealand. *Fa'aleaiga* emphasises the importance of the value (*alofa*) of *fa'asamoa* to these people.

Although *fa'aleaiga* faced challenges in New Zealand it has been successfully utilised by many which assisted their development. This research acknowledges how *fa'aleaiga* was utilised by Samoan people given the challenges they faced. Research (Ministry of Education, 2001: 2003) noted *fa'aleaiga* faced some difficulties in New Zealand for some. For example, some Samoans tried to solve economic difficulties via *fa'aleaiga*, but due to the different circumstances (health and political policies) of New Zealand such an approach would no be an easy road to achieve success. For example, according to New Zealand housing and health policies, a certain number of people are allocated to a dwelling (New Zealand Health Department, 2001) – such a policy limited the opportunity for many Samoan families to utilise *fa'aleaiga* as they could not allocate room to facilitate the other family members. According to the New Zealand Health Department, over-crowding could create poor living conditions and could cause diseases. The Statistics New Zealand (2006) report stated that many Samoans and Pasifika people were allocated to state houses because of the need to resolve overcrowding in single dwellings. However Morrison (1995) has

noted that such a policy did not stop the practice of *fa'aleaiga*. For example, although many Pacific Island families live in the state housing areas of Porirua, Mangere and Otara and the influence of their *fa'aleaiga* has always been the main factor of their development. Many Samoans still managed to help one another financially, spiritually and so on. How these people utilised *fa'aleaiga* in the New Zealand context is important for this research – it provides an understanding of the appropriate educational approaches for them.

### **Changes in Family Traditions in New Zealand**

The changes in Samoan family traditions in New Zealand are similar to the changes in family traditions of other minority groups in other countries. For example, Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore, (1991) and Shotton, Oosahwe, Cintron (2007) found that the Asian people in the USA have altered family traditions which assisted their development as well as strengthening their family ties. They shared ideas and supported one another in their family relationship. Normally family ties for these people in their home countries are restricted within their immediate families. However, in the USA extensive family ties to extended families benefited them more. In Tonga, many Asian immigrants work in extended family units which assisted the economic and educational lives. Sione Latu, a Tongan church leader reported that the Chinese people in Tonga worked in large family units to develop in Tonga and they have been successful through that approach (Sione Latu, personal communication, January 2 2007). In New Zealand, many Samoans have altered family traditions to assist their developments. Some families have incorporated some New Zealand cultural traditions for example allowing the young people to voice their views in family affairs such as conversations, planning and so on (Fuimaono, 2001: Tiatia, 2001). These researchers noted that while altering family traditions was necessary to adapt to life in New Zealand for many Samoans it has also strengthened their *fa'aleaiga* considerably. According to them, many Samoans are identified by family names and it is obligatory to ensure that the individual only attracts honour to the family name. Tupuola (1996) pointed out that for Samoans to maintain the good name of their families they must act and behave according to the values of *fa'asamoa* in *aiga*. As was pointed out to the researcher by

Tupuola, *aiga* is based on Christian guidelines such as responsibilities to parents, obedience to parents, elders and other family members, *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *fa'asamoa* (language), and respect for God (Fairbairn & Makisi, 2003). The studies of these minority groups have emphasised important points to assist educational development for these people today. First, culture is important for direction and purpose, and secondly, changes or alteration can be made to cultural traditions if necessary.

There is a growing belief amongst some Samoan community leaders that change in *aiga* traditions is necessary. For example, in a seminar at the Seventh Day Adventist church in Porirua 15<sup>th</sup> April 2004, Etuati Erika a minister of the church identified several factors indicating that some changes are required in *aiga* because of many young people leaving it. According to him, parents have always been strict with their children in instructing them to follow the basic traditions of *fa'asamoa* in *aiga* and not listening to these young people views. In fact some of these children believe that their individual rights are being restricted and in some cases they argue back (O'meara, 1990). Mageo (1998) also researched *aiga* and the lives of young Samoans today, has found that sometimes some influences of *aiga* impacted negatively on many young Samoans particularly those who are traditional. He indicated that the views of many young Samoans are not recognised by their families particularly those who follow the traditional culture – that is because in *fa'asamoa*, only the views of parents and senior members are recognised (Tupuola, 1996).

Not all agree with the advantages of change however. For example, many Samoans (particularly some parents and *matai*) have shown their concern about the growing influence of modern ideas on their children and some parents blame modern changes as the cause of conflict between themselves and their children.<sup>4</sup> Tupuola (1996) indicated that many Samoan parents and *matai* were worried that their children were starting to adopt new ideas before they thoroughly understand their *fa'asamoa*. He believed that it is crucial for Samoans to fully understand *fa'asamoa* to be able to incorporate new ideas

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<sup>4</sup> Radio Samoan discussed during a radio talk-back programme the schooling of Samoan students in the greater Wellington area. Many responded with their concerns about the negative influence of modern ideas on traditional approaches.

to enhance Samoan values. He added that, the Samoans who practice new ideas (e.g., *fa'apapalagi*) and do not fully understand either the *fa'asamoa* or *fa'apalagi* may get confused in life. Understanding *fa'asamoa* assists Samoans with regard to direction and identity.

This section of the literature review discussed *fa'aleaiga* in New Zealand and how it was utilised by many Samoans to adapt to the condition of New Zealand. Some changes in *faaleaiga* strengthened family ties which were the keys to the improved self-esteem and confidence of the many students. This adaptation is explained in Lewis's (2002) definition of culture, where culture is determined and driven by changing circumstances. As indicated earlier, the changing circumstances of many Samoans in New Zealand has led to the changes in some aspect of *fa'asamoa* and many Samoan people believe they have moved forward by adopting new ideas (Tiatia, 2001). For example, the recognition of the young people's rights and needs by their parents, churches and communities and these changes are considered important aspects for their education. Berk (2000), an education psychologist elaborated on the importance of recognising young peoples' views for their development. He stated that recognising young people's views helps develop their discipline (respect for others), confidence and their understanding of the world. Individuals are more encouraged, confident and considerate particularly when their ideas are accepted and recognise as part of their learning. What emerges strongly from this is that people must learn to adapt by utilising the ideas they are more familiar with in order to fully understand others and the world they live in and achieve a satisfactory adjustment to it.

### **Samoan Church Communities in New Zealand**

The position and role of Samoan churches in New Zealand is relevant to the discussion of Samoan family life in New Zealand and many other aspects of Samoan life as discussed earlier. This is because both *fa'asamoa* and family life are greatly influenced by the churches. Many Samoans in New Zealand are affiliated to their churches and their life is based on church policies and teachings (Taulealeausumai, 1997). An understanding of the church life of these people assists in the understanding of their views regarding success in education.

Currently in New Zealand, 99.2% of Samoans are still affiliating with their churches (Statistics New Zealand 2006). Many families keep their church traditions and are dedicated to their church's welfare through donations of money or labour and participation in Sunday or Sabbaths (Saturday) services (Tupuola, 1996). Jung's (1969) discussion of religious traditions and beliefs is relevant with regard to the church life of Samoans. He indicated that religious people established beliefs, notions and culture based on popular stories, events and heroes which their life principles are based upon.

Many Samoans are guided by their church principles and doctrines which are the foundation of their identities. For example, Samoans are dedicated to their churches because they are taught that it is their service to God that assists the development of their churches (O'meara, 1990). Church doctrines also encouraged members to respect the church ministers, *matai*, parents and others (O'meara, 1990) meaning that all members are taught to respect one another including the children.

However, even though church leaders have accepted new ideas in the development of their churches, the human rights policies of New Zealand pose difficulties to many Samoan churches. The rights of the individual have become the main excuse for some young Samoan people to separate from their church communities (O'meara, 1990). This move has been significantly damaging to the church principles which are important parts of fa'asamoa, particularly the authority of matai, church leaders and parents (Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001). Many young people have decided to leave their church to join churches where they felt more comfortable. Some families who experienced the pressure from the fa'alavelave fa'alelotu (church affairs such as church offerings) also changed allegiances by choosing churches they believed did not impose the same financial demands (Taulealeausumai, 1997). He added that the conflicting views amongst church members has encouraged many church leaders and matai to consider the views of all church members more frequently in the administration of their churches.<sup>5</sup> The movement of many young Samoans to attend other palagi churches has contributed to this development.

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<sup>5</sup> Su'a discussed at a youth conference in Porirua 2005, the development of the church in New Zealand in relation to the role of church members.

The review by the Ministry of Education of New Zealand in 1992 emphasised the importance of recognising people's rights. This policy has been an advantage to some Samoans particularly the young Samoans because it recognises their rights. Although such a policy was not accepted in *fa'asamoa* in the past (Tupuola, 1996), many have considered it as a useful policy for future development of the culture because many students have benefited from it. Such a policy has encouraged communications and understanding between family and church members which assisted many students' confidence and self-esteem. For some, the individual right policy of New Zealand motivated them to display unacceptable behaviours such as disrespecting parents, church and community leaders or even breaking the law. The Ministry of Education review found out that the problem was caused by a lack of understanding by many young Samoans of the rights policy of New Zealand. Therefore, it encouraged the teaching of such a policy in schools and communities.

In realising the importance of churches to many Samoans, the Ministry of Education chose them as the forum for teaching Samoans about government's policies (Popo Su'a, personal communication, October 15, 2003). Departments such as the police, health, and social welfare often sent their representatives to conduct seminars in churches where they believe Pacific Island people consider matters seriously (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

Many church leaders in New Zealand have started to recognise the importance of respecting all church members, as they realise the importance of that in the future development of their churches and that by respecting the views of all members this motivates them to participate in church development. Tiatia (2001) argued that many young Samoan will contribute in church activities and sermons if they are part of decision-making and other leadership roles in their churches. Pasikale, Wang and Apa (1998) indicated that in the past, many young people of their churches felt that they were not loved because the older members showed no respect for them. Now, because many of the older members have shown respect for the younger members this has contributed to the growing interest of many young people in church services and activities.



Many Samoans are also encouraged to take part in the development of their churches because they have to obey God. Many Samoans believe that church pastors are the mouthpieces of God and they must obey them at all times (Taulealeausumai, 1997). It is believed that many church pastors have stopped being the sole leaders of their churches because they believe the voice of God is also revealed through the views of church members (Taulealeausumai). Many pastors are from communicating with family and community leaders and other church members about the developments of their churches (O'meara). Many church pastors have also noted that individual member's success (for example, educational and professional) are important to the developments of their churches and they have shown a positive attitude toward educational and professional developments of church members particularly that of the young people (Meleisea, 1987).

Anae (2002) in her study of Samoans in New Zealand discloses that many young Samoans in New Zealand have established a strong sense of identity because they are involved in their churches. Some, although they are not involved in their churches, still held a strong sense of identity because of the recognition of that young people's views in the running of their churches. It is believed the influence of other ethnic people has also motivated many of young Samoans to hold on to their church identities (Pasikale, Wang & Apa, 1998). These people's identities can be used as a means to motivate students (Piaget, 1950).

While many Samoans considered the freedom of expression as an advantage, it may have impacted upon some of the traditions of *fa'asamoa*, particularly the Samoan notion of hierarchy. Anae (2002) pointed out that the place of dignity, power and prestige in the *fa'asamoa* faced challenge. Those low status individuals (Samoans without chief titles or lineage) would have no chance to obtain higher ranks because of this division in *fa'asamoa*, and it seemed to them that they would have to spend their lifetime being servants to their chiefs if they continued living in Samoa (Tupuola, 1986). Now many Samoans having gained a greater understanding of human rights believe that they have the right to challenge the higher status ranks (Tiatia, 2001). It is important to understand these characteristics of some Samoans because they would impact on the behaviour and views of some young Samoans.

It is important to note that although many changes have occurred in many Samoan churches the practice of Samoan traditional learning and teaching approaches are still encouraged and these have been significant in the methods favoured by these people in school (O'meara, 1990). Traditions such as rote learning and observation, group learning and one-on-one tutoring are required by the churches to assist in the preservation of their principles and teaching. For example, in Sunday schools, Samoans are encouraged to remember church rules and principles based on the Ten Commandment. Rote learning is also used in the learning of scriptures, hymns and speeches (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). Characteristics such as being humble, being fair, being patient, being peaceful, obedient and so on are also strongly supported by church communities (Mulitalo-Lauta). These characteristics of Samoans have also been noted by Jones (1991) in her research of Samoan secondary students in New Zealand but have been misinterpreted by many who believed that some Samoans were slow learners and less talented than the *palagi* students (Jones, 1991). These cultural characteristics are unique to these people and an understanding of them can assist educational development for Samoans. These findings can assist in the understanding of these students in relation to their cultural backgrounds, skills, language, approaches, interest, belief and other characteristics that might be useful in the development of educational approaches for them.

The findings as mentioned in this section indicate that Samoans in New Zealand have different perspectives of *fa'asamoa*. The development of Samoan churches in New Zealand has revealed the perceptions of Samoans regarding church life. Although the churches have changed and some people have changed allegiance to other denominations, many still maintain a religious connection and identity. This is the basis of *olaga fa'alelotu* or *fa'asamoa* (church life) amongst many young Samoans today and this appears have been accepted by some church leaders and parents. This changed behaviour was discussed by Eckerman (1994) and Jung (1969) who noted that influences on the human mind shape and are sometimes transformed by forces generated from within the group environment as well as from outside pressures. In this context, the external forces such as the

culture and equal right policy of New Zealand have impacted on the development of Samoan churches in New Zealand and the decisions of many young Samoans to leave their churches. Samoans have different views regarding church life and spirituality, and these are reflected in the way they think and believe (Dunlop & Makisi 2003).

There is a growing interest about the significance of spirituality in education in the world (Vialle, Lysaght & Verenikina 2005). According to these researchers, spirituality is an important aspect of humanity – spirituality relates to belief and mindset, meaning that everyone has spirituality. For Samoans, their spiritual life in relation to churches indicates who they are and this is an important point for educators to understand. This can assist in the development of educational approaches for Samoan students.

### **Development of New Zealand Education and Influence on Samoans in New Zealand**

The development of New Zealand education in the 20th Century is recognised as the benchmark for further developments in education (Sullivan, 1998). The New Zealand authorities were aware that education can assist in the development of other imperatives such as the social, economic and political status of the individual (Thrupp, 1999). According to these academics, the New Zealand government authorities emphasised the importance of having qualified teachers, doctors, lawyers and so on to assist New Zealand's development. They also emphasised the importance of having a successful and quality education system to promote New Zealand. A quality education system would attract immigrants to be educated in New Zealand promoting New Zealand's education, culture and image throughout the world (Thrupp). Importance was placed on improving education approaches applicable for Māori and Pasifika students because many did not achieve as well as the *papalagi* students. In Warner's (1980) research of the education system of New Zealand, she found that the New Zealand education system was predominantly British, which focused mainly on promoting teacher performances instead of students, and many *papalagi* achieved well via such an approach but not the Māori and Pasifika students. It is believed that many *papalagi* have been successful via the teacher-centred approach because it was based on the *palagi* culture (Warner 1980).

A student-centred approach was emphasised by the New Zealand Ministry of Education because it promotes students' cultures and interests. Approaches have also been successful in education of many countries (Warner). The New Zealand Ministry emphasised the importance of teachers' understanding of students' cultures for the success of the student-centred approach and provide learning environments related to students' cultures by teachers (Warner). It is believed that students' needs are situated within their cultures and the student-centred approach would adequately support them. Teachers must therefore understand students' cultures to fully understand their learning needs. In summing up Warner indicated that while culture is important in identifying students' needs, educators must be aware of changes in culture that may impact upon needs and beliefs.

The student-centred approach continued to be the foundation of New Zealand education in the 21st Century however it was not producing the expected results (Openshaw, 1993). One of the most significant changes made recently to address this problem is the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy which considered the education of Polynesian students.

### **The Tomorrow's School System**

In 1995 the New Zealand government, after its review of the School Sector Report (Ministry of Education, 2003) became more aware of the deteriorating situation facing many Polynesian students in New Zealand and immediately explored the problem. A group named Achievement Initiative in Multicultural High School (AIMHI) was established to monitor the progress of these students. The objective of AIMHI was to report on the causes of low achievement, which included factors such as low living standards, cultural misunderstanding, lack of homework, poor learning skills and poor understanding of English. These were identified as likely variables. The continuing poor results amongst Pacific Island students eventually motivated educators and government policy makers of New Zealand to work to resolve the problem.

Other research reports relating to New Zealand education have identified other weaknesses of New Zealand education system and approaches which further promoted a need for change. Thrupp (1999) research in the late 20th

Century into the education of Pacific students in New Zealand showed that some teaching approaches were unsuitable because Pasifika students did not benefit from them. As suggested earlier for most of the 20th Century the predominant teaching approach was teacher-centred and many Pasifika students were disadvantaged by this (Thrupp). Although the student-centred approach was part of the curriculum teachers' assumption was still a dominant force and thus the approach was not effectively applied (Thrupp). Many teachers therefore assumed what students need.

The New Zealand authorities initiated the Tomorrow's School system to assist educational developments of all students in New Zealand. The system included the government of New Zealand acting as the provider while parents and teachers form Boards of Trustees (BOT) to administer the schools. This system however had an inherent weakness – the government still outlined the objectives to be met (Thrupp, 1999) and these were not necessarily objectives that would meet the needs of diverse groups. The BOT members were supposed to represent the voices of their own groups, and in the meetings they may discuss local issues. However, it was noted that their main goal was to achieve the objectives as set out by the government. Many students failed as a result because they were learning concepts they were not familiar with. The government allocated funds to school however, funds were based on the school roll – those with bigger rolls were allocated more funds and less on the others with small rolls. The Pasifika oriented schools were however disadvantaged by such an approach because they often had small rolls and did not have the funds to facilitate their learning. As a result many students struggled in their studies due to resource inadequacy (Thrupp). Some students failed because the Tomorrows School system relied on the views of parents and community leaders as the main sources to understand students' learning needs but these views did not always accurately describe their children's needs (Iata, 2001). According to Bronfenbrenner (1990) individuals interactions with their environment determine their needs and only they would understand the nature of their interactions with their environments. It means that students have clear views and understandings of their needs. It was also noted by Thrupp that changes

could make this system effective for example the BOT needed more authority to meet special needs.

Thrupp (1999) has overlooked the advantage of teacher-centred approach to some students. Anae (1972; 2002), Levine (2003) and Tiatia (2001) research related to Samoans in New Zealand and noted that many Samoans adapted favourably to some changes because they are familiar with them – they practiced these approaches in Samoa. Many Samoan and other Pasifika students have been successful via the teacher-centred approach because they were more accustomed to it – many of these students practice *fa'asamoa* at home (Iata, 2001). The New Zealand Ministry of Education review reports (1999; 2000; 2003) pointed out that many Samoan students passed school examinations with high grades under the New Zealand education old system (teacher-centred approach) which means that for some Samoans, the teacher-centred approach assisted their development. For teachers to effectively apply this approach for Polynesian students in New Zealand, teachers must understand how it is applied in the students' cultures first (Ministry of Education, 1992; 2003; 2007).

Barrington (1992) researched changes in the New Zealand school system in the late 20th Century and found that the Tomorrow School concept was accepted by the New Zealand authorities because they believed it would benefit the New Zealand government more than the individual. The Tomorrow's School approach was seen as a vehicle to deliver its socio-economic and political objectives (Barrington) and enabled the delivery of the government's policies. This approach also enabled the collection of funds to facilitate the government's needs (Barrington). The concept was also utilised by the New Zealand government to control funds for the schools. Barrington believed that the way in which the New Zealand education authorities managed the Tomorrow School approach reflected a mono-cultural nature of New Zealand. He believed that some New Zealanders still believe success is through the host country's' culture. These findings however, indicate important pointers for future development, including the notion that the Tomorrow's School concept can be more effective if it focuses mainly on meeting students' learning needs. When students learning need are met, government's desires will be fulfilled.

There are aspects of the Tomorrow School system that can assist some Samoans. One of them was a partnership between schools, students and parents and communities which was important to the understanding of students' learning needs. BOT members should participate in school operations such as management committees, policy-making, staff appointments and other areas of school. Students also sit on the BOT and may have shown interest in teaching and learning strategies, homework, school rules and so on. This shared responsibility approach helps to give parents confidence in their children's schools (Livingstone, 1997).

### ***The Changes to the Tomorrow's Schools Education System of New Zealand***

Following a number of educational reviews, changes were made to the Tomorrow's School system. Reports from AIMHI suggested more changes should be made in educational approaches. The AIMHI reports (Ministry of Education, 1999; 2002, 2003; Pasikale, 1996) suggested that regular reviews should be made to take account of changes in society that continued to influence the lives and beliefs of the people. Other commentators when discussing low achievement by Pacific Island students identified a need for regular conferences with Pacific educators on Pacific educational issues. These conferences would help provide a better understanding of Pacific Island cultures and educational approaches for Pacific Island students.

As mentioned earlier, the AIMHI investigating groups also identified that student performance could be improved if teachers had a better understanding of the students' cultures (Ministry of Education, 2003). Following the AIMHI reports teachers in low decile schools were advised to put more emphasis on identifying the learners' learning needs (Livingstone, 1991). Pacific Island groups (e.g., Taumafai, Samoan Women's Association in Wellington and Taiala) in New Zealand have often indicated that one of the reasons for the high failure rate amongst Pacific Island students had been the extent to which many Pacific Island students were unfamiliar with the teaching methodologies, practices and resources. The investigation by Alton-Lee (2003) relating to educational approaches for diverse students in New Zealand suggested that the voices of the parents, teachers, community

members and students themselves are important for the learning needs of students. She suggests that they represent the culture of students.

The government was aware that the growing population of Pacific Island people in New Zealand could have a negative impact upon education and the economy of New Zealand. This trend encouraged further educational reviews of schools with high enrolments of Pacific Island students (mostly low decile schools) in New Zealand to monitor the learning needs of these students (Ministry of Education, 2003). The review by the Ministry of Education (2003) indicated that changes in New Zealand would affect these peoples' lives and their education, and suggested that reviews relating to these peoples' education be on a regular basis. This followed more education reviews (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2003) which had identified relevant areas for the development of education for Pacific Island students. These reports also emphasised the importance of successful educational achievement for the economy and education of New Zealand. Many of the schools concerned reflected the dominant role of the New Zealand culture in their operations. As stated earlier by Thrupp (1999) many New Zealand schools focussed on the issues that support *faapalagi* and not Pacific Island cultures and many Pasifika students were disadvantaged by it. It can be argued that many Pasifika students continue to fail because *faapalagi* remains the dominant force in their schoolings even in schools in when other cultures are strongly represented.

Part of the Tomorrow School system was that schools needed to establish their own charters based on their assessments and not the government's (Sullivan, 1998). However, further reviews by the Ministry of Education (2004, 2005, 2006) revealed that many Polynesian students were not benefiting from it. These reports identified low economic, poor health, over commitment to sports and cultural activities and less commitment to school work, limited understanding of English and poor social upbringing as one of the factors that led to failure of many Pasifika students. Other researchers have found that the factors such as those identified by the Ministry were not entirely the causes of failure amongst many Pasifika students (Codd, Harker & Nash, 1990: Scott, 1996: Thrupp, 1999). According to these academics although many Pasifika people are of low economic status, having poor health,



committed to their cultural and church affairs, and having English as the second language, many people still passed school examinations and have been successful in other life developments. According to them, the high failure rate in education amongst these people had been caused by a lack of understanding of Pasifika people and poor educational policies and approach. For example, school policies provided unbalanced programmes such as less emphasis on students' social upbringings, sports, cultures and more on academic subjects. It could be argued that policy makers (BOT) did not consider students' cultural and social backgrounds as important factors in education – understanding students cultural/social life would be of a great assistance to students' learning if they are acknowledged (Piaget, 1950). School charters have since been abolished because they did not meet the needs of students (Thrupp).

The educational zoning policy established by the New Zealand Ministry of Education can also be blamed for the high failure rate of Pasifika students. The zoning policy of New Zealand emphasised that all students must attend schools in their neighbourhood. Codd, Harker and Nash, (1990), Scott (1996) and Thrupp (1999) researched the zoning method used by the Ministry of Education and pointed out that it was not reducing the failure rate for Pacific Islanders. Having realised the poor reputations of the local schools (Porirua, Mangere, Otara, Otahuhu and others), many Pasifika parents either moved out of those areas or send their children to live with relatives living in the rich suburbs of New Zealand so they can be enrolled in the rich schools (Scott 1996). The reaction of these people led to a significant drop in the rolls of many schools in the Porirua and South Auckland areas (Scott). The increasing failure rate amongst Pacific Island students in the poorer areas of the main cities such as Auckland and Wellington raised questions about the adequacy of this policy. The rolls of the low decile schools became increased so as the demand for the resources to meet the learning needs of the students (Ministry of Education, 2000; 2003; 2005; 2006).

Many Pacific Island people believed that their children had been disadvantaged by the zoning approach. These people believed that zoning was racist and arrogant because it forced many Pacific Island students to attend poor schools in their own communities that are classified as the poor

areas of New Zealand.<sup>6</sup> For example, the schools in areas such as Otara, Mangere and Porirua were labelled low decile, and these schools were also identified as the schools with poor or low achievement records (Ministry of Education, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2003). There is a belief amongst many Samoans that enrolling their children at a high decile schools would assist their achievement where they could learn English from the *papalagi* students (O'meara, 1990). According to Tupuola (1986), many Samoan and other Polynesian parents did not support the zoning policy.

Toward the end of the 20th Century the Labour Government of New Zealand acknowledged that certain aspects of the education system were not benefiting all students. This has led to the de-zoning policy of schools. This however created other problems for schools, particularly in the poor areas of New Zealand. De-zoning effectively reduced the rolls of schools in poor areas, which also affected the achievement ratings in school examinations (Ministry of Education, 2003). The Pacific Island students who were moved by their parents to different schools were often the more capable students, and their removal effectively lowered the success rate for these schools even more in school examinations. These people believed that the wealthier schools were better equipped to teach their children (Thrupp, 1999). They also believed that the influence of *papalagi* students would benefit their children (Duncan & Raudenbush (1999). However most of these schools were Pakeha orientated and were not fully resourced to cater for special needs and as a result many of the students ended up failing in spite of the move (Thrupp). Their failure could also be linked with their lack of representation on the BOT committees of their new schools.

However, the government of New Zealand supported the notion that the people should have the freedom to choose. De-zoning was viewed to be suitable because it encouraged a democratic choice for parents in the education of their children (Scott, 1996) but, the issues related to the education of Samoan students were not resolved, particularly the low achievement of many of these students (Ministry of Education, 2003). It is

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<sup>6</sup> In a Samoan community meeting at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Porirua in 2005, many parents expressed their concern about the negative choice of restricting their children in the schools in the Porirua area.

possible that schools in wealthier areas benefited more from de-zoning because many Samoan parents preferred to enrol their children in these schools and consequently gave them finances, student fees and other donations (Mamoe, 1999), while many poor schools continued to struggle with lack of finance for resources and even gifted students (Scott, 1996). The question needs to be asked whether zoning or de-zoning policies can be improved to benefit all students or should New Zealand education authorities consider alternative approaches.

This section examined the challenges facing Samoans and other Polynesian people in New Zealand, in relation to the changes that occurred in their lives and the impact of the changes on education. Some have found a way to break the barriers, but these are only the minority for example those with relatives residing in the rich areas can afford the school fees of those schools. For many, the 'blame' could be apportioned to the New Zealand government for not meeting the needs of these people. Also Pacific Island people were not prepared for the changes they experienced. The consequence was evident in the continuing low socio-economic status which is related to the low achievement in education.

### **Samoan Students in New Zealand Schools**

This section discusses significant aspects of the schooling of Samoan secondary students in New Zealand including teachers' understanding of students, teachers' expectations and social and cultural influences. These influences can assist in the understanding of Samoan students and the development of appropriate educational approaches and methods for them.

The problems facing many Samoans in New Zealand schools are similar to the problems encountered by many students in Conroy in the USA. A study by Carew and Lightfoot (1979) of education in the Conroy district found the schools established learning objectives based on the American ideal culture which did not recognise the students' culture. As a result many of the students struggled and failed examinations. Many of these students were exposed to teaching and learning approaches they did not understand. In Australia the Ministry of Education recommended that all schools should apply the same teaching and learning approaches but these proved to fail

many Aboriginal students as many Aboriginal students did not understand their teachers' ideas and could not understand learning concepts (Partington, 1998). According to Pasikale (1998), the problems facing many minority students can be best solved through the application of the appropriate teaching and learning approaches. An example of this was provided by Chin (1995) in her investigation of education of the Chinese communities in America. She pointed out that many Chinese students were accustomed to regular testing because it was an important part of the Chinese curriculum. When teachers incorporated this practice into the curriculum the students benefited.

In New Zealand, research by the Ministry of Education (2007) found that many Samoans and other Pacific students have improved significantly in their achievements because their views have been recognised by teachers and educators – programmes such as *Talanoa* (consultation) and *Team-up*. These programmes have been encouraged by the Ministry of Education to encourage this approach (Ministry of Education (2007). The programmes assisted in identifying students' academic and other potential, and more significantly they provided insight of what Pasifika students' really want. These programmes have also identified the different areas that the Pasifika students were interested in, which were also what they were potentially good at. While many students showed potential in academic areas, some were interested in social development such as sports, culture and church, and they wanted to pursue them to provide a better future for them and their families (Mamoe, 1999). Gardner (1999) pointed out that many students fail in their schoolings because teachers and educationists view success from a scholastics viewpoint and view success as academic excellence only. According to Mamoe success is about achieving satisfactory results in areas of interest. It should be about students reaching their potentials and goals and not just academic achievements (Gardner).

Researchers (Podmore & Wendt, 2006; Wendt, 2006) work into Samoa students in New Zealand revealed that *fa'asamoa* plays a significant role in the educational life of many young Samoans. Podmore and Wendt noted that Samoans are exposed to the culture of New Zealand outside their homes and church communities however, *fa'asamoa* has always been a foundation

in their mindset and that reflects their approaches to learning. For example, Wendt (2006) interviewed a few Samoan students regarding their educational life in New Zealand and found that *fa'asamoa* played a dominant role. She found out that these students did not debate issues or partake in group discussion because they are trained to listen to senior family members for direction and decision-making. Wendt (2006) also noted that that many young Samoans preferred the cooperative learning and teacher-centred approaches because these are encouraged in *aiga* and church communities. Research carried out by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (1996) revealed that in many *aiga* and Samoan communities in New Zealand, young Samoans are encouraged to learn *fa'asamoa* because it is an important aspect of their identity. The learning of the culture involves oral teaching and learning, more practical learning, teacher/student consultation and use of *fa'asamoa* in discussion.

Some Samoan students have different learning styles, and their approaches to learning are often reflections of their family influences. For example, Anae (1998) noted that some Samoan students were individualistic in nature and these students preferred to learn as individuals and chose not to partake in group tasks and activities. Anae noted that some Samoan families practice the individualistic culture of New Zealand and she believed that the nature of the New Zealand culture could have influenced these students. She also noted that some students believed church to be irrelevant for educational development (Anae). One important pointer arises from this and it is that family is the most significant factor in many Samoan students' lives. Educators must understand the students' family cultures to identify appropriate approaches for them.

These findings have led to the decision by New Zealand authorities to encourage family and community involvement in classroom learning and the running of the schools (Anae, 1998). As stated earlier, what was concerning some Samoans was that the teacher instructional teaching and learning benefited some students (Ministry of Education, 2003). However, education New Zealand has shifted away from this. It is possible that some of these students might find the transition hard to adjust to. However, the inclusion of family and/or community members in school operations could provide

assistance for them. What this means is that educators must recognise the students' learning styles and apply the appropriate approaches to facilitate them.

Samoans' 'natural' learning approaches, according to the New Zealand Ministry of Education (1996) and Podmore and Wendt (2006), have been significant in the improved achievement of many Samoan students in New Zealand. As indicated earlier by Jones, many Samoan and other Pacific students are not comfortable with learning and teaching approaches they do not understand. This indicates the need for traditional approaches for Samoan students in New Zealand.

The literature indicated three important issues for the development of education – firstly, the significance of traditional approaches for some minority students, secondly, the understanding by teachers of the students, and thirdly, the importance of students' views for their educational development.

### **Educational Achievement for Samoan and Pacific Students**

A statistical snapshot of the educational success rate of Pacific Island people in New Zealand schools is discussed in this section. It shows that the achievement rate of many Samoan students in the 20th Century and beginning of the 21st Century were low. Changes to the teaching and learning approaches are needed to benefit many students.

According to the School Certificate examination results in 1995, only 30% of Pacific Island students gained a pass of A, B, or C grades and this low level of achievement continued into the 6<sup>th</sup> form (now Level 12) (Pasikale, 1996). Pasikale (1996) also noted that in 1994, 20% of Pacific Island students left secondary schools without any qualification resulting in more of these students needing to enrol in bridging courses to equip them with job and cultural skills. A Ministry of Education report (2004) showed that the low pass rate in secondary school examinations in 1993 and 1994 was consistent with that of 2002, so that little if any improvement had taken place. In 2002, only 5% passed the New Zealand University Bursary and University entrance qualification, 15–20% passed higher school certificate, 25–27% gained 6th

form certificate, 14–23% school certificate and 24–30% gained no qualification. A Ministry of Education report (2006) showed an improvement in Pacific Island students' achievement rate and linked this to student participation in educational development programmes, and further improvement for the future was predicted. The New Zealand Qualification Authority report 2005–07 showed an improvement in Pasifika students' achievement (Ministry of Education, 2007). Accordingly, 30–40% Pasifika students passed NZEA (Years 10–13) examinations. The report by the Ministry in 2008 showed that many have left school with National Certificate Attainment Achievement (NCEA) level 1 or a higher qualification, which is an improvement compared to previous years (Ministry of Education, 2008). However, concern remains about the relative overall lack of achievement meaning that there was still a high proportion of failure amongst these students.

Although there has been an improvement in Pasifika success achievement the level of qualifications achieved by Samoans and other Pacific Islanders is still less than half the level for non-Pacific students. The Ministry of Education (2004) indicated that only 4% Pacific students were studying at the postgraduate level, compared to 8.6% *palagi*, 12.1% Asian, 3% Māori and 15% of students of other ethnic groups. Since 1997, this gap has remained constant. As of 2006 the New Zealand Ministry of Education showed only 6% Pacific Islanders attained a bachelor degree which is considerably lower than the percentage pass of the Asian, European and Māori students (Ministry of Education, 2006). This indicates that a large proportion of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand left school at the secondary level. Various factors can be linked to these students' early departure from schools and sport was viewed as the more prominent cause. The following section discusses the influence of sports in the lives of many young Samoans and impact on their education.

### **The Influence of Sports on Samoan students**

It is apparent to the casual observer in New Zealand that the influence of sport on Samoan people in New Zealand is significant and this has been viewed as a potentially relevant factor for the educational development. Many Samoans students dedicate most of their time and effort to sports rather than to academic study. Sporting nature and aspirations of Samoans is similar to

that of Black Americans (Taylor, 1999). Many Afro-American prefer to play basketball because basketball is one of the highest income earning sports in America and many young people compete to become NBA players. Many young Afro-American are motivated in the sport because their families support them. Their dream is to be professional basketball players and become rich and famous. Taylor (1999) who investigated the sporting life of these Afro-Americans indicated that they are proud people who would sacrifice time, effort and money to achieve their goals. To these people, success in sport brings honour, wealth and prestige. Their aspirations for success in this field seem more achievable than in the academic arena. Like many Samoans, many young Afro-Americans preferred to go to colleges to learn how to play basketball at a higher level, and are often backward in academic subjects. These institutions also encouraged sporting skills and paid less or no attention to academic learning for many Afro-American students. This suggests that many black American students have been accepted by schools only to enhance their reputation.

Taylor (1999) believed sports' influence has been one of the causes of failure in academic performances for many students. His view of success was influenced by a scholastic perspective which overlooks other areas of human development. For example, Gardner (1993) indicated earlier that students' talents are what educators should look at to identify their strengths. He indicated that teachers should encourage students to develop their strengths or areas they are strong in (Gardner). In light of these academics viewpoints Taylor's concept can be broadened to include other areas of life and not just academic performances. It is believed that students can transfer their knowledge and skills to enhance their academic developments (Gardner). For example, sports learning approaches can be utilised to assist classroom learning (Bandura, 1997). Another is that an educated mind leads to better decision which is required in sports (Bandura).

Although in relative terms few Samoans would earn a living from sport, for many Samoans in New Zealand rugby is the inspiration for them for a better future and indeed some have become All Black players, and role models for younger Samoans. In the rugby World Cup in Australia 2003 and 2007 Samoan players made up almost half of the All Blacks, and the current All



Black team (2008) has eight Samoans in it. Sports such as boxing, athletics, wrestling, cricket, softball, netball and rugby league also have a large number of Samoan participants. The 60 Minutes' programme on TVNZ 3 (28<sup>th</sup> October 2003) identified Pacific Island young people as dominating New Zealand sports because of their size, talent, ambition and passion. This is excellent for sports in New Zealand, but the Sports Federation of New Zealand also emphasised the importance of academic education not only to help sporting excellence, but acknowledged the need for these people to have a career to fall back on after their sporting activities have ended. Graham Henry, a former school principal and the current coach of the All Blacks noted a large number of young Polynesian rugby players in New Zealand had concentrated on rugby instead balancing it with academic pursuits, and he encouraged these rugby players to have a balance of sporting skill and academic attainment.

For many Samoans, the influence of the professional sporting federation in New Zealand has encouraged them to pursue a professional career in sport. Many young Samoans and other Pasifika students have neglected their schooling because of the temptation to become big earners through rugby and other sports to provide for their family and give it honour.<sup>7</sup> For example, Mulivai Sega (cited in the television programme *60 minutes* aired in 2003) a prominent Samoan rugby player in one of Auckland's secondary schools stated:

I want to continue playing rugby because my family encouraged me. My parents said that I must play professional rugby because I can make more money in rugby than working fulltime as an office worker or labourer. Rugby is the only thing I am good at therefore I want to pursue playing rugby hopefully to become an All Black in the future.

As stated earlier by Bandura (1997), sport can assist with the learning of skills and development of teaching methodology. Chester (1981) also noted that students could benefit from the sporting learning approaches in academic learning but they must understand how to apply them appropriately. Novitz and Willmott (1989) studied sport as a phenomenon in

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<sup>7</sup> According to the 60 Minutes TV 3 (28<sup>th</sup> October 2003), many young Samoans want to become famous rugby players and they are encouraged by their aiga (families) as rugby would help their families financially.

New Zealand and reported that parents support their children by watching, praising and cheering performance and this motivates the children. This has helped Samoans excel in their sport because they are a proud people (Levine, 2003) and many Samoans could indeed view this as a means of attaining pride, something that is not often achieved via educational outcomes. Sports bodies however have emphasised the significance of better education for the future of young sports people and sports in New Zealand. As Michael Jones stated in a speech in Wellington 2004, Samoan students can become enthusiastic learners, and do well in their schooling if they are positive (as in sport) and understand the benefits of a better education for their future. Being an outstanding rugby player in the past, Michael Jones stated however, that academic success is the more honourable than being a top sports person from a Samoan perspective. It promotes family name and self-esteem of all family members (Michael Jones, personal communication, 21 July, 2004).

Undoubtedly, sport is a favourite activity of many Samoan individuals. They are highly motivated by it and often achieve well. The lesson for academic pursuit is clear – educationists need to appreciate what motivates the individuals to achieve so well and use this as a model and then utilise similar approaches when appropriate to facilitate improved learning outcomes.

## **Renaissance of Pacific Education**

The renaissance of Pacific education could be viewed as a backward movement because of the reinstatement of traditional educational approaches. However, for many it is a positive step. According to Sullivan (1998), traditional education approaches are important to the development of Pacific Island students in New Zealand because they are familiar with them. Thaman (1996) indicated that a 'dual learning' setting was the approach recommended by the New Zealand Ministry of Education which enabled traditional Pasifika educational practices as part of learning for Pacific Island students in New Zealand. Dual learning requires schools to work cooperatively with the students' families. This approach played a significant role in the success of many students in the Pacific Islands. A homework centre approach was identified by Thaman as an important part of the dual learning. This approach assisted many Tongan students in their schooling in

Tonga and New Zealand (Sullivan, 1998). It provided them with the opportunity to apply their favoured learning styles. According to Thaman (1996), dual-learning approach would benefit many Pacific Island students because it recognises their learning needs.

Many Pacific Island students are familiar with their traditional approaches because they are encouraged in their families and churches (Pasikale, 1996) but changes in the New Zealand's education system implied that these students' traditional approaches were not required.

There have been mixed feelings among Pacific Islanders when New Zealand reformed its education system in the late 20th and 21st Centuries. According to Sullivan (1998), the New Zealand education authorities recommended a student-centred approach and the abolition of the School Certificate (SC) and University Entrance (UE) examinations. Many Pacific Island nations such as Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu and Niue decided to continue with the earlier New Zealand schooling system, a central control education system, because they believed the new system would have a negative impact on them. The changes made by New Zealand in its education system were considered by Pacific educators as inappropriate for education in the Pacific because they were not familiar to the students, and students were not motivated by it. For example, the student-centred approach introduced in the Cook Islands and Niue created problems for their people. Inexperienced teachers became involved in teaching and the students were not motivated to study hard. Many students were also defiant against teachers because they believed they also have the rights in the running of schools (Pasikale, 1998).

Many Pacific Island educators also questioned the significance of the reforms made to the educational system of New Zealand and have placed more emphasis on developing their own systems. Pacific Island nations agreed to form a committee known as the South Pacific Board of Education Assessment (SPBEA) in Suva Fiji which is now responsible for administering the South Pacific senior secondary school examinations (Sullivan 1998). This system is similar to the pre-reform education system of New Zealand where emphasis is placed upon teacher-centred learning. The SPBEA control system, teacher-centred teaching, has been an advantage to many Pacific

Island people because it has encouraged them to work cooperatively with teachers, and more significantly has encouraged the students to study hard. Many secondary students have moved on to attend university study while some of these students have undertaken further study in New Zealand or other countries for higher post-graduate qualifications. The changes in the Pacific Island education systems are important for this research. Many of Pacific Islanders bring their traditional learning approaches/style to education in the New Zealand which indicates the need for teachers to fully understand these students.

### **Approaches for Samoan Secondary Students in New Zealand**

This section is concerned with the approaches for Samoan students in New Zealand. Researchers' (Meleisea, 1997; Tiatia, 2001; Tupuola, 1998; 2004; Podmore & Wendt 2004) discussions about students all agree that they are defined by their culture (*fa'asamoa*). As indicated earlier, Samoans have diverse views about *fa'asamoa* and their needs, desires and personalities are characterised by their view of their culture. In this research, the perceptions of the students of *fa'asamoa* describe who they are. An understanding of these students' perception of *fa'asamoa* will assist the development of educational approaches for them in New Zealand (Podmore & Wendt, 2004).

Recent research by Podmore and Wendt (2006) has raised some significant issues related to the education of many Samoan students in New Zealand and suggested various issues for further investigations. These issues are that:

- Samoans are comfortable working in groups
- Samoans prefer peer learning
- Samoans are encouraged when *fa'asamoa* (language and culture) is part of their learning
- partnership between the schools and families/communities assist in the students' educational development
- teacher development will assist teachers' understanding of the students.

## **Samoans are Comfortable Working in Groups**

Podmore and Wendt (2006) observed a number of Samoan students and noted that they prefer working in small groups. Furthermore, they have found that working in small groups is part of these students' family life and *fa'asamoa*. Tupuola (1996) discussed the significance of this approach in *fa'asamoa* and the lives of many Samoans. According to him, working in small groups became part of *fa'asamoa* before Tonga invaded and ruled Samoa in the 1–6th Centuries. During that time, Samoans worshipped their own gods and worshipping in groups was encouraged because it is a sign of power and domination. Such an approach was encouraged because the Samoans understood it provided a better understanding among the group and encouraged them to work together, support and cooperate with one another. The approach benefited some native religions where various gods and rivalries often occurred amongst these people because of their religions so, the bigger the group the better the chance to win wars and hold power (Tupuola). The approach was also encouraged by the missionaries to enhance the development of the churches in Samoa (Tupuola). Samoan families and church communities today encourage group work to assist their development – that is, these people get along, support one another and do their best to assist development when they work in groups (Meleisea, 1987). The information these commentators gathered confirmed that group task is part of *fa'asamoa* and likely to influence many Samoan students. It can be argued that many Samoans today value group involvement because it is a sign of *alofa* which is an important value of *fa'asamoa* – that is, being part of a group to Samoans is a sign of respect, unselfishness and love (Tupuola). Research (Podmore & Wendt, 2006) related to Samoa have found that many Samoans have been successful because of group work. This knowledge about adolescents would also suggest that working in groups is important for many students. At the pre-school and kindergarten levels children are encouraged to learn *fa'asamoa* and working in groups is encouraged because it is part of it (Wendt, 2004). This indicates that Samoans have realised the importance of Samoan native approaches for Samoans, and learning from the young age (pre-school) is the best way to achieve that (Wendt).

## **Peer learning**

Peer learning is also part of family traditions and *fa'asamoa* for Samoans and many young Samoans prefer this approach in their schooling. Research by Wendt (2006) and O'Meara (1988) revealed that many Samoans prefer to work with peers because it is part of their social upbringing. Samoans are encouraged to help the other family members in tasks because it is a symbol of love and respect. In school many Samoan students prefer working amongst peers particularly their friends and this approach is recommended in the New Zealand school curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2003). What is unique about these students is that peer learning for them involves respect, love, dedication and commitment, humility, honesty and fairness – these characteristics must be part of peer learning for Samoans to fully appreciate it. Meleisea (1987) indicated that effective peer learning for Samoans involves being open to peers, have the same interest, accept one another and not having conflict interests and views. It could be argued that such characteristics of Samoans are determined by their cultural upbringing – that is, many Samoans are taught that love, humility and being humble are the keys to a people relationship and understanding of learning contexts (Tupuola, 1996). It means that love leads to people working cooperatively and respecting one another. So, for many Samoans a peer learning approach must be well executed to assist Samoans.

## **Fa'asamoa (Language/Culture) as Part of the Students' Learning**

Podmore and Wendt (2006) highlighted that *fa'asamoa* is unique to all Samoans. According to them, Samoans are encouraged and motivated in their studies when *fa'asamoa* is recognised as part of their learning. The importance of *fa'asamoa* (language/culture) is that it assists many Samoans' understanding of learning concepts. Samoans students' understanding of learning concepts is enhanced particularly when Samoan ideas are used to describe learning concepts because they are familiar with their own culture (Wendt). Hunkin's (1988) discussion of the importance of language and culture was mentioned earlier in this chapter where he highlighted the points that are relevant to Samoans. An important consideration for educational development arising from these findings is that students' understanding of their own cultures enhances their learning if teachers utilise it adequately.

## **Partnership between Schools and Families/Community**

Partnership between family, school and community was also suggested by Podmore and Wendt (2006) as another approach supporting Samoans. This approach has often been recommended by the Ministry of Education (for example, in 2008), because of the notion that students learn well and achieve better result in examinations when they are familiar with learning contents. In other words what students learn at home they do at school (Jones, 1991). The findings of this study revealed that some Samoans are comfortable working alongside family members because they were encouraged to work as a unit in family and church tasks. Podmore, Wendt and Jones suggested that the families and communities can contribute to the schooling of Samoans by taking part in the teaching and learning roles such as teacher aides, supervisors, tutor, adult and student learning). Partnership between families and school was also recommended by Cahill (2006), Sheet (2005) and Mageo (1998) as an important approach for education of Samoans. According to these academics, partnership approach requires constant communication between the schools, teachers and family members. This approach will assist teachers and families understanding the learning circumstances of the students (Podmore & Wendt, 2006).

Some Samoans however, are uncomfortable working alongside family members because they view their teachers as the experts, and Tamati (1983) believed that this influenced many Samoans. It can be argued that many Samoans still believe that they had limited education and that their ideas may not be adequate to facilitate their children's educational needs. This is a gap that needs to be bridged – Samoans need to understand that the teachers' understanding of students is not as deep as the parents and that is much needed for educational development. A partnership between schools and Samoan families must be encouraged to assist Samoan students. This is why education of the Samoan adults is very important – these people must be taught to understand about the importance and values of their participations to their children. To an extent, adults must be taught to understand the curriculum so that they can work alongside their children in activities such as homework.

## **Teacher Development**

One of the important approaches for the Samoan students' education is teacher development. Reviews by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) reported that many Samoan students failed because the teachers lacked the understanding of the students. Wendt (2004) indicated that Samoans have diverse views of their culture therefore generalising about these students (based on the general understanding of *fa'asamoa*) may not accurately describe individuals. There are issues such as gender, religion, family, personality and health associated with individuals and these influence their views (Wendt, 2004). According to her, the teachers must have a deep understanding of these issues relating to the identification of approaches to facilitate learning.

The approaches discussed in this section have been valid in *fa'asamoa* for many years and are recognised as being very relevant in education for many Samoans. However, consideration must be given to how these approaches should be applied in class in the future because of changes in Samoan children's lives. Although there is more literature about the Pasifika student today there remains an urgent need to integrate research and develop more in depth studies. To make sure that the education is adequate for the next generation, further research is needed.

## **Summary**

Changes in New Zealand have had a significant influence upon many Samoans (Elliot, 1981). This chapter has discussed the changes that occurred in New Zealand and their relevance to the educational success and failure of Samoan secondary students. The influence of new ideas has been noted in many areas of *fa'asamoa*. Samoans have always borrowed new ideas and they regarded these ideas as important contributions to *fa'asamoa* (Meleisea, 1987). It is important to understand the changes in *fa'asamoa* as this reflects who the people are. It is also important to note the pattern of change in *fa'asamoa* to understand the way Samoans cope with life in general and in education.

An explanation of the forces that have influenced the minds of Samoans can be described as follows. The changes discussed in the educational system



(particularly in New Zealand) have caused Samoans and many Pacific Island people to re-evaluate their position and consider whether it was a benefit to accept the change or simply retain old traditions. Many believed that the new education system (Tomorrow's Schools) was not educationally but politically and market focussed (Sullivan, 1998) and to them this often had negative outcomes. The influence of traditional education methods on Pacific Island people remains somewhat relevant to their view of success and can be helpful in understanding appropriate educational approaches that led to the success of the students.

As already noted in this chapter *fa'asamoa* is based upon qualities of respect, honesty and wisdom which are central to the mind-set of all Samoans. With regard to traditions, norms and behaviour, there is a need to show respect for the purpose of achieving higher honour. This implies that respect is the gateway toward knowing, accepting and understanding one another. It therefore appears that listening, recitation and practice are the learning methods Samoans used to master their own culture and these methods are still practised in villages, *aiga*, churches and Samoan communities. There is also an understanding that the basis of *fa'asamoa* is much wider than this. There seems to be a link between the learning of *fa'asamoa* and an understanding of the world in general. A significant implication relates to the applicability and the utility of *fa'asamoa* in the world today. What is its place and value in the 21st Century? An understanding of how the traditional education methods of Samoa survived from the past can lead to an appreciation of its relevance for the education of Samoans today.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Educational Theories and Methods

#### Introduction

There is nothing more important in any research than the theories and methods as they reveal the approach to gathering knowledge. In education, a broad understanding of the educational conditions for the students involved will assist the understanding of how successful research could be achieved (Grierson, 2003).

This research focussed on three important influences that have been widely recognised in education theories: social, political and economic impacts. In education in New Zealand, these forces play significant roles (Alton-lee, 2003; Thrupp, 1999) as they contribute to an understanding of students, their context and even more so, the appropriate educational approaches and practices for them.

#### Social

Bandura (1989) and Friedkin (1998), two influential education psychologists in the twentieth century, argued that human social life involves different networks, for example, friends, sports, family, community and peers. They elaborated further saying that these forces interact with each other and influence one another. They indicated that these forces are not of equal strength, some are would be stronger than others however all these factors are important in understanding peoples' needs as they influence social needs. These psychologists viewed the networks as social control mechanisms and that the interactions within these networks influence humans, for example, for example behaviour, habit, belief, instinct, language, ideas, vision, attitude toward others and goal/direction. This suggests that a person's social life is an important means for identifying needs.

An important force in the social lives of individuals is culture. Hegel (cited in Lewis, 2002), one of the influential theorists of the 20th Century, argued that interactions within networks determine ideologies and beliefs and people behave in view of that. This he termed as culture. He stated that culture is

maintained because it is meaningful to those involved. Bronfenbrenner (1990) one of the most influential education theorists of modern time argued that culture and other social influences are important in human development. He pointed out that cultural and social networks include culture, friends, peers, family, community, neighbours, church and school. The interactions within these networks influence peoples' mindsets which are very important in understanding learning needs and desires. He also viewed interactions in society as an important means for establishing appropriate teaching and learning approaches to motivate students. This suggests that an understanding of these forces in a student's life facilitates understanding of the needs of the student.

### **Political Influence**

Political influence has also been widely recognised as another significant force in education. An understanding of this is important in the development of educational approaches and practices for Samoans and other ethnic minority students. Researchers, for example, Ian (2002), Bronfenbrenner, (1990), Karab-Parpowicz, (2006), and Plough (1988) investigated this area and found that politics influences life development. They suggested that the world could be viewed in the light of logic, meaning and desire, which are important in decision-making. An important point related to politics according to these theorists is that the influence of politics varies from one individual to another due to the different circumstances they are involved in. For example, Samoans' perspective of politics is influenced very much by the influence of their religion, friends and clubs. These researchers suggested that the life forces such as those influencing the Samoans influenced life and political views and that the life forces interact influencing the mind, needs, desires, expectations and behaviour and political decision-making based on these interactions. Solemen (1936) elaborated further stating that politics sometimes play a negative role in development particularly when politicians establish policies and rules to fulfil their own desires.

In the Pacific, the influence of politics had significant impact on the minds of many Pacific Islanders and also on influenced the development of education in the region. Many Pacific Island nations were administered by countries such as the USA, France, Germany and New Zealand and education was

effectively used to deliver these countries' policies and rules (Rice, 1995). Many Pacific Islanders were influenced by the new policies. For example, in Samoa, the influence of the missionaries was significant in many changes in fa'asamoa and in the views of many Samoans regarding what defined success for them (Meleisea, 1987; O'Meara, 1990). According to these commentators, many traditions of Samoa, such as the division of labour for men and women, fa'amatai were challenged. Women believed they could also be breadwinners and have the right to voice their views in family and society. This notion was further encouraged by the human rights beliefs located in New Zealand when it administered Samoa. Many young Samoans were encouraged to decide for themselves on the ideas relevant to assisting in their development instead of relying on parents or matai (O'Meara). It was also noted that change has also impacted on education. Many Samoans viewed New Zealand as the best place for the achieving a successful future because Samoans believe it has better education than that in Samoa (Tupuola, 1996).

In New Zealand, politics plays a significant role in its education system and this has provided mixed results for Samoans and other ethnic minority students in New Zealand. For example, the Tomorrow Schools system, according to Barrington (1992), was intended to promote democracy in New Zealand as well as to assist the ethnic minority groups. It provided the opportunity for the ethnic people to voice their views regarding education and their views would help the development of appropriate approaches for the ethnic students. Many viewed the Tomorrow Schools system as a better system to express their own views and purposes. However, it was noted that there were flaws in the system (see chapter three). According to Scott (1996) and Sullivan (1998), the move benefited only some students and this implies that the system needs improvement to allow all students in New Zealand the opportunity to improve.

There are other important factors related to politics that are important to the understanding of the educational lives of Samoans in New Zealand. According to Levine (2003), the New Zealand human right policy which endorses individual rights encouraged many Samoans to return to their cultural traditions. Some, although they had slightly different interpretation of

fa'asamoa due to the circumstance in New Zealand, for example New Zealand born Samoans viewed their culture as the most important part of their identities (Tiatia, 2001). In fact, these people were proud of their Samoan identity (see chapter three). Bishop & Glynn (2003), suggest that many teachers, influenced by racist ideology, insisted that all students should assimilate the New Zealand culture because it was the dominant culture. Jones' (1999) research found that many Pacific Island students failed as a result of this practice.

Overall, what can be understood about the impact of politics on education? These findings indicate that politics can be an important force for education development if society is open to all views. The implication is that when the politics are consistent with the needs of all of the people then there is more likelihood that there is also equity of educational achievement.

### **Economic Influence and Education**

Economic influence has also been recognised in the educational theories and methods. Researchers (for example Donald, Martha, Coutinho, Best, 1999) working in the area of economic development in education, indicated that economic well being influences education, and that achievement will occur when the economic well-being is positive and this impacts upon the development of methods and approaches (Ministry of Education, 2003; 2007; 2008; Sullivan, 1988; Thrupp, 1999). Ian (2002) has identified the three important interacting forces related to economic influence on education; socio-cultural; personal and specific economic factors.

### ***Socio-cultural Influence***

Cleverland and Jacobs (1999) viewed Socio-cultural influence as an important determinant of economic development. According to them, life forces such as friends, family, community and school are important factors of a person's social life, and these are important to the understanding of needs. Bronfenbrenner's (1990) research indicated that the interactions between the forces of life such as culture, friends, family, community and neighbours impacts on needs and influences economic well-being. It means that a person's life requirements for example lifestyle and consumption needs are influenced by socio-cultural factors. For example, in New Zealand, religion,

families and social networks influence many Samoans because those are the foundation benchmarks for their communities. Their socio-cultural and economic needs are determined by these forces which also impact on their education (Ministry of Education, 2003). One of the reasons for the decile identification system of New Zealand schools was to identify the students who need assistance (Ministry of Education, 2008).

### ***Personal Influence***

As indicated earlier, individuals also have their own views regarding their development and those views indicate their needs. In New Zealand, many Pacific Island students failed because the school did not fully understand these students and hence their learning needs were not met. Not all students have the same needs. This depends on their interactions with the forces in society (Bronfenbrenner, 1990). For example, some Samoans have their own personal views relating to fa'asamoa (Tiatia, 2001) and only they fully understand those views. Kestranbaum (1977) indicated that – individuals do not fully understand other people through a general understanding of life because changes occur from time to time and they adjust to those changes differently. According to Bronfenbrenner (1990), people are diverse in needs and views due to the forces they are exposed to and these forces are what determines the economic and personal needs. This means that people who belong to the same culture-community are very likely to be different.

### ***Economic Influence***

Economic influence according to Plough (1988), involves the management and planning of consumption needs (for example budget) and other social factors such as culture, school, community, friends and clubs. He argued that the interaction of such forces determined human needs and that individuals spend and plan accordingly. For example, school fees, donations, lunch, stationery, uniform and other school costs are part of school life in New Zealand and these requirements are usually met although some families are well off while the others struggle economically. The Ministry of Education (2003) reported that many Samoan and other Pacific students could not cope in school because their families had limited financial backing, and many of these students failed examinations as a result (also see chapter three).

Tupuola (1996) indicated that many Samoans and other Pacific Islanders in New Zealand struggle in life in New Zealand because of poor financial management.

## **Defining Educational Success and Achievement**

The literature relating to success indicates that success has a broad meaning, and there is no precise specific way to achieve success. An important consideration is how to define what success and achievement mean. Success can be defined in global and specific terms, narrow or broad in focus and applied to different contexts or situations.

Aristotle defined success as the best thing man can do with his life. He continued by suggesting that in order to obtain success a person must have a goal or objective for his or her life (cited in Kelley, 1967). Aristotle's thoughts of success indicate two important points for educational development. Firstly, success is determined in the mind – that is, a person can be successful if they believe in success. Secondly, in order to be successful, goals must set in order to achieve. Montgomery (1987) had a similar view of success. He stated that success is the cause for a drive in life and a person undertakes the best approach to achieve those goals. He continued by stated that success is about fame and prominence, meaning that sometimes an individual wants to be successful because it makes them feel famous and powerful. The key to Montgomery's theory of success is the feeling that occurs after achieving a goal. He suggests that if one enjoys a task then they can become successful at it. Becoming successful and satisfied in a person's achievement occurs when they feel that they have reached their potential. In his own words, he stated:

A real success is the person who performs at or close to the best of her or his ability, most of the time, in all of the important areas of his or her life. She or he will be as successful as his or her inherited potential, past experiences and present circumstances permit, in the careers of her or his choice, in intimate and social relationships, and in the recreations of his or her choice. She or he is making the realistic best of what he or she got in the lottery of life (Montgomery 1987, p. 25).

Bridge, Judd and Moock (1979) suggest that success can also apply to a wide range of interests such as the achievement in sport, cultural, and social interests. Success according to these writers is achieving goals. Therefore, success is about being happy and satisfied due to achievement. An example of this in the Samoan context is that success is measured by the individual's ability to identify within a group, relate with others and obey God. To be part of a community or group these people must learn and gain knowledge of fa'asamoa and of the world through others and to abide by God's rules (Aiono, 1996; O'Meara, 1990; Tupuola, 1996). Culture has been widely recognised as one of the keys to education development (Ministry of Education, 2003) because it is viewed as one of the paths to success. The New Zealand Ministry of Education indicated that when ethnic students are successful in their culture, it motivates them to succeed in many areas of life.

Carbarino, (1981) and Harns (1995), writing about the wider context in education view success as also applying to sectors' achievements, for example, the school, families, community, business stakeholders and students. This means that these sectors have set objectives that are to be achieved and the attainment of these are linked to totality of success in education. Cabarino's (1981) definition of success, is that successful educational approaches and methods that lead to passing school examinations is another explanation of success. For example, success for students in Tonga, is the need to require grades (either A or B) in order to enter the highest college in the kingdom. Many Tongans prefer this because it made them competitive and motivated (Sullivan, 1998).

What this indicates is that educational success and achievement can be viewed from a narrow perspective such as academic excellence, or from a broader point of view which includes other aspects of life. The international literature (Bronfenbrenner, 1990; Moffat, 1995; Osborne, 2001) has identified many factors significant for educational success, for example recognising students' culture, appropriate educational approaches, better school environment, homework, sufficient economic backing, positive attitude of students and teachers, and supportive roles of parents. These descriptions of success have been used by many to define educational success in varying



contexts (Osborne, 2001; Steinberg, Kinchloe & Hinchey, 1999; Sullivan, 1998).

## **Approaches to Understanding Achievement**

These influences have generated many theories about what promotes achievement and consequently many approaches have been implemented around these theories and explanations to facilitate success. The following lists a range of the theories and approaches that outline the nature of educational achievement of diverse ethnic groups:

- The assimilation theory
- The deficit theory
- Cultural reproduction theory
- Cultural disadvantage theory
- Cultural difference theory
- Interpretive ethnography theory
- The motivational theory related to success – the attribution theory
- Critical theory
- Ecological systems theory
- Methods and Approaches: Multicultural and second language learning

### **The Assimilation Theory**

The assimilation theory is regarded as important because it assists in the understanding of diverse groups, such as Samoans. This theory refers to a process of integration whereby people are absorbed into another culture, generally larger community culture (Alpa & Nee, 2007). These theorists have argued that people often assimilate to another culture when they believe it is superior to their own. Maslow (1954) argued that assimilation is associated with need and that need determines action and goals. This means that people set goals to achieve and behave according to those goals. Maslow's

model shows five important steps of assimilation which are significant in the lives of Samoans.

- a. Self actualisation
- b. Esteem:
  - needs
  - self-esteem
  - recognition
  - status
- c. Safety needs:
  - security
  - and protection
- d. Psychological needs:
  - hunger
  - thirst
- e. Love

Maslow's (1954) model indicates that there are different levels of assimilation and all these explain behaviours. The assimilation process can be considered to begin at the bottom of the hierarchy (i.e., 'e') and finishes at the top (i.e., 'a'). That is, level 'e' which includes affection, trust, a listening ear, daily order, a right to privacy and unconditional love needs to be achieved first and then a movement to the next level can occur until finally it reaches the top level (Maslow, 1954). This model is important for this study because it shows assimilation as a means for stability and security in life which is relevant to the lives of Samoans and other ethnic minority groups.

The other forces relating to assimilation were highlighted by Clark (2003) as socio-economic status, language, intermarriage and politics. These forces explain why and how people assimilate.

### ***Socio-economic Status***

According to Alpa and Nee (2007) and Maslow (1954), assimilation occurs because of the need to improve socio-economic status. This requires cooperation, a combined effort between the individuals and families. That is, in order to assist the well-being of family, members would have to contribute by working at paid jobs and in doing so, they would have to abide by the work ethics and policies. As paid jobs are important to life, people assimilate into work ethics and policies (Alpa and Nee). Furthermore, they elaborated by stating that there are constraints that motivates assimilation and they pointed at variables such as wages, salaries, profits and rents. Alpa and Nee's definition indicates that assimilation is a very important part of life – that is, people assimilate in order to survive. An example of the importance of this form of assimilation to life was noted earlier in this study (see chapters two and three). Assimilating to the lifestyle of New Zealand has impacted negatively on the lives of some Samoans in New Zealand where some struggled in life because they did not have sufficient financial backing due to unemployment and that impacted negatively on the schooling life of many Samoan students (Ministry of Education, 2003).

### ***Language***

Another variable relating to assimilation is language (Maslow, 1954). People often assimilate another language, often the dominant language, because of the need to belong to a group. For example, research reported by Araki (2003), DeSilva (2000), Esera (2001), Macpherson, Spoonley and Anae (2002), Meleisea (1987), Roberts (1999) and Ministry of Education (2003) have found that assimilation has always been used by the Samoans to adapt to modern situation which led to the use of many palagi terms and ideas such as names, grammar, and intonation. Samoans assimilated these as part of fa'asamoa. It could be argued that the Samoans assimilated fa'apalagi because they want to be part of it (Meleisea, 1987). Many writers (for example Araki, 2003; Meleisea, 1987; Sullivan, 1998) indicated that through education, many Māori and Pacific Islanders were encouraged to assimilate English because it is the language of instruction. English has been viewed by these people as the only way to achieve success for them (see also chapter three). In New Zealand assimilation to English was policy for the Māori in the

early 20th Century until Māoritanga was encouraged throughout schools in New Zealand in the late 20th Century (Richard, 1970; Simon, 1998).

It could be argued that Samoans were influenced by their traditional belief that English was the only way to achieve a better future. According to Meleisea, (1987) such a belief occurred in the past when Samoans first encountered papalagi although there are still many Samoans today who subscribe to this belief. Ferani Ete stated that many Samoan parents in New Zealand still encourage their children to learn English and forget about fa'asamoa (personal communication, July 15, 2005). However, the general belief amongst many Samoans in New Zealand is that English is important in winning jobs (Pasikale, 1996). Therefore, the learning of English is prioritised and the palagi culture assimilated. While this approach was significant in the successful achievement for some, many Samoan students still fail school examinations (Ministry of Education, 1999; 2003). Many Samoans now believe that understanding fa'asamoa is important for the future of Samoans and it should be recognised as part of the school curriculum (Tupuola, 1996). According to Hunkin (1988), traditional language is one of the keys to success as the use of the traditional language gives meaning and understanding that is unique to the learner.

The findings, as indicated in this section, suggest that assimilation works well for some and not for the others. It could be that some people adjust better to the conditions of New Zealand than the others. Importantly what it does indicate is the centrality of language in education and the role it can play in successful achievement.

### ***Intermarriage***

Intermarriage, according to Pagnini and Morgan (1990), is another approach that leads to assimilation. They indicated that sometimes people assimilate to another culture via intermarriage. For example, many Samoan people are married to papalagi and they assimilate fa'apalagi culture because they are frequently exposed to it more so than fa'asamoa. Bronfenbrenner (1990), in discussing such influences, stated that people are more influenced by the dominant culture because they are part of the interacting forces within that culture. Some Samoans in New Zealand, although they practice fa'asamoa,

live within the context of the New Zealand culture (Tiatia, 2001) and the children and young people from these families assimilate the dominant culture of their families (Pagnini & Morgan, 1990). This information is important in understanding Samoan students' learning needs and to fully understand these students, teachers must have a clear understanding of these students' cultural background.

### ***Politics***

Assimilation has also been viewed in terms of achieving political desires and goals. For example, in the 20th Century, immigrants in the USA were encouraged by the USA authorities to assimilate the culture of the USA (Mark, Cave & William, 1981). These writers have noted that assimilation was encouraged in America because of the need by American authorities to control immigrants who arrived there and to preserve the American culture. It was then that the term assimilation was renamed as 'Americanisation' or 'the American way', meaning to assimilate to the American culture by immigrants. In education, assimilation meant that the ethnic minority students had to assimilate into the educational culture which only recognised the culture of the USA, and many believed it was the only way to achieve success. Success for these people was to be achieved through assimilation into the culture of the host country. Mark, William and Cave (1981) also pointed out that many ethnic students in the US failed as a result because they were not familiar with the prevailing teaching content, methods and culture.

As discussed earlier, the influence of the dominant culture impacts significantly and in New Zealand this was no different. It was clear from Rice's (1995) findings that politics played a crucial role in the assimilation of the New Zealand culture by immigrants in New Zealand in the early 20th Century. Imperialism was thought to have a significant influence on the minds of New Zealand authorities and this was reflected by the New Zealand education authorities, the development of a New Zealand culture in schools, work places, sport and other institutions. Assimilation to the New Zealand culture in the late 20th Century was similar to that encouraged in the USA. In education, many Māori and Pacific Island students had to assimilate to the education approaches recommended by the New Zealand authorities (Pasikale, 1998). However, the need for changes was identified and as early

as 1914 Māoritanga was encouraged in schools (Whitecliffe, 1999). However, it was not until the late 20th Century, education reviews by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (1995; 1997) reported that the other ethnic languages and cultures should also be recognised in the curriculum. This was because of the growing population of ethnic minority people in New Zealand and the need for these people to adapt to the conditions of New Zealand. The reviews revealed that many Māori and Pacific Island students failed because they did not understand the New Zealand teaching and learning approaches.

### **The Deficit Theory**

The deficit theory in the past has been one of the main explanations given for the success or failure of students from minority groups. According to Osborne (2001) the deficit approach refers to students who failed to inherit the ability to handle schooling adequately and that they were born with cognitive deficits. In other words, 'intelligence' was defined as genetically inherited, meaning that only those who inherit such a gift can be successful and pass examinations. This approach has been largely discredited. A broadening of this explanation has some merit however in understanding the deficit approach. One way is to interpret it as simply a lack of 'something' and not just inherited intelligence. Three important components of the deficit theory can be identified: cultural, language and systemic deficits. These are significant to the understanding of the circumstances involving Samoans and other ethnic students in New Zealand.

### ***Cultural Deficit***

The cultural deficit theory has been viewed by many (for example, Ahlquist, 2003; Thomas, 1983) as one of the reasons why many ethnic minority students fail. This concept indicates that people fail in life because of their inability to adapt to the condition and/or culture of their host countries. Ethnic minority people in particular often have this problem particularly when they have experienced new situations or circumstances such as living in places where their own cultures are not recognised. For example, many Samoans in New Zealand schools struggled because they did not understand the New Zealand culture in which teachers were heavily involved. Some Samoans

were unable to fully practise or understand their own culture. These students feel negative about fa'asamoa because they believe it is not as superior as fa'apalagi. Thomas (1983) argued that negative feelings can lead to a belief that some people are failures. This applies to some Samoans, particularly, the younger generation who believe they are not as good as the papalagi people because they believe the palagi culture and language are superior to the fa'asamoa (Jackson, 2008). Research (Alton-Lee, 2003; Araki, 2003; Meleisea, 1987; O'Meara, 1990) has noted that Samoans in the past had such belief which led to the changes in their life-styles. Such a notion had been passed on from generation to generation (Meleisea, 1987) and even recently, many Samoans believe that fa'apalagi provides better opportunities for the future than fa'asamoa. Such beliefs may have arisen from the parents or other family members who had been unsuccessful in New Zealand. But, according to Perner and Linkam (2008), such a belief is false and must not be encouraged because it leads to failure.

In more recent times, many Samoans however have realised that there are correlations between traditional culture and language and successful achievement and they have prioritised the learning of fa'asamoa (Jackson, 2008). Another important approach according to Parse (1999) is 'positive thinking'. He argued that anyone can be successful if he/she understands him/herself. This leads to an understanding of how realistic and achievable goals, motivation, confidence and self-assurance become established. Self-esteem and self-efficacy was seen as important.

### ***Language Deficit***

Language deficit recognises that some people fail because they do not fully understand the language of instruction of their schools. Lauren and Weaver (1979) wrote that language deficit is a concept associated with the belief that students must learn only a specific language in order to be successful. The language deficit concept also applies to ethnic minority students who have a different English accent from that of the palagi students. For example, many ethnic minority people have their own accents and sometimes they are viewed by the other students as less able or low achievers because of their accents. Some people believe ethnic minority languages are not the same as the English language as they are different in meaning, structure, intonation,

etc. and should not be used in the teaching of English. In New Zealand, Jones (1991) has found that many Pacific Island students are viewed by the others for example by teachers and papalagi students as slow learners or failures because English is their second language. Many of these Pacific Island students are discouraged by such a negative behaviour.

### ***Systemic Deficit***

The deficit theory has also been linked to the inability of a system to facilitate ethnic peoples' needs in terms of education, socio-economic needs etc. (Kamawar, Garfield & de Villiers, 2002). They argued that the lack of the deeper understanding of peoples' needs leads to the inadequacy of measures to facilitate the students' learning needs. For example, in education, many ethnic minority students failed because they were exposed to new areas and levels which they did not understand. The school system of New Zealand has been noted by Jones (1991) as having such a weakness because it failed to provide adequate approaches to facilitate the learning needs of many Pacific Island students (see also chapter three).

The deficit theory has been largely discounted in relation to diverse groups' achievement levels. Not only does research indicate it has little validity as an argument but it is very dysfunctional in that it promotes racism, segregation, cultural dominance, a central control hierarchy, poverty, and other negative forces (Yosso, 2005).

### **The Cultural Reproduction Theory**

The cultural reproduction theory is another one that has assisted in the understanding of the problems leading to failure of many ethnic students. The cultural reproduction theory indicates that cultural traditions or approaches can be reproduced in order to achieve success. Bourdieu (1989) originated a theory which emphasised the idea that life involves social agents such as social life, culture, family and friends and they act according to circumstance and general logic. According to him, life has social agents that interact influencing the conscious mind. Bourdieu's concept arose in France in the early 1970's and emphasises that healthy ideas and culture are adequate for social, political and moral development (Jenks, 1993). The political and socio-economic links between France and the USA and many countries in



the Pacific has led to many ideas being shared and that is seen as being reflected in the maintenance of the cultures of these countries.

The cultural reproduction approach encompasses the concepts of enculturation and diffusion and these explain the development of many cultures such as fa'asamoa. Enculturation is a process in which the older generation encourages the younger generation to exercise traditional beliefs and practices (Jenks, 1993). The theory indicates that people maintain and preserve their cultures because they are proud of their identities. Such an influence could be linked to imperialism when other countries administered other countries. However, according to Shreffler (1988), many people including those of ethnic minority failed socially and educationally because their cultures were not recognised. This suggests that ethnic minority cultures should be important and should be recognised to assist ethnic minority people.

In the Pacific, the enculturation process plays a crucial role (Mayeda, 2005). Many young Pacific Islanders were encouraged by their parents and elders to maintain their traditional cultures. For example, many young Samoans are encouraged by their parents, community leaders and matai to abide by the traditional fa'asamoa because they believe it is the only way to consolidate the Samoan identity (Tupuola, 1996). Even today, many young Samoans are encouraged by their parents and community leaders to learn fa'asamoa because they believe this leads to success (Anae, 1998). However, many young Samoans have their own views related to their culture and language, for example in decision-making and leadership roles. Many young Samoans believe they should be considered because they are important for the safekeeping of the culture (Tiatia, 2001). This suggests that changes occur and impact on cultural perception and these should be acknowledged because they are important to the development of culture. The cultural reproduction theory should consider these changes.

The cultural diffusion concept has also been relevant to the understanding of how culture develops. The concept came from the process whereby new ideas, behaviour and norms are infused in to another culture (Gray, Ann & McGuigan, 1993). Research by Aiono (1991), Meleisea (1987) indicated that

many Pacific Island cultures include modern ideas that have been adopted from other cultures such as names and traditions. The concept of diffusion explains the educational cultures of many countries such as the USA and New Zealand (Jenks, 1993). Many new ideas from different cultures were adopted by these countries which assisted the development of their education systems (Gray, Ann & McGuigan, 1993). Earlier research (for example Meleisea, 1987; O'Meara, 1990; Aiono, 1991) about Samoans revealed that cultural diffusion was also applied by the Samoans in the past to enhance fa'asamoa. These researchers indicated that the Samoans used fa'apapalagi traditions such as the clothing style and food as part of fa'asamoa.

In New Zealand, many Pacific Island students failed because the New Zealand authorities adopted a central control method. The idea was implemented in other countries such as the USA but it was designed to reduce the low levels of achievement in New Zealand schools. However, rather than solving the problem, more difficulties were encountered and the system failed to improve the academic achievements of many Samoan students (Mitchell, McGee, Moltzen & Oliver, 1993). Instead, it drove many Samoan students away from fa'asamoa. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (1995; 2003; 2005) reports recognised that students' cultures are important in their schooling and as a result a multicultural approach became valued in New Zealand schools. However, while this approach was 'good' in theory and practice, many Samoan students were disadvantaged because it was not accompanied by a deeper understanding of the students' needs (Ministry of Education, 2003).

### **The Cultural Disadvantage Theory**

The cultural disadvantage theory conceptualises the cultural misunderstanding existing in families and communities and has been used to explain failure in general. Markowitz (2001) has identified the two important forces associated with the cultural disadvantage theory: economic and politics.

### ***Economic***

The cultural disadvantage theory has been linked to economic instability. Ethnic minority people are sometimes disadvantaged in life because their cultures are not recognised by their host countries in terms of the juxtaposition of economic well-being and daily living (Markowitz, 2001). In New Zealand, economic instability has led to many Pacific Island students' failure (Ministry of Education, 2003). These students' families often undertake approaches that often lead to failure such as practising the palagi traditions they do not fully understand and adopt economic practices that are not recognised in their culture. Such an approach has led to some Samoans struggling to provide for their family needs for example in fa'asamoa Samoans help one another (O'Meara, 1990). As a result some Samoan parents spend more time working and less time supervising their children and educational failure results (Fuimaono, 2001). These findings indicate that the economic position and perspectives of people is very important and assist in building confidence and positive self-esteem.

### ***Politics***

According to Markowitz (2001), politics sometimes leads to people being forced to practise a different culture they do not understand and that leads to their failure. Barrington (1992) and the Ministry of Education (2003) have identified that ethnic minority students in New Zealand failed because education policies were intended to fulfil particular political desires such as some of those associated with the central control and the Tomorrow Schools systems (see chapter three). According to Markowitz (2001), many ethnic students in other societies failed because they have been forced to practice a different culture they did not understand.

Many Polynesian people believe that the palagi culture and language are more significant in higher education than their own culture and so encourage their children to forget about their own cultural traditions and concentrate on the palagi culture (Roberts, 1999). Jones (1991) has noted the same belief amongst many secondary students, and the schools of these Polynesian students seemed to agree that some Polynesian students may not be able to achieve success. But there are many other forces at work here. Jones

suggested that schools failed to assist these students and indeed they were left to do whatever they wanted, and so many of these students ended up forming gangs or missed class. He continued by saying that one of the reasons why many Polynesian students believed they were not as good as palagi students was because they were not as financially stable as the palagi students (Pasikale, 1996). The literature revealed that these students can still be motivated to succeed if they believe they can be successful.

The cultural disadvantage explanation also has implications for understanding the cognitive style of the students. As Pasifika students belong to different cultures and are more familiar with their own traditional methods of learning Pasikale (1996) suggested that it is appropriate to encourage them to use their natural and/or cultural cognitive style of learning in school. However, teachers sometimes enforced an unfamiliar cognitive style on ethnic minority students in New Zealand (Osborne, 2001). Cummins (2005) argues that if society wants students to use what is learnt in real life situations, the learning context must be authentic to the students, and must be meaningful to them. As mentioned earlier, one method of identifying appropriate learning contexts was to find out from the students themselves (Hattie, 1999). Another approach was to understand ethnic students' cultures in order to establish appropriate educational methods and approaches for them.

Other ethnic minority groups have used different methods to resolve their educational problems. For example, many Asian parents in the USA learnt to participate in the schooling of their children, which made their children more confident and encouraged them in their academic pursuit (Moffat, 1995). This confidence ensured these students believed in their own potential, so that instead of perceiving themselves as inadequate they believed that they can be as good as their American counterparts. For Samoan students, understanding fa'asamoa in relation to their schooling and the involvement of parents and other Samoans in school programmes would encourage better learning behaviour as well as inspiring confidence (Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001; Podmore & Wendt, 2006). The Ministry of Education of New Zealand (2003) viewed cultural disadvantage as one of the reasons why

many Pacific Island students failed in New Zealand schools. These findings reveal a very important point to be considered for future education development for Samoans and other ethnic minority students. That is, cultures are different and that they are important in understanding the students' cognitive learning. One of the approaches to improve cultural disadvantage facing many Samoans and other ethnic students was the encouragement of ethnic students' cultures in their schooling – that is, Polynesians should be part of the teaching and administration roles of the student's school (Baba, Mahina, Williams, & Nabobo-Baba, (2004). According to these writers ethnic minority peoples' participation in education can assist ethnic students' confidence and understanding of the areas related to their education. A view recognising cultural diversity is needed to assist in the understanding of ethnic minority students.

### **The Cultural Difference Theory**

The cultural difference theory has contributed to the understanding of the educational situation in multicultural societies, such as that facing many Samoans in New Zealand. The cultural difference theory indicates that some ethnic minority students fail when they practice a different culture from that recognised by their schools (Swisher, 1997). In the USA, the cultural difference theory highlighted that many native America students failed because of cultural misunderstanding. These students applied their own culture which is different from that recognised by their schools and many have failed because they lacked the understanding of the learning content (Cook, 1999). However, cultural diversity can be useful for successful achievement if educators utilise it in the most appropriate ways to assist learning. Recognising different cultural views provides a wide range of ideas and views to motivate ethnic minority students and develops positive learning behaviours.

In New Zealand, some Samoans particularly those who have recently migrated to New Zealand did not understand their school cultures and hence, they communicated and behaved according to fa'asamoa. Their schools on the other hand recognised only the palagi culture and that has led to a cultural misunderstanding between the teachers and students. For example, some approaches such as patting on the head or looking people directly in

the eye are not acceptable in fa'asamoa (Tupuola, 1996) but these approaches have been part of many Samoan students' learning in the New Zealand context. In some instances, the students themselves applied the Samoan traditional approaches such as bowing the head or not answering back when they are talked to in class and their teachers did not understand them. Many of these students did not understand their teachers and hence they started misbehaving (Jones, 1991).

### **The Interpretive Ethnography Theory**

The interpretive ethnography theory implies that cultures are different and is another approach that has been used to explain why the achievements of students from ethnic minority groups in education are considerably lower than the achievement of students from the majority. According to Denzin (1997) and Dourich (2007), the interpretive ethnography theory highlights failure because of misinterpretation. For example, some teachers interpret students' behaviours, attitudes toward others based on the general understanding of culture and they still do not fully understand their students (Robertson, 1994). Bronfenbrenner (1990) and Denzin and Dourich indicated that there are forces in life such as family, friends, peers, community, neighbours and parents and they viewed such forces as important in the understanding of human development. Such forces interact and influence human needs, desires, aspirations and so on. An important point for education development arising from these findings is that the teachers' clear understanding of the forces that influence the students' lives leads to the establishment of the most appropriate learning and teaching approaches to facilitate learning. Policy-makers need to acknowledge such an approach because it is directly linked to the forces influencing life and that it is significant in the successful development of other societies.

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education reviews (2000; 2005; 2007; 2008) reported that many Pacific Island students failed because teachers lacked understanding of approaches to facilitate their learning needs. In some schools, Pacific Island teachers and helpers are involved in the teaching areas but still, many Pacific students failed (Ministry of Education, 2003). It could be argued that many of these students failed because their teachers and helpers did not fully understand them. They probably assumed these

students' needs were based on their own experiences and understanding of these students' cultures. Such an approach is not always accurate because of the various influences of change in peoples' lives.

Even some Samoan parents and community leaders such as church ministers, matai and the elderly Samoans, lack the understanding of many young Samoans. As indicated earlier by Tiatia (2001), many young Samoans in New Zealand have their own views of fa'asamoa and these are important to them. Many parents and community leaders ignored the views of the young Samoans because of the influence of the traditional beliefs (refer to chapter three). These findings emphasised the importance of teachers, educators, helpers and parents' full understanding of the students to assist their learning, and suggests that communication with the students could be the most accurate approach to identify their needs.

### **Motivational Theories Related to Success**

The sociological perspective on ethnic education failure is only part of the story and it is also important to understand the psychological factors that may be operating, although they may interact with the socio-cultural factors. One of the key issues in the psychology of learning is motivation. Various explanations of what motivates students to achieve is an important issue in this research.

There are two major differences in the motivation theories: extrinsic and intrinsic. Huitt's (2001) states that some people are motivated by the feelings and beliefs formed in the mind (intrinsic), while other people are motivated by influences surrounding them (extrinsic). He believes however that the major force is an internal state and condition (intrinsic) that determines behaviour and direction and Hull (1943) argued that motivation is a force within a person that gives them a sense of direction and determines persistent behaviour. Such approaches imply that individuals are motivated to behave in certain ways because of the drive or motive within ourselves.

There are a large number of motivation theories that are applied to the educational setting. For example, Covington and Beery (1976) and Cole (2002) argued that some people are sometimes motivated to perform well

when they see others performing well. Other people are motivated to perform well because other people expect them to achieve well (Weiner, 1974). Some are motivated to perform to demonstrate their own self-worth and to avoid being labelled as failures. Covington (1984) and Martin and Marsh (2008) further explored this by indicating that motivation is associated with need where need is determined by 'awareness' in response to the influences in the mind. Wlodkowski (1999) considers that in the educational context there are four critical conditions that must be established if students are to achieve. In his culturally responsive motivational approach he states that the students must feel included; be able to gain meaning from the tasks; have positive attitudes toward the study; and feel that the tasks can be related to a performance in the real world. Other theorists for example behaviourists promote an extrinsic motivation theory whereby external influences (for example grades, praise, and economic benefits are deemed to motivate the learner to succeed, while other learners may be motivated to succeed because they fear being punished if they fail.

### ***Attribution Theory as an Example Explanation***

One motivational theory relates to the attributions people give to their behaviour. It can be used to understand and interpret the behaviour of students. The attribution theory can be used to understand the success and failure of many Samoan students in New Zealand. This theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events, and how this relates to their thinking and behaviour. For example, if students believe achievement is due to chance or luck then concentration on studies seems inappropriate. According to Weiner (1974) ability, task difficulty, and luck are the most important factors for attribution theory. Students with higher self-esteem attribute success to internal factors such as ability, while they contribute failure to external factors such as task difficulty. On the other hand, students with low self-esteem are more likely to perceive themselves as being less competent in certain subjects particularly if they experience repeated failures in those subjects Weiner (1974).

Weiner (1980) further explored success and failure and pointed out that success and failure can also be attributed to the students' level of motivation, so that students are motivated when they receive higher grades in class.



However, some students may view their high grades as unimportant if all other students are also receiving high grades, possibly because of their teachers being too lenient, or perhaps because they were given less challenging tasks.

Attribution theory provided a relevant understanding of the performances of many Samoans and other Pacific Island students in New Zealand schools. As noted earlier by Jones (1991) in her research into Pacific students, many of these students failed because they viewed themselves as failures. Jones argued that many of these students viewed themselves as failures because they have been failing repeatedly in examinations. However, some Samoans have been successful because their families have been positive by supporting and encouraging them in their schooling and they acknowledge their family effort. These students' attitudes and behaviours could be linked to fa'asamoa where loyalty is attributed to family because it is the key to life for Samoans (see chapter three). Some Samoans are motivated to achieve well because they want to be just as good as the palagi and they attribute that to the competitive nature of Samoans (Tupuola Sione Malifa, personal communication August 15, 2007). Tiatia (2001) wrote that a successful Samoan postgraduate student from Auckland University attributed her success to pride. She stated that being a proud Samoan encouraged her to work hard to achieve her goal in education.

All these theories of motivation attempt to explain success and can be related to education by identifying ways in which people seek to achieve success. In this research, an understanding of Samoan students from their perspectives is important for their educational development. What is needed, however, is an encompassing theory that links relevant factors together.

### **Critical Theory**

Critical theory is a post-modern theory and examines the power relations that maintain the status quo. It is essentially concerned with the forces that enslave certain groups in circumstances that disadvantage them (Stanford Encyclopaedia, 2005). The theory has developed an influential perspective amongst scholars but as a force to ensure transformation of such groups so that domination in a system is negated.

In education, the critical approach has examined the 'unjust circumstances' of many underachieving groups and has valued 'transformational processes' that can change the circumstances of these groups. As Freire (1994) notes:

One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do. For hope is an ontological need... The attempt to do without hope in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion. (p. 9)

Torres (1998) has linked the underachieving in education to capitalism and has indicated that by adopting critical theory people can be relieved of two educational myths – that education is neutral and apolitical.

In the New Zealand context Bishop (2008) identifies that the Māori and other cultural groups are disadvantaged because of the power imbalances in the New Zealand society. Some people argue for structural change (economy, school resource allocation, etc.) and others believe that cultural realignments (for example change culture of the school) would suffice but Bishop maintains that more is required to ensure there is no perpetuation of the imbalances. The power imbalance cannot be ignored and he calls for a change in the way educators think about diverse groups and the adoption of a relational discourse that minimises the power differentials between players. The teachers, students and families all need 'agency' within a context of understanding about the important cultural variables. This view implies that there are needs to be consideration given to a more precise understanding of the nature of Samoan culture. One way would be to listen to the voices of all participants. Another way would be to by reducing the power of the educational authorities and including others into the decision-making process a more equitable education system would be developed.

### **Ecological System Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological system theory can assist in a holistic understanding of a student's position. It details that there are five layers of environmental impact on an individual. The first is the microsystem, or the child's immediate surroundings. He argued that this is where the child

interacts with his/her immediate surroundings (for example child-family, child-parents, child-teacher or childcare and/or neighbours). These interactions impact on the child's belief and behaviour. Bronfenbrenner also believed that this is an interdependent reciprocal approach. A child can also influence his surroundings and he/she can influence the belief or behaviour of their parents, neighbours or teachers. The second level is the mesosystem. The mesosystem forms the connection between the structures of the child's micro-system. An example of this is the connection between the child's family and school, or the child's church and the neighbourhood. The interaction between these structures has influence the child. For example, it is believed that if the child's family has a better relationship with the school it impacts positively on the child's behaviour. The third connection is the exosystem, which includes parents' workplace and parents' relationship with friends. Bronfenbrenner pointed out that this is the largest social system that impacts on child's development. For example, if parents spend more time at the workplace and less on their child, that can impact negatively on the child's development. The macrosystem is the fourth layer and includes many subsystems such as cultural beliefs and values, law and society. According to Bronfenbrenner, the macrosystem is the outermost layer of the child's environment and also impacts on the other layers of the child's development. For example, if it is the cultural belief that the church is predominant in the society, that belief will influence people's beliefs which in turn impacts upon the child's development. The fifth layer is the chronosystem which is concerned with changes in circumstances, changes, maturation and development and societal change which of course impact on the child. For example, the death of a family member can impact negatively on the child.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory emphasises various important points that are relevant in the education of Samoan students. For example, the students' social and cultural background is important in the understanding of their learning needs. Secondly, the students could be different in social surroundings and that influences their learning needs and desires. Thirdly the approach emphasises that all forces of the students lives are important to the understanding of who they (the students) are and their learning needs. Another important point raised by this approach is that the students are

central in this system that surrounds them and obviously can have a significant appreciation of what is applicable or useful in their own learning. No one understands the students better than the students themselves (Ziva, 1999). Fifthly, teachers must be open-minded about the significance of the changes in any system and how this impacts on the students.

Understanding such influences is likely to ensure a better understanding of students. As indicated earlier by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2003), it is important for teachers and educators to understand students because they can then identify their learning needs (Thaman, 1996). For Samoan students, they are closely associated with their families, churches, communities, neighbours, friends, parents and so on and these are very important aspects of their life (Alton-Lee, 2003; Tupuola, 1996). Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory has in part formed a theoretical underpinning for this research.

Each of these theoretical approaches contributes towards an understanding of the educational failure or success of Samoan secondary students in New Zealand and why other ethnic minority groups also fail or succeed. However, many Samoan students continue to fail at least in part as a consequence of the lack of understanding of the culture problem and according to Bates and Codd (1980) and this consistent failure can be viewed as a result of the changes in fa'asamoa. Research by the Ministry of Education of New Zealand (2003, 2006, 2007) revealed that lacking of understanding of the students' culture by teachers led to many of these students lacking motivation and enthusiasm in learning. Earlier research by Esera (2001) also revealed the same problem. He pointed out that many Samoans could have been successful achievers in education had they been motivated, and he suggested that appropriate education methods will assist many Samoans in school. Furthermore, as stated earlier by Sullivan (1998), one of the reasons why many Polynesian students in New Zealand lacked motivation was because education methods and approaches had been politically driven instead of focussing on the student's learning needs. For teachers working with Samoan students, an understanding and determination of the appropriate of the methods and approaches to motivate them is important.

## **Methods and Approaches**

In light of the theories discussed in the research, educational methods and approaches have been designed to assist ethnic students in their schooling. The methods and approaches identified recognise the students' social and spiritual developments and these were considered important for their educational development. As indicated by Bronfenbrenner, environment impacts on the students' development and according to Codd and Hermanson (1976), recognising the students' immediate environment can assist in the development of methods and approaches for them. For example, for Samoan students in New Zealand, an understanding of how they communicate in their aiga, community, church and friends as well as the social influence of the New Zealand culture on these students can assist in the development of educational approaches for them. One of the approaches that recognises the students' cultural views as well as student-centred learning, is the multicultural perspective.

### **Multicultural Education**

There are several issues such as poverty, corruption, greed, cultural misunderstanding and low educational achievement that may arise in multicultural situations and it is important to investigate these issues to understand how to adjust, and to develop a better understanding of student educational development. In countries such as England, the USA, Australia and New Zealand such issues explain the high failure rate amongst many ethnic students (Ministry of Education, 2003; 2006; Livingstone, 1991). A multicultural educational approach has been viewed by educators as an important way to facilitate all students' learning needs (Livingstone 1991; Pasikale, 1996).

A multicultural system acknowledging the ethnic students' social and cultural, language, spiritual, intellectual, orientation mode and cognitive aspects was established in New Zealand (Pasikale, 1996). Many use the term culturally responsive teaching today to refer to such approaches. In the USA in the early 20th Century, multiculturalism in education was referred to as "The Melting Pot". This approach involved recognition of ethnic cultures in education in the USA and involved certain arrangements, meaning that the

educational needs of ethnic students were seriously considered by educators in the USA as an important area for education development.

In New Zealand the multicultural approach focuses on cultural diversity or learners from different cultural backgrounds (Fusitua & Coxon, 1998). According to these researchers, the multicultural approach in New Zealand involves recognition of all students' cultures and languages by educators – that is, ethnic cultural approaches and ideas are incorporated as part of educational curriculum. The approach requires teachers' having a good understanding of students' cultures (Singh, 1999). According to him, educational workers and teachers must engage in critical thinking about the approaches suitable for students' experience, because not all students are the same in learning needs. Singh explained how multicultural education helps improve learners' achievements by pointing out that students' cultural approaches, resources and native language motivate them to study hard. He argued that students are familiar with their native language and culture and this makes learning easier and meaningful to them if they are recognised in their schooling. This is a notion supported by Ashton-Warner (1980) in the New Zealand context.

The multicultural educational approach was introduced in New Zealand when large-scale immigration from Polynesia and other countries was experienced. Ashton-Warner (1980), one of the prominent theorists in New Zealand in the 20th Century indicated that multicultural approach would benefit many Māori and Pasifika students because many of these students struggled to understand English which was the basis of learning for all New Zealand students during that time. She argued that multicultural approaches in education of these students would improve the literacy in English. Ashton-Warner played a significant role in the implementation of multicultural approach in New Zealand in the 20th Century. Being a teacher in schools in New Zealand she focussed on educating many Māori and Polynesian students in New Zealand.

Her aim was to improve English literacy amongst the Polynesian students and in doing so she initiated teaching methods that reduced the dominant use of English in schools which she believed discouraged many Polynesian

students. Ashton-Warner's influence in school was significant in the renewed interest of many Māori and Polynesian people in education in New Zealand during the 20th Century. She pointed out that effective multicultural approach includes the learners' native language, artefacts, culture and other cultural means in instructional teaching and learning. She argued that all cultures are artistic in nature which is important in motivating students and that the students' cultures influence their characteristics. They are motivated to learn when their cultures are recognised as part of learning. Ashton-Warner believed that multicultural approach for people such as Māori and Polynesian people must involve a variety of communication activities because of the artistic nature of their cultures. Although Ashton-Warner became less popular in New Zealand due to political influence she was still remembered by many as the icon of education in New Zealand during her time (Clement, 1996). In fact her idea of multiculturalism was reintroduced in New Zealand when the government realised the growing number of ethnic minority in the country and the ineffectiveness of its bicultural approach in these peoples' educational development (Clement).

The multicultural approach was re-introduced in the late 20th Century in New Zealand because it was considered by the New Zealand government that its bi-cultural education approach would not be adequate to facilitate all ethnic students' learning needs. A multicultural approach would benefit, not only the ethnic minority students, but also the palagi and Māori students. It was argued that continuous consultation between the government, schools and Pacific Island communities could create a better understanding of some people's needs and a partnership between the schools and the students' families was considered an adequate approach to achieve that. The review report indicates that having a close link with these students' families and communities was important. It was also believed that an insight knowledge and experience of Pacific Island people could assist students' learning as well as widening the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the most appropriate approaches for Pacific Island students (Esera, 2001). Other approaches such as group and peer learning, and teacher development were identified by the Ministry of Education as important for these students.

Another approach related to multicultural education has been the adoption of the culture of the majority group (Roberts, 1999). According to Roberts, ethnic groups can adopt their host country's culture but still maintain their traditional cultures. An example of how this is achieved was suggested by Samuelu (cited in Araki, 2003) and Mulitalo-Lauta (2000). They believed that adopting new ideas from other sources was important in the development of fa'asamoa, and they pointed at how Samoans in the past incorporated new ideas to enhance their own cultural values, for example English words and terminology. They indicated that Samoans are diverse in their views of the culture and only they understand their views, and for this reason educators and teachers need to focus on the students themselves rather than establishing policies based on the documented version of fa'asamoa. Curtis & Mays, (1978) also argued that rather than assuming why students behave in one way, it was also important to understand the causes for these behaviours.

The idea of cultural diversity and students having their own views of their cultures was causing concern for other teacher and educators. Research by Codd, Harker and Nash (1990) and the Ministry of Education of New Zealand (1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007) relating to ethnic groups in New Zealand reported that the increasing failure rate in schools, particularly amongst the Pasifika students, was having a significant impact on the schools they attended. Many people had negative attitudes and views of these schools and that was significant to a reduction in their rolls. According to Langer (1987), although multicultural education has been considered an important approach to education in New Zealand the teacher-centred approach was still dominant, and the reason for this was because in some schools, the New Zealand culture was still the dominant force in their operations and many Pasifika students continue to struggle as a result (Livingstone, 1991). The Ministry of Education (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) later confirmed that it is important for the cultural interests of learners to be identified in order to support their needs, strengths and potential. This finding by the Ministry came as a result of investigations carried out in several schools in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1999). Such negative attitudes and results have led to a need for new and better approaches to



combat these problems and a number of important approaches were considered.

The New Zealand educators considered that a wide range of views in education has likely contributed to better and more advanced educational developments (Livingstone, 1991). The input of friends, family members, neighbours, teachers and others who have the experience and are familiar with the cultural and social, and educational context of the students is required. Multicultural education in New Zealand follows this model (Barrington, 1992).

The findings related to Samoan students and the multicultural approach contributed to an understanding of the problems facing many Samoans in New Zealand. As indicated by the Ministry of Education (2004), more changes were made to improve these students' achievement. A Ministry of Education (2008) review recommended that successful education strategies that recognise different areas of life, are needed for a balanced education system and to cater for all students. A Ministry of Education programme known as The Quality Teaching and Research Development Project, is currently underway to investigate appropriate Māori and Pasifika teaching and learning approaches for these students (Ministry of Education, 2008). One of the methods that has been also widely recognised in multicultural education is second language learning.

### ***Second Language Learning Method***

One of the biggest problems facing many Samoan students in New Zealand is literacy in English as these students do not fully understand English (Roberts, 1999). The researcher experienced this when he first attended secondary school in New Zealand in 1982 and recalls that when papalagi students spoke in class discussion or answered questions, they spoke so fast that most of the time he did not understand what was being discussed. Teachers also did not slow down when they gave instructions, which made school a frightening experience resulting in his decision to stay quiet all the time because he could not follow what was happening. This could be the reason that many Pacific Island students decide to focus on their friends and engage in other activities.

Second language learning method has been linked to various approaches and one of these approaches is TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages) approach. TESOL involves communicative language teaching to task-based language teaching (Savignon, 1991). According to Brown and Haylon (1970) teaching the target language requires meaningful interaction in the target language. They pointed out that interaction in second language learning requires learners' confidence in expressing their thoughts, and believed that learning a second language is a subconscious process. They argued that it is not necessary for teachers to correct students' mistakes in second language because correcting them does not make them think. According to them, focussing on the messages in conversations encourages learners to speak and express their thoughts. They believed that learning activities encouraging learners to correct own mistakes are appropriate as the activities allow learners to self-correct and broaden their views of second language. The TESOL approach provides conversation activities that encourage communication between students and teachers.

Jones (1991) discovered that truancy and mischievousness increased amongst Pacific Island students because these students were bored and they felt that teachers did not care. Jones (1991) noted that poor results in these students' performances were determined by the teacher-centred approach and poor relationships between teachers and students. Pacific Island students are more comfortable and enjoyed studying when teachers understood their cultural needs (Bell, 2000), while some students prefer outside classroom activities and peer tutoring (Pasikale, 1996). In this setting, students can feel relaxed because they are within their own world where they are not intimidated by the 'overuse' of English in classrooms (Geva, 2006; Masina, 1966; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). Spoken English in these activities may not be as academic as palagi students' English, because Pacific Island students normally mix English language with indigenous language to express their ideas. Macpherson, Spoonley and Anae (2001), in researching the role of first language (mother-tongue) in the learning of English (at age 5 years and above), discovered that the learner's first language helps to improve and

speed up the learning of the English language. According to Livingstone (1997) this is a faster way to achieve better results for Pasifika students.

All the researchers in this chapter agree that recognising the students' cultures is important for successful learning. Many Pacific Island students in New Zealand struggle in schools because they do not understand their school culture. Some parents also believe that fa'apapalagi is better than fa'asamoa and are encouraging their children to learn just fa'apapalagi (Pasikale, 1996; Roberts, 1999). Such setbacks have led educators, parents, community leaders and teachers' to urge students to understand their indigenous culture and language so they can be confident in school (Livingstone, 1991; Mitchell, McGee, Moltzen & Oliver, 1993). Schools need to provide a better environment for Pasifika students so that they are not alienated but feel comfortable (Fusitua & Coxon, 1998). These approaches will make many more of students interested in learning, and produce results that will please both the government and parents.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has examined important theories and methods relating to the academic achievements of Samoan students in New Zealand. These contribute to the understanding of how Samoan secondary students learn and achieve. Key factors such as culture; family values and traditions; school and family and community partnerships; traditional approaches; and teacher development have been identified as significant aspects for improvement. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory has particular importance. It is viewed as a perspective that can unite and integrate the different explanations of what accounts for learning behaviour. The intention of this study is to gather ideas from Samoan students that can add to the understanding of these factors. In specific terms, the research question is: 'What do Samoan secondary students perceive as important motivating factors for their educational success or failure?' and by default 'What do the students perceive as obstacles to success?' Little attention has been directed at examining student perspectives regarding their schooling success and this study has attempted to address this issue.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

Despite the changes in the education system of New Zealand, the lack of achievement of Pacific Island secondary students is considered a serious problem (Ministry of Education, 1999; 2000; 2001). Both New Zealand and international literature have identified a range of factors impacting on successful achievement and the causes of failure. However, the extent to which this is applicable to Samoan students in New Zealand remains largely unknown. In this study, the researcher gathered views from a number of successful Samoan students about significant factors relating to their success. Students' viewpoints have not generally been acknowledged and these key participants' viewpoints have not been emphasised by New Zealand educators possibly because the educational approaches and practices have been based upon universal ideologies and directed by researchers (Thrupp, 1999).

This research takes the position that the answers for success (and perhaps failure) may be within the Samoan students themselves because they are the recipients of the education, understand their schooling situation and have an important perspective to present. It was decided that for this research a qualitative approach was required to gather information from the students and a research model was established to support this. It was considered that the students' views could assist in the understanding how best to assist Samoan students to become successful achievers.

The overarching question in this research, therefore, relates to the perspective of successful Samoan high school students –to what do they attribute to for their success.

#### **Perspective of the Researcher**

The perspective of the researcher is an important aspect to define in qualitative research as it is an issue related to the validity of the study. In the first instance the researcher's perspective has been influenced by a number

of observations. In the seven years that the researcher was involved in New Zealand education he became aware that significant numbers of Samoan students leave secondary schools after Year 13 (form 7) without any qualification, which is higher than for other ethnic groups (Ministry of Education, 2000; 2003; Melville, 2003; Pasikale, 1996). Many Samoans in Samoa in the past wanted their children to reach year 12 and 13 because this seems to be a higher achievement benchmark to them. Some believed that many Samoan students failed at these levels because of their traditional belief which suggested that finishing Years 12 and 13 equates with being intelligent (Tamati, 1983). New Zealand secondary schools also do not have entry examinations to level 12 and 13 and many Samoans did not work hard to win places in these classes.

In essence the researcher's perspective has been influenced by three inter-related issues. Firstly, the students' perspectives – there has been little research on the students' perspectives of their education and Kessariss and Lenoy (2002) noted more is needed to be done in this area. There are some pointers in the literature however, for example, Hattie's (1999) investigation revealed that the voices of students can also contribute to the understanding of how Samoan students become successful achievers. Such findings assisted the researcher in terms of the direction for the research.

Secondly, the idea of cultural mismatch influenced the researcher. From his experience, the researcher has identified a cultural mismatch between home and school as one of the major factors to be explored and its contribution to the understanding of how best to assist Samoan and other Pacific Island students. One of the causes of failure amongst ethnic minority students is the lack of understanding of the culture. The students and their schools often misinterpret each other's cultures. The critical issue is whether parents and students perceive value in the schooling, the role of the schools vis-à-vis parental responsibility, and how the families' cultural norms and educational beliefs contribute to or inhibit academic performance.

The third factor that appeared important to the researcher was explaining Samoan students' success related to the broad issue of motivation and the role of fa'asamoa. Samoans, where from a young age Samoans develop a

social identity (fa'asamoa) through the influence of their aiga, friends, churches and communities (Kinloch, 1976; Macpherson & Spoonley, 2001; Tupuola, 1996). The researcher believes that an understanding of these areas is important for the research because they are significant in the life of Samoans. It is believed these areas would be significant in the views of many Samoans regarding success in education. This research investigated the contextual factors identified by Samoan students that motivated them to succeed in education. The researcher also considered that the findings for this research will also contribute to the understanding of how success is achieved for other ethnic students.

The above factors define the conceptual and theoretical interest of the researcher but the actual decision to undertake this study was based on several issues. Firstly, being Samoan, the researcher had empathy with Samoan students. Secondly, the researcher was aware that the population of Samoans in New Zealand is the fourth largest ethnic group in the country (and the largest population from the Pacific) and its growth rate was considerably higher than that of other ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) so that it could be expected that an increasing number of people will be affected by low educational achievement. There is also a need for the high failing rate of Samoan students to be identified. Of equal importance is the impact this research will have on the overall welfare of New Zealand (Livingstone, 1991, Ministry of Education, 1999). Thirdly, the researcher recognises that success in schooling is of paramount importance to the future development of Samoans. It is essential that Samoan students are successful to improve their socio-economic standard and quality of life. Other ethnic communities (for example, Asians in the US and Aboriginals of Australia) have improved socio-economic standards because they emphasised the improvement of their young people's education (Caplan, Choy & Whitmore, 1991; Harris, 1990; Moffat, 1995). What is more is that attention needs to be directed at the low educational success of Samoan and other Pasifika students to reduce unemployment, crime, poverty, cultural loss and, most importantly, the appearance of 'failure' in future Pacific Island generations. As previously stated it is possible that the findings of this

research could be applicable to other Pasifika students because of the similarities of Pasifika cultures.

## **The Research Objectives**

In attempting to achieve the objectives of this research there are a number of questions needing to be answered:

- What are significant factors in the success/failure of Samoan students?
- Are the factors related to the education success/failure of Samoans similar or different to the existing research in this area?
- Are there any unique groups of factors, according to the students, that could explain Samoan student success achievement?
- How could the factors raised by the students in this research apply to other Samoan students?
- Are there any new factors that help to explain their success and failure that have not been identified in the literature?

It was considered that the similarities and differences to existing research would help to consolidate the existing knowledge and enhance the understanding of approaches to assist Samoan students becoming successful achievers.

There were two overall objectives. The first objective was related to the identification of key issues relevant to Samoan student success or failure and how these related to perception of success and therefore contribute to the overall understanding of ethnic students' success. It is acknowledged that the students' perspective is one aspect and there are other interpretations. However, it was felt that this was a particularly important consideration that needs to be added to existing literature. The second objective, is the identification of theoretical implications from the research findings and to contribute to the overall understanding of ethnic student success.

These objectives reflected the researcher's belief that an individual's perspectives constructs reality – that is, the individual interpretation of the

external world is how it appeared to him/her. In other words reality comes from within the individual not from without. A phenomenological research approach was considered for this study and a qualitative method was viewed as an appropriate approach for the data collection because it involves observation, interaction and conversation with the participants (Reeves, 1996), in this case, the Samoan secondary students. Conducting interviews was considered to be most appropriate because of the need to find out from Samoan students their perspectives of success achievement in education, and these views needed to be fully interpreted and understood to verify their meanings and implications. Packer (1985) highlighted three important areas describing reality/truth in an individual's views, ontology, epistemology and axiology. According to Packer, these 'zones' are an important tool to analyse truth particularly in constructivism where truth is based on the individuals' views – they explain the how, what, where and when of the information for research. An important consideration arising from this is that there is a need for teachers and educators to understand all students' views regarding successful achievement. Obtaining such an understanding requires a realisation of their ontological, epistemological and axiological 'origins' (Packer). An understanding of these origins will assist in the development of appropriate approaches and practices for Samoans and the development of education in New Zealand.

### **Ontological**

Ontology (also known as metaphysic) is the philosophical study of the nature of individuals' existence or reality in general, (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Ontology is concerned with questions such as; what determines behaviours? Why does an individual do things in certain ways? How are things linked? Bronfenbrenner (1987) described why people believe and perceive in certain ways (refer to chapter four for detail description). His concept highlights the need to understand the nature of interactions with the forces around that is they explain why people behave and believe in certain ways (Johannessen, 1996; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). These academics have indicated an important pointer for this research – that interactions with environment help explain who a person is (for example their characteristics, nature, personality and beliefs).



Ontology was considered as a very important part of this inquiry as it attempts to explain meanings associated with the nature of the participants, where in this study the nature of the students is described by their interactions with their families, school, friends, culture, socio-economic, politics, church life and so on (Tupuola, 1986). Emphasis was placed on understanding meanings associated with the nature of Samoans as such an understanding could contribute to an awareness of the students' views and most of all the development of education in New Zealand.

### **Epistemology**

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief (Armstrong, 1973), that is, knowledge influences perceptions and behaviours (Loucha, Elba, Hammer & Kagey, 2004; Marcia & Magolda, 2004). According to these academics, knowledge is determined by interactions with the forces in environment. For example, a person is influenced by his/her family, friends, neighbours, schools and so on. A person therefore, believes, perceives and behaves according to the nature of the interactions with the forces of environment and through that forms knowledge (Armstrong). He also pointed out that these forces are important part of human life and that they are the roots of human thoughts, perceptions and behaviours and they justify logic and meanings of thought.

Epistemology was considered as an important area to explore the meanings of information for this research. It is concerned with meanings associated with knowledge and experiences of the students. That is, there was a need to justify the students' beliefs, perceptions or behaviours for this is crucial in verifying the truth of their thoughts. Consideration was given to the nature of their interactions with the forces in their environments. According to Armstrong (1973), interactions with the forces in the environment influences beliefs and perceptions and as a result forms knowledge which is justified by actions/behaviours. The epistemology for this research provided a deep understanding of the information gathered from the Samoan students. It contributed in a number of ways. Firstly, it described meanings associated with the Samoan students' social, cultural, spiritual and historical lives. Secondly, it described reality located in the Samoan students' experiences and beliefs of success. Thirdly, it described the students' achievements as a

justification of their beliefs and perspectives. And, fourthly, it recognizes the other forces influencing the Samoan students' views. In considering the impact of the varying circumstances of Samoans in New Zealand in relation to changes and other forces influencing their lives, diversity in views were likely to be a factor and that could be problematic (confusing and hard to understand). The researcher however needed a deep understanding of these students' views and the epistemological origins of their views provided a clear idea of their thoughts.

Diversity of the Samoan students' views for this research was problematic and required an investigation of the forces (fa'asamoa, fa'apalagi, church, politics, economics and so on) that influenced them. These influences were significant in understanding the students' perceptions/views as they provided insights of the students' views/perspectives and actions. What deemed most important to these students were their families as family was considered central to their success and their life developments. Their experiences and knowledge evolved around their families which also impacted upon other areas of their lives such as fa'asamoa, churches, Samoan communities, the New Zealand culture and other influences.

### **Axiological**

Axiology (from Greek, axia, "value, worth"; and -logia) is the study of quality or value (Finlay, 1990). Axiology concerns emotions and feelings, which are determined by the ordering system of how people make facts meaningful. For example, all humans have values, logic and morality and they behave and act accordingly (Finlay, 1990). Characteristics such as individualism, personal privacy, emotions and feelings are also determined by these forces and these depend on how meaning is perceived. Truth therefore can be assessed according to how individuals perceive meaning. Axiology is viewed by constructivists as a very important concept in qualitative research. It assumes that there is no specific truth (morality and logic) and that people should respect another person's perspectives for they also represent truth (Finlay). Axiology has been crucial for this research project as it concerned good judgement and consideration of Samoans cultural beliefs, values and emotions.

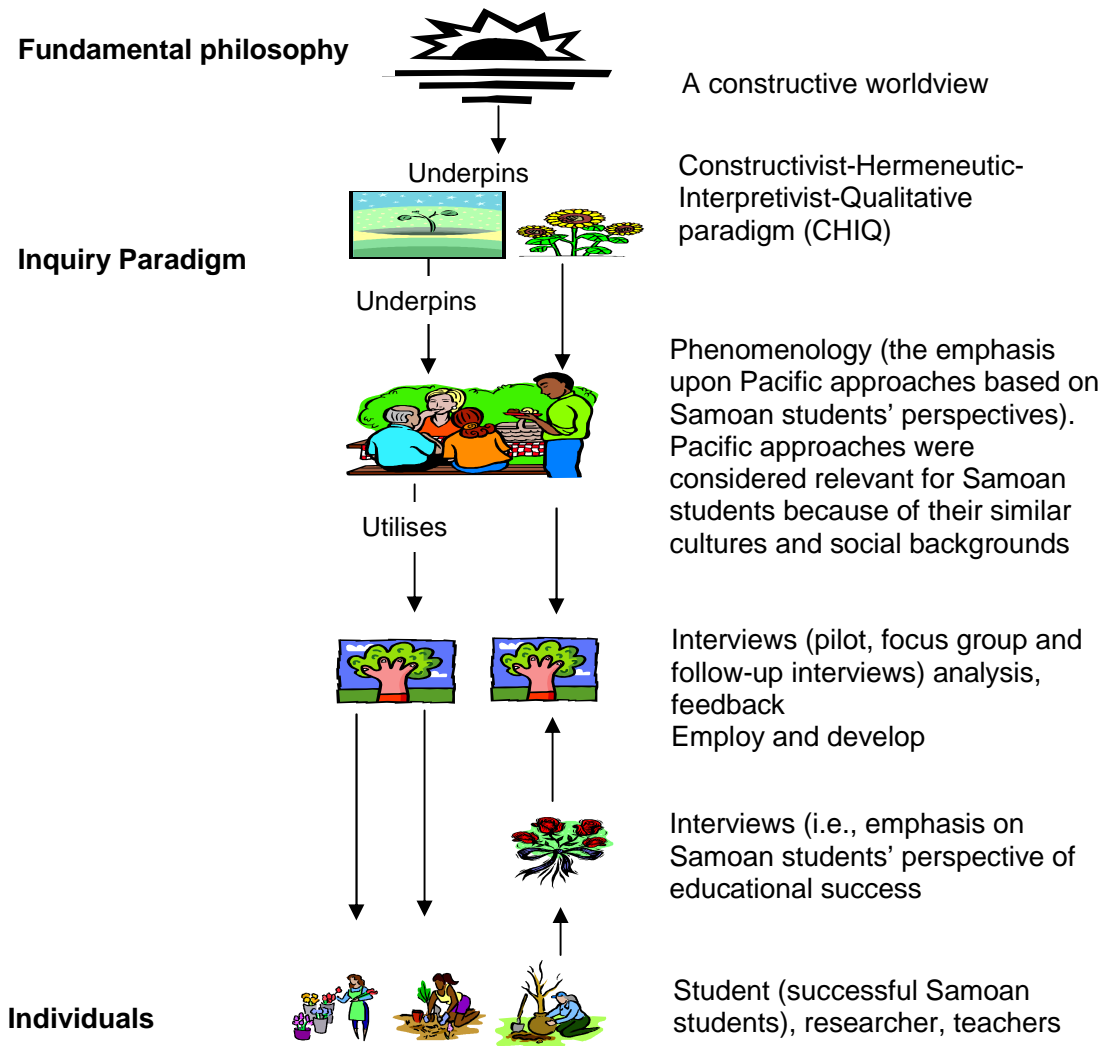
An ethical application for this research was made in accordance with the guidelines provided by the School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The application outlined the research objectives and approaches for data collection, which were considered and approved by the Ethics Committee. Letters explaining the nature of the data collection and list of interview questions were also sent to the schools and parents/care-givers of the students nominated, by their schools, for the interviews. These letters were approved (refer to appendix A, B, C). The axiological procedure that was implemented in this research was crucial. It provided the platform and legitimised the findings, meaning that the approaches and results were authorised and approved by authorities and the people.

### **The Research Model Approach**

The structure of the epistemological argument for this research, outlining the terminology, model of inquiry and particular elements of interpretation undertaken is presented in figure 5.1. The model for this research was constructed based on the model outlined by Reeves (1996).

This research included participants who all had different views of success but efforts were made to outline clearly to them the topic under consideration. Recognising the viewpoints of the students is critical an understanding of their experiences and how they became successful achievers (Nisbett, 1978). A research model which required focus-group interviews and follow-up interviews was designed to meet this requirement. As indicated, this research relied on student views of their successful academic achievements. All data gathered from the interviews required careful consideration and analysis using a thematic analysis approach. The processing of the data required four phases as indicated in figure 5.2.

## Methodological Terminology and Structure Adopted in the Study



**Figure 5.1: The model of the research approach**

A model based on Reeve's (1996) was established to assist in the understanding of the information gathered. Reeve's model outlines four steps which were arranged in hierarchal order:

- Fundamental philosophy
- Inquiring paradigm
- Model for research
- Participants.

According to Reeves (1996), the most important part of any research is the fundamental philosophy (see chapter one).

Figure 5.1 indicates how the foundation of this study is grounded in the researcher's philosophical worldview. This worldview underpins a paradigm, constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm (CHIQ) within which the constructivist concept and principles of the inquiry were framed.

The model for the research was designed according to constructivist's views and the key frameworks for using standard approaches for participants and any other groups. The researcher believed that individual's perspectives of the world change from time to time, possibly because of the need to adjust, or for more life improvement. Such changes impinge upon the evolution of thoughts and beliefs (Reeves, 1996), and these would need to be verified by the individuals because they have the best understanding of their own views. In this research, it is the diverse views of the students themselves on success that required clarification. The complexity of these views and their authenticity generated the need for a constructivist paradigm in the research. As discussed earlier by Tiatia (2001), many young Samoans in New Zealand also have their own views about how success is achieved, and only they can fully understand and describe their views. A constructivist paradigm was therefore considered for the research to assist in the identification of the success factors from the students.

The second step of Reeves (1996) model is the inquiry paradigm. The philosophical stance of this research underpins the paradigm (the constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm (CHIQ) where the principle of inquiry is framed.

The third step according to Reeves (1996) is the model for research and this aspect relates to approaches for data collection. Crucial for the data collection in this investigation was that the researcher understood the culture/language (fa'asamoa) motivating the respondents.

The fourth step in the hierarchy is the participants (Reeves, 1996). In this study the researcher understood the participants. This step is also a confirmation of data as it shows where and how data was collected (Reeves).

This research acknowledges that truth is within the Samoan students' views.

### **Constructivist**

The constructivist aspect of this research methodology indicates that the individual's worldview explains truth/reality and not the existing external knowledge that is independent of the individual (Reeves, 1996). Piaget (1950) described truth/reality in terms of constructivism as a concept formed in the mind. He argued that peoples' minds are influenced by their interactions with the forces of environment, and through that they behave and perceive accordingly. He pointed out that the nature of interactions with environment describes peoples' purposes and intentions which could be different from one individual to another depending on their circumstances. He believed that these are important attributes of truth/reality to the individual and that researchers and educators must understand this. Such an influence is discussed and supported by Bronfenbrenner (1990) (see chapter four). Constructivist ideas are an important part of this study as they focus on meaning as indicated by the individuals.

While individuals' views are considered as verifications of truth in constructivism many constructivists (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1990; Piaget, 1950; Reeves, 1996) agree that individuals' views can be 'distorted' and misrepresented by others including researchers. Piaget viewed the linguistic and narrative forms of participants' views as a way to verify beliefs and should be considered in research. The following sections indicate the significance of these in research.

### ***Linguistics and Narratives in Constructivism***

Many psychologists (e.g., Finlay, 1990; Johannessen, 1996; Mayer, 2004; Sweller & Clark, 2006) believe that shared knowledge and experiences are important in constructivism and these are often conveyed via linguistics and narratives. Linguistics concerns sound, structure, grammar, punctuation, patterns, rhythm and meanings and so on. All these characteristics hold specific meanings, and these are often use to express meanings of texts (May & Wright, 2007). Narratives are spoken or written accounts of ideas (Finlay 1990). According to Findlay narratives are concerned with language articulation and he referred to how language is used to present or report

ideas or events, for example, dialogue or interviews. Generally, narratives are referred to as written or spoken accounts of connected events or story (Johannessen 1996). Constructivists view linguistics and narratives as significant components of qualitative research as they assist in specifying and confirm meanings of data. According Packer (1985) narratives and linguistics forms of data are tangible evidence of participants' views and ideas. These ideas are useful for this research as the meanings of people's thoughts beliefs can be located in their linguistic and narrative forms and the interviewing of Samoan students are represent this.

Linguistics and narratives in constructivism are also important for data analysis. Packer (1985) indicated that linguistics and narratives are tangible evidence of truth and constructivist researchers often compare them to verify meaning, that is, linguistics and narratives confirm each other. They also indicate perception and behavioural patterns which are important in understanding logic and reason. Perception and behavioural patterns describe why people behave and perceive in certain ways (Packer). Another significance of linguistics and narratives according to Hunkin (2001) is that they represent unique meanings to the individuals. He indicated that sometimes individuals express their thoughts/views in particular ways (for example in slang or rap music) which is meaningful to the. He believed that aspects of language such as sound/intonation, context, choice of words, structure, punctuations and so on are very important in verifying meanings. It is clear from these academics' views that linguistics and narratives are an important tool for data analysis. They are tangible forms of data, and they need to be analysed carefully to avoid complication and confusion.

Linguistics and narratives are important for this research. They provided physical evidences of students' thoughts which are crucial in the interpretation and analysis of data. As indicated by Kant (1789) truth is perceived in the mind and that reflects through language and behaviours. Packer (1985) writes that linguistics and narratives are written and spoken forms of language/thoughts, both in oral and written forms. He indicated specific characteristics such as intonations/ pronunciations, punctuations, choice of words, motives and tone are important to describe meaning. In this research, the meanings unique to the individuals were presented in the

linguistics and narrative forms of their views and these were revealed through dialogue and interviews. These approaches also assisted in the identification of students' current conceptual schemes (Mathews, 1987). An important pointer arising from this is that linguistics and narratives are important considerations for verifying truth. What the students stated were indications of truth to them. These 'indications' were audio-taped and transcribed and through listening to these viewpoints this gave the researcher an impression of what the students meant.

This research focused on Samoan students' views regarding successful achievement for them. The linguistic and narrative forms of these students' views were crucial in verifying their meanings and these were required for the data collection process of this research. It was considered that the successful Samoan students' own words were sufficient to explain their achievements because these are genuine descriptions of their experiences.

### ***Advantages of Constructivism***

There are many advantages of using constructivism in this research. In teaching areas, constructivism assists many students. According to Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, and Chinn (2007) constructivist approaches in classroom are more suitable in student centred approach. They motivate and encourage students more than the teacher centred approaches. For example, a GenScope programme in the United States of America assisted the educational development of many Afro-American students. GenScope is an inquiry-based science software programme that promotes student-centred learning and teaching and many Afro-American students who have used this programme have shown significant gains over the research control groups. These students were successful because they instigated learning concepts and ideas which they used effectively because they understood them well. Constructivism broadens students' views and experiences and it provides students with the opportunity to explore areas outside classroom to enhance their learning (Piaget, 1950).

In research, constructivism recognises a wide range of views which is important in broadening meanings and understanding of data. Piaget (1950) pointed out that constructivism opens to wider perspectives and provides rich



information to broaden views and understandings of the world. Another advantage is that the meanings suggested by the participants (as indicated in findings) are often pointed out by participants which means researchers only have to transcribe them. What this means is that researchers' inputs are somewhat limited because truth is indicated by participants (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan & Chinn, 2007). The importance of such an approach is that the participants' views broaden the understanding of reality and the world (Piaget). In considering the nature of this research, the researcher undertook a constructivist approach emphasising the need to find out from the successful Samoan students their views of what contributes successful achievement for them. It is believed that the information from these students would assist in the development of appropriate educational approaches and practices for Samoans.

### ***Disadvantages of Constructivism***

While many believed that constructivism has advantages in many areas, some writers (e.g., Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006; Mayer, 2004) believed constructivism also has disadvantages. Constructivists often assume that truth is located in words but, that may not be adequate to explain views that are not true. According to these writers, constructivist data can be misleading particularly when individuals' claims are not true. This means that it is possible that researchers can be misled by participants if they do not understand them, that is understanding another person leads to an understanding of their thoughts (Riceour, 1976). Some theorists (e.g., Johannessen, 1996; Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006) indicated that constructivists do not make clear the distinction between the epistemological sphere and ontological sphere. They noted that constructivists often lack scientific evidence to distinguish one from the other and support their findings. Another weakness of constructivism according to these writers is that it is difficult to analyze the findings from constructivists' research because they are often diverse in nature and the researchers often consider them all as valid. This means that constructivist researchers often assume all views are valid even if they are not supported by evidence (Mathews, 1987). As a result constructivist researchers can be misled if they do not have deep understandings of the participants under investigation.

The researcher was aware of these disadvantages and hence he undertook cautious approach (refer to the data collection section). Gathering information from the successful Samoans participants was viewed to be an appropriate approach for this research because their views are reflections of their achievements. The advantage of such an approach was that the students have clear views of their successes because they understand their motives better than anyone else. Their views provide information to assist educational improvement for Samoans. Therefore the fundamental philosophy for this research is based on the constructivist view arguing that truth is within the successful Samoan students' views and experiences.

### **Hermeneutics**

Another aspect of the research model is hermeneutic. The hermeneutic aspect is a strong part of qualitative research. This term is derived from the Greek verb 'to interpret' (hermeneuo) and was used to explain the relationship between man and 'deity', in other words, the representation of hidden or secret knowledge (Heider, 1958). Hermeneutic was introduced into philosophy through the title of Aristotle's work (Peri Hermeneias 'On Interpretation', more commonly referred by its Latin title De Interpretatione). It is one of the earliest (c.360 BC) philosophical works in the Western tradition and deals with the relationship between language and logic in a comprehensive, explicit, and formal ways (Heider).

There are two forms of hermeneutics, traditional and modern. Traditional hermeneutic regards the interpretations of written and narrative forms of texts. It deals with explicit meanings of words as well as the readers' thoughts (Gadamer, 1994). Traditional hermeneutics acknowledges meanings outside the author's intent and recognises readers' assumptions as the verification of the meanings of texts.

However, traditional hermeneutics was found to be inaccurate in some respects because readers have always added meanings to texts that were not always true (Riceour, 1976) and they did this to suit them Heider (1958). Heider pointed out however, that meanings cannot be exaggerated by readers' assumptions because real meanings of texts are located in texts. In the past Biblical hermeneutics which have been the main focus of texts

interpretations have always been corrupted by readers/interpreters' assumptions (Riceour), which led to modern hermeneutic, (sometimes called contemporary hermeneutic). Modern hermeneutics is believed to have begun in the 15th Century when the Christians searched for new meaning of Christian doctrines and traditions (Ricouer, 1976).

Four kinds of hermeneutic interpretations have been used to translate Christian doctrines which were also popular amongst interpretations of other texts. These were literally hermeneutics (literal interpretation), allegorical hermeneutics (separate and higher meaning of text), moral hermeneutic (moral meaning) and mystical hermeneutic (seeks to relate event in the bible to event in real life) (Foster, 2009). The scope of hermeneutics has expanded to analysis the investigations and interpretations of not only of oral, textual and artistic works, but of human behaviour generally, including language and patterns of speech, social institutions, and ritual behaviours (Heider, 1958). Other factors such as presuppositions, pre-understandings, the meaning and philosophy of language, and semiotics are also important for providing empirical information for describing reality and true meanings of texts (Heider, 1958). These suggest that modern hermeneutic interpretation deals with contextual factors. Such an approach assists in the understanding of meanings of texts or other people's views. An important pointer arising from this is that true meanings of texts or other people's views are located in texts and areas related to their lives and not the interpreters' assumptions. As indicated earlier by Bronfenbrenner (1987) forces of life are determinants of reality/truth of a person's views. It means that in order to fully understand other people's views the forces influencing their lives must be fully understood. Bronfenbrenner's concept was considered important for this study where the students' socio-economic, culture, family and so on influenced their views/beliefs. Modern hermeneutic has also expanded to analysis because of the need to understand the meanings of contextual factors (Heider).

### ***Hermeneutic Analysis***

Diversity of meanings can be confusing and hermeneutics recommend specific analysis procedures (Strauss, 1987) to ensure meanings of texts are accurately interpreted and analysed. Analysing data require different layers

of interpretation, knowledge construction, social construction and historical context. Knowledge construction requires data to be interpreted and placed according to the backgrounds and current situations of students (Strauss, 1987). Social construction requires data to be translated and analysed based on social contexts. For example, social factors such as other people, churches, family and so on are viewed as significant forces in the social construction of meanings. When these forces are understood, students' needs and conceptual schemes become identified (Strauss). Historical context concerns interpretation of data via historical contexts. Other aspects (cultural, historical contexts as well as time and place of writing), are also considered in hermeneutic analysis. Placing data according to these contexts assists in clarifying meanings and implications (Strauss). Hermeneutic analysis procedure deals with the forces that influence views to determine their meanings. This approach was crucial in the understanding of the students' views for this research.

In considering the diversity of views by the participants for this research, the researcher undertook a hermeneutic analysis approach which assisted in describing the Samoan students' views. The diversity of the students' views in relation to their circumstances in New Zealand and other forces influencing them is potentially difficult for the researcher to understand. However, hermeneutic analysis approach has provided a comprehensive way to describe all data. The advantage is that it limits the use of researcher's voice which could be bias and not adequate to describe the students' views (refer to analysis section).

### **Interpretivist**

Another aspect of the model for this research is interpretivist. Interpretivists believe reality is not objectively determined but socially constructed (Husserl, 1965). It assumes that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Interpretivist attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings assign to them (Fay, 1987). This process requires the analysis of peoples' views in accordance to their social contexts and interactions (Husserl). The interpretivist concept for this research acknowledges the place of the students in their social context and this

provided a greater opportunity to understand their perceptions and values (Husserl & Husserl, 1997). Husserl and Husserl demonstrated this by placing data according to social, cultural, political, spiritual and so on to assist in the understanding of data. An important consideration for interpretivists, according to Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), is that data should be analyzed and placed according to similar meanings. They argued that one person's view may not be sufficient to represent truth. They believed that truth is about people having a common understanding of something. By categorizing peoples' views according to similar meanings assists in the understanding of their origins, implications and legitimacy (Husserl & Husserl).

Interpretive theory involves building a second order theory or members' theory, which involves thinking and belief (Schwandt, 1994). It also means that there is no objective knowledge independent of thinking. In other words, the truth is not the opinions and perceptions of the others. The interpretivist aspect is widely recognized in research (Schwandt, 1994) and the writer stresses the need for researchers to analyse the perceptions of participants in context. In this research the students' views are diverse and potentially hard to verify however, via the interpretivist process the students' meanings were identified. This process involves the analysis of the data from the interviews using thematic analysis procedures which assists in the understanding of their origins, implications and meanings (refer to analysis section for detail description).

### **Qualitative**

The qualitative aspect of research emphasizes the individual as the primary research instrument and emphasises the importance of the participants' views and beliefs. Finkelstein, 1998 wrote that these are often viewed as the truth. Qualitative research can be problematic particularly when participants have diverse perspectives and researchers take a positivist stand (Rolfe, 2004). However, most qualitative researchers have been able to identify meaning by focusing on the quality and not quantity of the research (Rolfe). This research aimed at identifying truth/reality based on the views of participants and qualitative procedure was considered appropriate for data collection.

The term qualitative used as the model for this research, concerns data collection. A qualitative approach was required for this research because of the need to find out, from Samoan students, their views of success. As discussed earlier by Reeves (1996), the meaning, as expressed in the actual words and ideas by an individual is how reality appears to him/her. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), what an individual perceives in his/her mind is how reality appears to him/her. Peterson (1989), an education psychologist, researched young adults' cognitive developments and indicated that there are links between perception, thought and action or behaviour. He believed that perceptions describe who an individual is He emphasized the importance for teachers and educators to understand the links between thoughts, behaviours and perception to fully understand their students. It was considered that the views of successful Samoan students regarding their successes were an accurate description of successful achievement

Particular characteristics of the Samoan students could be problematic for the research therefore specific qualitative approaches suitable for these students were undertaken. The Pacific research perspective provided important information for the research. Baba, Mahina, Williams and Nabobo (2004) researched fa'asamoa revealing that Samoans are sensitive about their culture and language. These researchers have found out that many Pacific Island people are shy and would not open to conversations particularly when they are exposed to an unfamiliar environment (for example culture). In recognition of such characteristics, the researcher demonstrated being humble by addressing students in an honourable way which led to open and honest conversation. He also showed humility by speaking highly of the students, their friends or families. According to Mulitalo-Lauta, (2000), Samoans become more comfortable in speaking and writing when Samoan traditional approaches and protocols are recognised and undertaken. These areas were considered important for the research, although some would argue that they should only apply to matai (e.g., Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). The researcher believed, that by respecting the students this would motivate them to talk and express their thoughts comprehensively and freely. Some academics (e.g., Baba, Mahina, Williams & Nabobo, 2004) also indicated that in order for researchers to be successful they must obtain better

understanding of the language and culture of students. An important pointer arising from this is that for many Samoans their cultural protocols need acknowledgement to be motivated and open to discussion.

However, it was noted that in the New Zealand context although many Samoans speak and understand their culture/language, they would rather communicate in English. Many would argue that these people communicate in English because they are more exposed to it outside their homes (Tupuola, 1996). However, according to Tupuola ego/pride has led to many Samoans being forced to speak English although some have limited understanding of it. He added that many Samoans equate excellence with being able to speak English and many Samoans communicate in English because of that. Many of these people however, are sensitive about fa'asamoa although they speak and practice a different culture. In considering this characteristic of many Samoans, the researcher believed that undertaking the research in English would be the adequate approach as the students would be more open to discussions and interviews. The researcher considered interviews as an adequate approach to obtain such an understanding and gather valid information from the students. As mentioned earlier, Samoans are very sensitive about their culture and language, and misinterpretations can occur if it is not dealt with in an appropriate manner. This is because there are values in fa'asamoa (in particular language and culture) that are very important (Hunkin cited in Singh & Sinclair, 2001; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

### **Constructivist-Hermeneutic-Interpretivist-Qualitative (C.H.I.Q)**

The constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative (C.H.I.Q) paradigm was considered for the following reasons. Firstly, the paradigm concerns reality as constructed via collective views. This approach was used in this research because of the need to gather information from the students about their successes. The focus was on the Samoan students' views regarding successful achievement for them. The students' views were considered important because they know more about their learning needs than the teachers. The paradigm was also viewed as an important tool and consideration for future educational development as it may assist teachers in forming appropriate teaching approaches for students. The paradigm

provided an opportunity for the students to fully express their views and ideas as it involved the use of interview questions which were directly related to the students' experiences. Secondly, the paradigm reflected a philosophical position of the research and the educational theories underlying them, that is, the students had a clear view of what is significant for their educational development. Thirdly, the paradigm offers an alternative approach for investigating complex issues without resorting to a single viewpoint or mathematical explanation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The students' views were diverse and hard to understand but, through triangulation and careful analysis of data, meanings were clearly laid out. What was considered the most important for this paradigm was that it encourages world views which enabled the description of the learning concepts which, in this context, contained the significant factors for success for secondary Samoan students. The paramount influence of the paradigm was that a wide range of views brings a wide range of ideas (Reeves, 1996).

### **Model for Research Phenomenology**

Phenomenology began as a movement in philosophy that considered the examination of objects, or phenomena as they present themselves in the human consciousness. Husserl (1970), the founding father of phenomenology, argued that reality is shaped in a person's consciousness. He added that reality varies from one individual to another and pointed out that such a variation is influenced by circumstances and other forces of life. This process was also explained by Bronfenbrenner (1987) (refer to chapter four for detail description). Husserl's concept was influential in the phenomenological movement that began with Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900-1901). Husserl's work reflects an interest in mathematics, language, perception, and various types of re-presentation (Embree, 1997). In phenomenological research reality as perceived by individuals is emphasised (Gary, Charles, Judd & Mook, 1979).

Phenomenology is useful as a model for this type of research. It implies that individuals understand more about themselves than anybody else. Therefore their views can only explain them fully (Curtis & Mays, 1978). Kestenbaum (1977) theorised phenomenology in terms of identifying people's individual needs. He stated that:



There are meanings present but not visible in the experienced situation, meanings which are not merely present in some passive sense, but which, in interaction with the world or environment, are constitutive of the situation as it is experienced by the organism (pp. 4 & 5).

Given the problem of the high failure rate of Samoan students despite the efforts by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, this research undertook a phenomenologically orientated approach with an emphasis on qualitative design to cater for all the Samoan students' needs and viewpoints. The phenomenological approach was informed by the methodologies of phenomenology (Hycner, 1999) and grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Hycner phenomenology is based on ideas of reality/truth of the individual's views where ideas are formed in an individual's consciousness and they reflected through perceptions and behaviours. Hycner's phenomenology supports that of Glasser & Strauss' grounded theory. Grounded theory suggests that the dynamic and holistic unity of needs, feelings, values meanings and behaviours are triggered by immediate situations and that these characteristics make meanings of situations formulating our responses (Glasser and Strauss, 1967). This means that the way an individual reacts and behaves is according to situations involving them. It also means that truth/reality is established in the perceptions of 'things'. Phenomenology as applied in this research project focuses on the perspectives of the students from New Zealand with a Samoa orientation.

No specific literature was found on the New Zealand Samoan orientation. However, based upon Fairbairn and Makisi (2003), Partington (1998), Reid (1987), Sullivan (1998) and Tupuola's (1996) descriptions of Polynesian cultures, there are similarities that need considering. For example, the educational cultures of Pacific people are similar in many aspects (for example meaning, values, people's behaviours, approaches, rules, and the curriculum), and these are significant in the development of education in the Pacific (Mamoe, 1999). Due to the similarities amongst of many Pacific cultures the researcher believed that understanding the forces influencing these students will assist in the understanding of Samoan students' educational needs. Emphasis upon gathering information from the students themselves became a priority as this was regarded as a more genuine and

authentic description of reality as they perceive it (Curtis & Mays, 1978). The students' views of educational success could be relevant to the educational achievement of all Polynesian students.

The phenomenological approach for this research, therefore is based upon meaning as indicated by the students. According to Finlay (1999), phenomenology is about reality expressed by the participants and not the views of observers. Although the researcher is Samoan, and has experience and understanding of both fa'asamoa and the culture of New Zealand, the interpretation of data was based on the views of the students. The meanings indicated by the students were recorded and analysed.

The researcher was well aware of the importance of accurate interpretation and analysis of the data as perceived by the participants, which led to the use of the interpretative method of analysis as outlined by Kestenbaum (1977). The model for the research has placed emphasis upon the authenticity of the information as provided by the participants and the CHIQ paradigm was preferred because of such advantages. Firstly, it gives an understanding as to why viewpoints are valid objects of investigation. Secondly the interpretivist aspect puts the analyses in context, presenting the interpretation of many participants (Schubert & Schubert, 1990).

A theory grounded in the perceptions of the participants was considered by the researcher as an important approach to understand Samoan students. Guba and Lincoln (1989) argued that a theory grounded on multiple views has a broad description of reality, that is, different people have different experiences, and their perspectives can assist in the understanding of reality from a broad sense. The views of many people were regarded by Guba and Lincoln as a more accurate and fair representation of reality than that of one person. The grounded theory was adopted for this research.

## **Methods**

The method for any research shows the way in which a researcher deals with areas of interest (Grierson, 2003). Ball (1994, p. 2) discusses a methodological aim for critical analysis – “To analyse, take risks and be imaginative, reflective when interrogating a field of knowledge”. These ideas

have been used in the context of the politics of 'market reforms' of educational policies, approaches and practices as well as socio-economic development. In this research the same approach has also been significant in determining the findings. There are other methods this study could have used to gather information such as field work and the use of informants, survey and general observation. However interview was considered more appropriate, not only because it gives prominence to the voice of the students, but also gives insight to their experiences. Interview also gives greater scope for follow-up questions where appropriate.

### ***Pilot Interviews***

A procedure for testing the quality of an interview protocol and for identifying potential researcher biases is the pilot study. This is where investigators try out their proposed methods to see if the planned procedures perform as envisioned by the researcher.

Pilot interviews are used to test the validity of the interview questions and procedure, as well as the competency of researchers in conducting interviews. According to Baker (1994), the term 'pilot interviews or studies' refers to mini versions of a full-scale study (also called 'feasibility' studies), as well as the specific pre-testing of a particular research instrument such as a questionnaire or interview schedule and consent requirements.

The term pilot interview or study is used in two different ways in many research projects. It can refer to so-called feasibility studies which are "small scale versions, or trial runs, done in preparation for the major study" (Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2001: 44). However, a pilot study can also be the pre-testing or 'trying out' of a particular research instrument (Baker 1994).

This research project undertook pilot interviews to prepare the researcher for the main interviews. It was considered that pilot interviews would give advance warning about where this research project could fail, where the research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated. In the words of De Vaus (1993: 54), "Do not take the risk. Pilot test first." Another important reason for

undertaking pilot interviews/studies, was to convince education bodies that the research proposal for the main study is worth considering (Baker).

It was considered that the choice of questions and the manner to which these questions were asked were valuable aspects for the development of the interviews. Townsend (1999) discussed the importance of accurate questions in interviews by suggesting that interview questions must be directed on the subject and restricting the interviewee from making exaggerated comments. Gower (2003) also argued the importance of the questioning technique for interviews but he focussed more on the manner of questioning. It is important that an interviewer understands the questions, is positive, friendly and shows a willingness to learn because this is when interviewees respond with enthusiasm and honesty. In considering the importance of asking appropriate questions in interviews the researcher undertook the following question route.

### **Questioning Route**

This guide was considered to set the agenda for the discussion and provide direction for the research. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), research direction should grow directly from the research questions and they suggested guidelines for formulating interview questions:

- that questions be ordered from the more general to the more specific;
- questions of greater importance should be placed early, near the top of the guide, while those of a lesser significance should be placed near the end.

As these two principles appear to be conflicting, the researcher started with general questions and then moved to specific questions and then back to a set of more general questions. This approach, from the general to specific, engaged the interest of participants quickly. It was considered that such an approach was important to set the discussion on a track.

### **Number of Questions Asked**

Kreuger (1988) suggests that a focused interview will include less than ten questions with the best number around five or six. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) proposed that most interview guides should consist of fewer than a

dozen questions. These academics agreed that too many questions can be boring and that too many questions could drive the interest of participants away. These points were considered and hence, seven questions were required for the interviews for this research.

### **Types of Questions**

It was considered that unstructured and open-ended questions would allow respondents to answer from a variety of dimensions (refer to appendix B). The questions were carefully selected and phrased in advance to elicit maximum responses by all participants. Questions that included words such as how, why, under what conditions, and similar probes were asked. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) reflected on these types of questions stating that they suggest to respondents that the researcher was interested in complexity and in facilitating a discussion. However, Kreuger (1988) argued that such questions should be rarely used in a focus group as they force participants to provide quick answers that seem rational or appropriate to the situation. As indicated earlier, the researcher asked general questions which motivated and aroused student's' interest. All questions were answered with reference to the students' experience. Before the pilot interview started the researcher checked if the consent forms are signed by the parents/caregivers of the students. It was important that the students had permission to attend the interviews for ethical reasons. All pilot interviews for the research were audio-taped. The recording process for these interviews was important in the preparation for the actual interviews.

In conducting the pilot interviews, the researcher read out the questions and the students orally answered the question. The researcher decided to run through the complete interviews without interruptions or "time outs" to discuss or reflect on the proceedings.

Once the interviews were completed, the researcher critiqued the them. This process was accomplished in a number of ways. The researcher played back the recordings and revised the questions before the actual interviews. Notes were made on what seemed to work and not work well in the interviews. In examining the responses in the interviews the researcher noted follow-up questions and noted reactions to what was said and not said. Throughout this

process moments of surprise, frustrations, and satisfactions were noted and assessed in relation to what was happening and not happening in the interview.

In the modifications process, the original list of questions was edited and annotated. Editing tools, found in software applications such as Microsoft Word, was used to track changes being made and to insert comments to generate an audit trail in the question development and refinement process.

In addition to these techniques the researcher used methods such as journaling (Meloy, 1994) to examine thoughts and impressions that surfaced during the interview which might bias the collection and analysis of the “real” interviews of the study. In the journaling approach, the researcher recorded and transcribed the thoughts by the students after the interview. This was done with a recorder. This process has helped the researcher identify unclear or unrecognized thoughts, feelings, and impressions which might have led to bias. This aided the researcher in developing empathy for the participants in the study and identified some vulnerability or ethical concerns in asking certain questions.

The data generated via the pilot interviews for this research were analysed just as the data from the actual interviews. This analysis helped the researcher identify the students’ thoughts and assumptions regarding what a participant might say in response to the questions being asked. It also gave the researcher practice (analysing data) prior to the main interviews.

### ***Focus Group Interviews***

Focus groups were originally called "focused interviews" or "group depth interviews". The approach was developed after World War II to evaluate audience response to radio programmes (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Radio authorities believed that audiences had the best views of radio programmes because they were the recipients. The approach became recognized by many disciplines because it supported the concept that reality is socially constructed (Stewart & Shamdasani). Since then social scientists and programme evaluators have found focus groups to be useful in

understanding how or why people hold certain beliefs about a topic or program of interest.

In this research focus group interviews were crucial in gathering information from the Samoan students regarding their success. The approach encouraged the students to express and share views as well as confirming each other's views. Focus group interviews were undertaken after the pilot interviews. There were six groups and each group had six members. Focus group interviews were considered an appropriate approach because these students are more open when they worked in groups and that is crucial in the understanding of their views and experiences. Focus group interviews motivated the students to express their views of success, and that was significant in the diversity of factors indicated by the students. These participants were selected because they were identified by their schools and peers as successful achievers. Krueger, (1988) believed that the moderator or interviewer should create a nurturing environment that encouraged different perceptions and points of view, without pressuring the participants to vote, plan or reach consensus.

It was considered that the groups should not be so large to stop participation by most members nor should it be so small, (Kreuger, 1988). Smaller groups (4–6 people) were viewed as preferable where the participants had a great deal to share and had intense or lengthy experiences about the topic of discussion.

A triangulation process in the form of students confirming one another's viewpoints and students confirming the factors in the research literature occurred. This assisted in understanding their experience (Mitchell, McGee, Moltzen and Oliver, 1999). Although 45 minutes for a focus-group interview was considered to be more efficient for this type of interview (to maintain the students' interest and enthusiasm), many important and relevant factors mentioned by the students were not fully explored. However, according to Eccel (1994), effective interview questions need to be semi-structured and open-ended to elicit student's own experiences, rather than their abstract thoughts so the interview questions should draw in the interviewees' wider experiences of the world relating to the issues raised. In this research the

interview questions were open-ended which was significant in drawing a wide range of views from the students.

### **Advantages of Focus Group Interviews**

There are advantages of focus group interviews which deemed most important for this research. According to Mitchell, McGee, Moltzen and Oliver (1999):

- In focus group interviews people naturally interact and are influenced by others (high face validity).
- A focus group generally requires less preparation and is comparatively easy to conduct.
- Researchers can interact directly with respondents (which allows clarification, follow-up questions, and probing). Information gained from non-verbal responses can be used to supplement (or even contradict) verbal responses.
- The data uses respondents' own words; which can obtain deeper levels of meaning, make important connections, and identify subtle nuances.
- Focus groups are very flexible; and can be used with wide range of topics, individuals, and settings
- Results are easy to understand and more accessible to lay audiences or decision-makers than complex statistical analyses of survey data.

These advantages reflected in the smooth running of focus interviews for this research. There were imaginative and absorbing views by the students and they were responsive to questions by being positive and considerate toward the other students and researcher. Students were comfortable and felt 'good' toward each other and they gave a range of important and interesting factors which contributed in the understanding of their success in education.

### **Disadvantages of Focus Group Interviews**

- Focus group interviews are also disadvantaged in some areas which also provided guidelines for the research. For example



- Researchers have less control over group; less able to control what information will be produced;
- Produce relatively chaotic data making data analysis more difficult;
- Have small numbers and convenience sampling severely limit ability to generalize to larger populations;
- Moderator may knowingly or unknowingly bias results by providing cues about what types of responses are desirable;
- Do not necessarily provide what participants say. Results may be biased by presence of a very dominant or opinionated member; more reserved members may be hesitant to talk.

In considering the disadvantages of focus group interviews the researcher undertook the following approaches:

- He emphasized the importance of students respecting one another;
- He asked motivating and open-ended questions which were important in gathering required information;
- He obtained an understanding of the group dynamics which assisted in the validity and reliability interview questions.

These steps assisted in a variety of ways which were important in the data collection procedure for the research. These approaches also assisted in the smooth gathering of data without being anxious about the disadvantages.

### ***Follow-up Interviews***

Following the group interviews there were the follow-up interviews of individuals selected from the focus group membership. These students were selected because the researcher noted their ability to effectively describe and elaborate upon issues. Follow-up interviews were required because of the need to further explore the factors identified in the focus group interviews – the limited time for group interviews was not enough to explore important issues by the students. Applebaum, Straker and Geron (2000) studied the significance of follow-up individual interviews in research studies and

identified some advantages for this approach in data collection. According to them, a follow-up interview provided an additional information to the issues raised in the focus group. They also suggested that a follow-up interview could replace the focus group as a way of initially exploring issues. Also for some, it allowed the individuals to express themselves more honestly in a one-on-one setting. It was noted that even though many Samoan students prefer to work in groups, the individuals for this research enjoyed and fully participated in the follow-up interviews. They were motivated by the approaches and open-ended questions, the general discussion of some issues about Samoa and the students' personal interests by the researcher. Other advantages of this approach were that the questions could be reworded and re-asked until the respondents understood them. It was noted that asking the appropriate questions made the students became comfortable and confident in follow-up interviews. Following the collection of the data from all focus group and follow-up interviews data analysis was undertaken.

### ***Thematic Analysis of Data***

The data was analysed following the grounded theory data analysis approach (Smith, 2003). The data gathered from the focus-group and follow-up interviews required careful analysis because of the need to understand the diversity of views as well as their relevance to the study. A description of the analysis process follows.

### ***Thematic Analysis as an Approach***

Bergum (1991) Merriner and Alligood (2005) and Walters (1995) have all indicated that in qualitative research it is a requirement for researchers to gain insight into the world of the participants. One method to achieve this is for researchers to be acquainted with the participants. In this research process the researcher needed to understand the world of the secondary Samoan student and he achieved that by interacting with the students and learning about their lives, interests and desires. Thematic analysis procedure requires interviews to be audio recorded which helped the transcription of the data, and more so, the validity of the data. The students had to listen to the audio recorded interviews and they confirmed what they said. According to Smith (2003), before interview data are analysed it must be confirmed by

participants as the transcribed data must accurate. Sometimes data can be confusing, particularly where there are a number of different views expressed in defining the truth, so by refining the data through a series of processes (for example, coding and placing data according to meaning patterns helps the researcher understand more about the meaning of the data. The research process clarifies the meaning put forward by the participants, making it easier for the reader to understand.

Based upon the approach advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994), thematic analysis involves analysing the participants' views to understand the significance of their logic and reasoning. This analysis requires coding, which is viewed as an important step in the reduction and analysis of the data. A number of researchers (Benner, 1984; Lieninger, 1994) have identified other advantages of thematic analysis in qualitative research. First, it helps to arrange the data in categories so avoiding confusion; secondly it prevents the exaggeration of data; thirdly it prevents the data being generalised, and fourthly thematic analysis saves time.

Smith (2003) demonstrated how thematic analysis can best be applied where he suggested that every time the researcher identifies a transition in meaning, based upon the response described, it needs to be recorded. Secondly, he argued that the thematic analysis clarifies the key categories arising from the interview data. Thirdly, that the data needs to be read and re-read, then identified into codes and finally that the data must be identified into potential patterns and themes in relation to the codes along with summaries, questions, used words, metaphors, expressions and so on. He argued that the behaviour pattern emerging from the interviewee's thought is important and must be noted because it helps identify their logic and reason, as patterns of thought help explain people's views in relation to their world philosophies. The procedures adopted for this study were similar.

### ***The Thematic Analysis Procedure Adopted***

A hermeneutics approach recognise thematic analysis procedure which was considered an important concept for this research because it recognises the forces that influence the students. The process required the researcher to interpret meanings expressed by the students. Audio tape recording assisted

the interpretation of data. The researcher listened to recorded interviews repeatedly to ensure all the words the students used were transcribed. The researcher used the process of transcribing data verbatim to give a more accurate description as perceived by the participants so avoiding distortion. This approach was used because of the researcher's experience of fa'asamoa and culture of New Zealand. His perspective could influence the data if the words used by the students were not accurately recorded and transcribed. The exact words the students used were analysed and categorised according to the meaning and ideas. Other characteristics such as triangulation (students debating and confirming one another's views) were also noted by the researcher which assisted in the understanding of the students' views. Furthermore, the data needed to be placed according to meanings patterns and implications. Strauss, 1987 wrote that the data should be coded, placed into patterns and then into themes (). All relevant data was analysed using the thematic analysis process and the issues arising from the students' viewpoints were categorised according to meaning.

All data identified were analysed through a thematic analysis procedure as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). The analysis of the data was undertaken in the following steps:

1. The researcher read the transcripts a number of times to become familiar with the material.
2. The data was defined as codes, by identifying meaning or conceptual units.
3. The codes were defined precisely and then studied to identify similarities or differences. Some changes were made. Some new codes were established and others were collapsed together.
4. Codes were then categorised in group patterns and the description of each pattern was checked to see if it covered all of the definitions of the codes.
5. Patterns were also established and linked to the literature.
6. Overall themes were established.

There were other characteristics identified that helped to explain the students' responses. According to Ziva (1999), it is important to note that the words people use do not always explain fully what is meant. The validity of the views raised in the focus group interviews were tested through follow-up individual interviews and all data was analysed using thematic analysis procedures.

The researcher also considered a hermeneutic interpretation to be more relevant in this research because it addressed the ways in which readers may come to the broadest understanding of the text and their relation to the audience within the constraints of culture and history. In applying the hermeneutic approach to the study the researcher interpreted the words and sentences, pauses, phrases used and other circumstances involved as identified in the data. This was needed because it helped to legitimise the perspective of the students in the data and it was considered that since there is no singular universal truth (Ashworth, 1997), focus should be placed upon meanings as emphasised by the Samoan students while transcribing, interpreting and understanding meaning which they attribute to their schooling.

### **Individuals – Inter and Intra-group Differences**

The research model adopted and emphasised the importance of the individual and the individuals' viewpoints. Kestenbaum (1977) argued that people are different and have different needs, beliefs and characteristics dependent on their level of well-being. Having an understanding of these characteristics helps in understanding people. Ziva (1999) has contributed to an understanding of why people are different in views where he indicated that in contemporary society people's views are different due to their social, cultural, psychological and spiritual exposure. LoPresti (1997) acknowledged this in his research, and suggested that it takes a wide range of views to make it easier to understand a subject. Curtis & Mays, (1978) continued by suggesting that the individual's perspectives of reality is regarded as more authentic and genuine because this is how they see it without influence from others. This suggests that recognition of the cultural understanding, and general observation of the researcher may not be accurate enough to describe the factors impacting on Samoan students' educational

achievements, and as a result, the perspectives of successful secondary Samoan students themselves are therefore required. Given this however, an interpretative phenomenological approach was adopted because this enabled a clearer description of what the students perceived to be success factors.

## **Research Implementation**

This section describes the steps undertaken to implement the research choice of ideas and the reasons why they were chosen.

## **Setting and Participants**

The interviews were held at the schools of the participants. There were 36 students nominated for the interviews by their principals. These included 18 females and 18 males, aged 16–18 year of both athletic and slim built. These students were selected for the interviews, as they are regarded as successful achievers. State schools with a high concentration of Samoan students were chosen with three being in Auckland and three in Wellington. It was considered that their views would contribute to the understanding of how success can be achieved for Samoan students.

The student's views regarding success was collected through a series of interviews. Six focus group interviews were conducted where each group comprised about six students and was followed by follow-up in-depth interviews requiring one or two students from each group.

## Research Process and Data Collection Techniques

The following steps were followed in the gathering of data.

### Summary of the Research Process

#### **Phase 1: Preparation for Interviews**

Information was gathered from the Ministry of Education of New Zealand on the schools involved in the interviews. These schools were contacted for permission and the distribution of key information i.e., interview questions, information sheet and confirmation sheets were distributed to these schools.



#### **Phase 2: Pilot Interview**

Three secondary Samoan students aged between 16 and 17 years were chosen for the pilot interviews. In preparation for the focus group interviews, all interview questions were used in pilot interviews and modifications to some questions and the approach used were made.



#### **Phase 3: Focus Group Interview**

Selected students from the six schools i.e., 3 secondary in Auckland and 3 secondary schools in Wellington were interviewed. There was one group interview, comprised of 6 students in each group, for each of the schools. Each school provided a list of 3 girls and 3 boys aged 16–17 years for the interviews. All interviews were audio taped as well as the behaviour characteristics of the students noted (e.g., body language and movement).



#### **Phase 4: Follow-up Individual Interviews**

Based upon the issues arising and areas that needed further exploration, the follow-up interviews were conducted – additional interview questions were prepared. One or two students from the focus group interviews were chosen for the follow-up individual interviews.

**Figure 5.2: The Four Phases for Data Collection**

An equal number of female and male participants were chosen for the sample as this provided a gender balance for the study and they were also selected on the basis of consistently good grades and high performance in all their subjects as determined by the school in records. Successful students of mixed inheritance (Samoan-palagi, Samoan-Indian and Samoan-Afro-

American) were also included. The reason why they were chosen was to ascertain if their views were different from the other students.

### **Outline of the Methodological Phases of the Research Study**

The four phases explored in this research were essential to validate and refine the data. The required data collection procedures through focus group and follow-up interviews were considered appropriate to gather valid information for the research. A series of phases was required in processing the views raised by the students.

#### ***Phase 1: Preparation for Interviews***

Leading up to the actual interviews the researcher approached the New Zealand Ministry of Education requesting names and addresses of 'low decile' schools in the country. The information provided also indicated school ranking based on examination results. A selection of schools on the basis of high Samoan students' enrolment was made. Following this, requests were made to the principals of the schools for an appropriate place to conduct the interviews as all interviews were to take place in the schools. The researcher emphasised the confidentiality of the research process to the students and it was decided that pseudonyms should be used in the transcription of the data, rather than students' names. The students were asked not to share information about the research with other students who were not involved in the interviews. The interviews endeavoured to draw out information from the students of their social, political, spiritual and educational background. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and this timing was chosen because:

- it was more likely to maintain interest and attention of students;
- the students would lose minimal time – the timing of the interviews coincided with the NCEA examination.

This timeframe was agreed with the principals of the schools. Consultation with the principals and vice principals of each school to discuss the nature of the study was initially made through telephone conversations, and further developed by e-mail or another telephone conversation. Information about the study included the information sheet, interview questions and consent



forms for the parents and students. Following the original request the schools replied by confirming the location for the interviews and the names of students they nominated.

The aim of the interview arrangements was to put the students in a central position. The purpose was to gather student's perceptions, analyse the results and formulate a 'theory' based on their views to discover their understanding of success. Drawing on the practices of phenomenology, the steps taken in the analysis of information built a conceptual framework based on the perceptions of those involved.

One of the issues that had to be resolved by the researcher was related to concern that this was a hermeneutic study emphasizing fa'asamoa as a key contextual and yet the interviews were undertaken in English. Did this endanger the integrity of the study? This was a possibility but because these participants were very adept at moving between the two cultures the use of English was not seen as being significantly problematic.

### ***Phase 2: Pilot Interviews***

In preparation for the actual focus-group interviews the researcher conducted two pilot interviews and these interviews targeted students that were not included in the focus-group interviews. This practice, in advance of the focus-group interviews, helped the researcher ensure the appropriateness of the interview questions and minor changes were made to some questions. Three Samoan secondary students who were also regarded as successful students by the researcher and the church were selected for these interviews. These students showed consistent high achievements not only in their school examinations, but also contributed intelligently to group discussions in church. The pilot interviews were undertaken in the churches of the students. The first pilot interview required all the three students, but the second pilot interview only required one student deemed to be the most knowledgeable of the three. The second pilot interview concentrated mainly on the important issues raised in the first pilot interview.

### ***Phase 3: Focus-Group Interviews***

The focus group interview was chosen as the method for collecting data in this study because it reflected the constructivist, hermeneutic, interpretivist characteristics of the design of the study. In this phase, the students were given sheets with the questions to refer to while the researcher asked the questions. All answers to the questions were recorded on tape, to ensure that what the students said was recorded accurately. Although the students were instructed to speak one at a time, interaction amongst the students, particularly when they discussed and shared their views was encouraged. The information gathered shaped the development of the study. Information gathered in such a way provides a form of triangulation although differences of opinions were also solicited. The answers to some interview questions were also linked to the literature review.

### ***Phase 4: Individual Interviews***

Phase 4 included follow-up interviews of students chosen from each of the six focus groups in phase 1. These students were selected based on their comprehensive views and understanding of the research context, also their contribution in the focus group interviews stood out from the rest, in other words, those who could articulate their position well. The purpose for these individual interviews was to develop a deeper understanding of the issues raised from the focus group interviews and to ensure their legitimacy. These interviews emphasised the phenomenological approach, which requires that the researcher attempt to discover the world as experienced by those involved in it. For example, the students were asked questions such as: "What do you think about what (A) said?" or, "What else do you think is relevant?" These questions were different to those used in the focus group interviews – they were seeking clarification, deeper insight and additional information. The data from the follow-up interviews was also analysed using the thematic process, and was found to make considerable contribution to the research outcome.

In analysing the individual interview data the researcher read through the transcripts to get a feel for what was being said first. Following this measurements and confirmation of all viewpoints was made through

comparison with existing patterns and logic, that is, coded data was placed in categories according to similarity of ideas and meaning. Then related key themes and issues were identified.

### **The Advantages of the Research Model**

As stated earlier, this research concerned Samoan students' perspectives regarding success. The key emphasis of the research approach was to identify new and unique ideas from the students, and establish theoretical explanations for these ideas.

The CHIQ paradigm has advantages for this particular research regarding Samoan students' views because it was concerned with subjective understanding. Guba and Lincoln (1989) referred to the CHIQ paradigm as an important approach for evaluation and instructional development studies. They also believed that this approach was important and gained rich information to assist decision-making. The CHIQ paradigm met the objectives for the research. As indicated earlier in this chapter, the constructivism aspect of the paradigm was considered to improve the understandings of the findings, outside their original context, and it was hoped that this would help shape the final outcome of this research. At various points the researcher referred to the socio-economic, political, spiritual and personal forces that had a significant influence on the students' perspectives to verify their origin, implication and significance. The perceptions of participants, or were important in understanding the success factors, particularly, the shaping of relevant educational theories and methods for Samoan students.

The phenomenological approach was advantageous in this study as it emphasised the need to hear from the actual participants on their views regarding success achievement in education. Based upon Curtis and Mays' (1978) explanation of phenomenology, it was considered that the views of Samoan students on their success in this research revealed valid explanations of their schooling. Stanley and Wise (1993) clarified that in phenomenological studies, data must be interpreted based upon the findings and a researcher must be visible in the frame of the research rather than just as an observer. Likewise phenomenological research can be easily understood because the participants have a better understanding of their

own views, and only they can provide thorough explanations of their own views. According to Hastie and Kumar (1979) and Klayman and Ha (1987), explanations could be flawed when they are based on assumptions rather than noting the exact meaning in the data. The model for this research indicated that reality is based on the views of Samoan students regarding successful achievement for them. In this study, it is through the experience of the students that the best explanation can be provided of their views on success.

### **Some Limitation of the Research Model**

The research model for this research has been criticised by positivists as being limited in some areas (e.g., Cuba & Lincoln, 1989). According to these writers, studies based on this model (Constructivist-Hermeneutic-Interpretivist-Qualitative paradigm, CHIQ) often lack validity, because it is impossible to link to scientific explanation or objective description. It could be said that this could apply to this research because of the diversity of views of the individuals (Ministry of Education, 2008). The model outlines that the students' views are how reality appears to them but does not indicate how these views are interpreted. However, the students' views of successful achievement were sometimes hard to interpret and the researcher had to deal with them in the individual interviews which assisted in the understanding of these views. Another limitation of the model is that researchers who are not familiar with cultures of the participants may find it hard to understand the participants' cultures as they may not have a deep knowledge of participants. In this research, the researcher had advance knowledge of fa'asamoa and that assisted in the type of questions asked in the individual interviews. The researcher's approach was strongly supported by Leshin, Pollock, and Reigeluth (1992) who argued that teachers have more life experience than students, and they can assist in terms of clarifying meaning and direction. In this case questions were asked to stimulate and motivate the students.

In considering the strength and weaknesses of the research model, the research questions and objectives focussing on the similarity and differences in views, new ideas from the students, and the theoretical explanation of the views were established.





<p>Dependability Dependability is concerned with obtaining the same result if the same research is repeated (replicability) (Hoepfl, 1997).</p>	<p><b>Setting</b></p>	<p>The interviews for the research were conducted in numerous settings in two main cities of New Zealand (Auckland and Wellington) and one of the reasons for the nominations of these cities is that they held a large population of Polynesian people. Another is that these cities themselves provided different contexts, which was important in broadening the understanding of the students' views but at the same time identifying whether there was consistency of results. Apparently, the circumstances in the two cities are different according to the respondents; however, the researcher has noted that despite these differences, the respondents had one value that was always in common – they value their aiga. Consistent responses were often given by the students.</p>
	<p><b>Peer examination</b></p>	<p>To make sure the participants' views for the research are credible, the researcher and principals of the school double checked the students nominated for the interviews emphasis was upon the successful Samoan students.</p>
	<p><b>Data clarification</b></p>	<p>The responses of the students were checked and clarified with them as well as relating their responses to community members' views. The move from the focus interviews to the individual interviews whereby issues identified in the former were followed up in more depth provided a further check. These procedures provided a form of member check.</p> <p>The researcher located whether the circumstance involving education for the Samoans in New Zealand was similar to the other ethnic groups in other settings and in New Zealand. In researching this, there was clear evidence from the literature that many of the findings from the participants matched the literature relating to education for other ethnic minority people.</p>
	<p><b>Coded procedure</b></p>	<p>All data were coded and placed in patterns and then themes.</p>

<p><b>Confirmability</b> Confirmability refers to where results are confirmed and supported by the data or others (Hoepel, 1972).</p>		<p>Various methods were used to confirm the meaning and truthfulness of the data. Firstly, the data were confirmed via triangulation – the students confirmed the other students' views. Secondly, the data were confirmed via the findings related to other ethnic minority groups. Thirdly, the data were confirmed via educational theories – the data supported the theories for the research. And as detailed, there is potential for bias in qualitative research and so the researcher has carefully detailed in a personal statement his particular personal position and orientation toward the research. This was undertaken as a means of overcoming or alerting the reader to any bias. Finally, in this research, there were some negative cases in terms of some of the data but on investigation it was found that the major findings of all the cases were confirmed as consistent.</p>
	<p><b>Researcher – positioning</b></p>	<p>The researcher's position for this study is stated earlier in chapter five.</p>

There were several focus group and follow-up interviews used. This process made the participants trust and feel confident in the researcher allowing them to fully express their views, and even more so, allowed for adequate study of the cultural context and adequate checks for misinformation (Davis, 1992). It was also important to widen the foundation of the credibility of the research in relation to what the students were saying however and therefore increased credibility was obtained from the wider community and fa'asamoa. This research gained considerable support from the Samoan communities (e.g., churches, aiga, individuals and the students) to support what the students were saying. Many Samoans have researched this (Ministry of Education, 2003) and they have also detailed problems facing the Samoan students and have shown interest in finding approaches to assist these students.

All the data gathered from the focus group interviews was discussed in the follow-up individual interviews to confirm their legitimacy and worthiness (refer to interview section for detail discussion).



## **Chapter Summary**

The phases and methodology of the research have been outlined in this chapter. A constructivist orientation was adopted and the research model developed was described as a constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm. This emphasised the validity of an individual's meaning, the interpretation of given data, socially constructed reality and the importance of viewing 'truth' as within the participants' views.

This research specifically focussed on the students' views relating to success achievement in education, and a phenomenological and the constructivist-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm assisted in verifying their views. The phenomenological approach was appropriate to gather qualitative data through interviews. In phase 1 of the research, the researcher made preparations for the focus group interviews. Phase 2 included the pilot interview involving students from Wellington who were not included in the actual focus interviews. Phase 3 was the focus group interviews, which identified a number of significant factors. Phase 4 was follow-up individual interviews involving the students selected from focus group interviews and followed up issues identified in the focus groups.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Results and Discussion: Phases 1–3

#### Introduction

This research aims to be descriptive and this reflected on the approaches undertaken. Firstly, the researcher adopted a reflective attitude towards the Samoan students' experiences of their success in education by putting aside assumptions based on his understanding of education. Secondly, the researcher sought to describe particular, concrete phenomena relating to Samoans. Howarth (1998) indicated the importance of approaches that deal with views of participants under investigation. He stated that for researchers to fully understand views of participants they must attain practical knowledge of views by listening and taking notes of the subjects' views and as a result this approach gives researchers general understandings and awareness of subjects' views. He continues by suggesting that researchers must obtain 'propositional knowledge' of the participants' views through analysis and exploration of the views and that is this approach would lead to a deep understanding of subjects' views (refer to chapter five for detail discussion of epistemology/ontology). This chapter discusses the views, narratives and experiences, of the Samoans students who participated in this research, regarding their successes as measured by the outputs of the interviews. All narrative accounts by the students are descriptions of their 'lived, or subjective' experiences and these were analysed to generate the findings for the study.

All data from the interviews were identified according to codes, patterns and themes and analysed accordingly.

The interviews involved four phases.

1. Selection of the schools and the students for the interviews.
2. Pilot interviews.
3. Focus group-interviews and.

#### 4. Individual follow-up interviews.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter (chapter five), other steps undertaken included contacting the principals of these schools seeking agreement to participate, the preparation of interview questions and other related information. The schools and suburbs, types of interviews, and students and their genders were identified by codes. Code 'A' stands for greater Auckland while codes 'O', 'P' and 'B' are for the schools in the Auckland region. The two types of interviews, focus group and follow-up interviews were coded as 'G' for focus group and 'V' for follow-up interviews. Code 'W' for greater Wellington and codes 'T', 'C', 'L' are for the schools nominated from the Wellington region. Code 'F' stands for female and code 'M' is for male. The respondents are also identified in numbers which ranges from 1–36. The codes are identified in table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Codes for Suburbs, Schools, Interviews (focus and follow-up interviews), the Students (gender) and Number for each Student.**

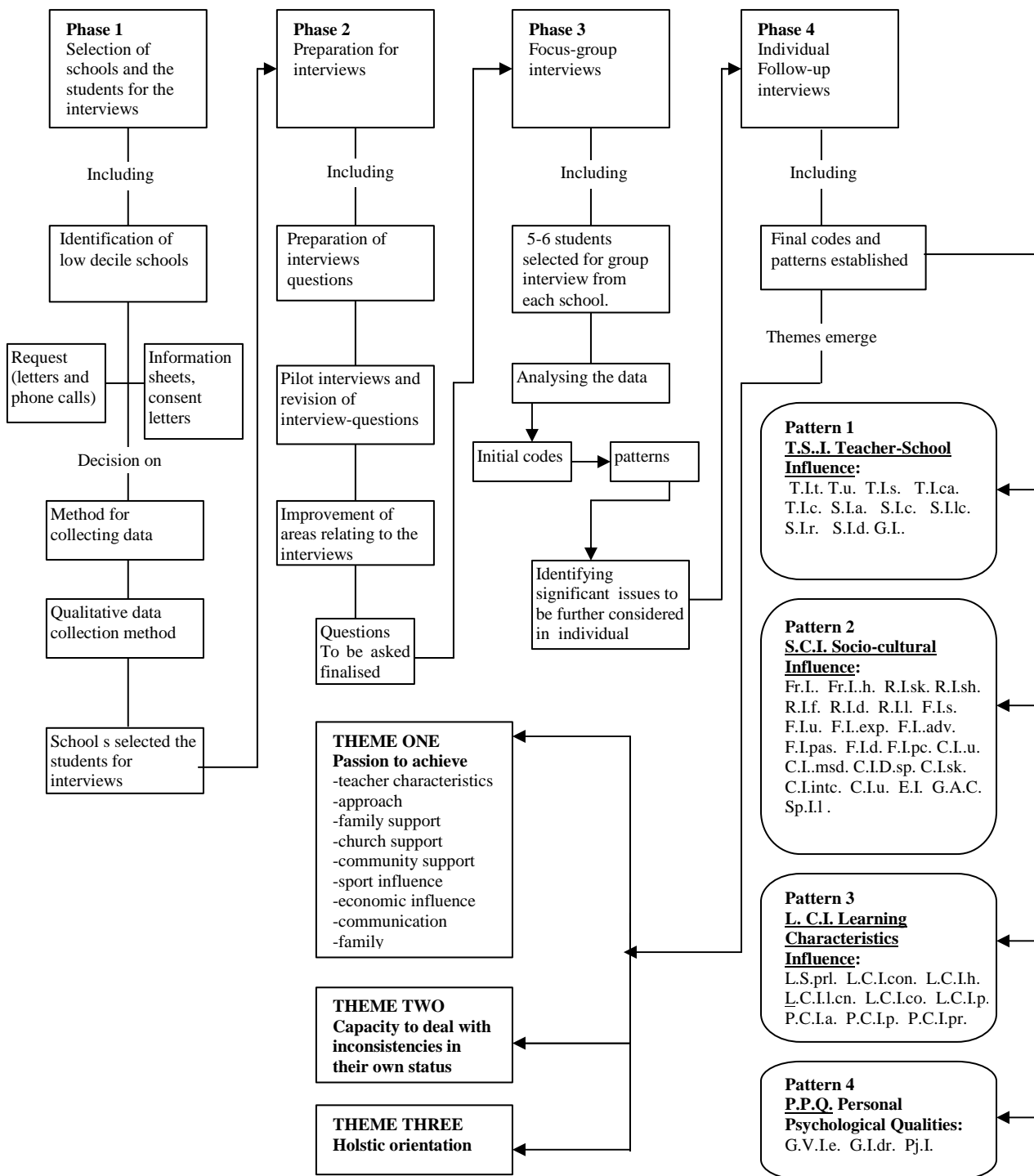
AUCKLAND	SCHOOLS	INTERVIEWS G – focus group V – follow-up	GENDER AND NUMBER (male)	GENDER AND NUMBER (female)	CODES
A	O	G	M1	F2	AOGM1/AOGF2
A	O	G	M3	F4	AOGM3/AOGF4
A	O	G	M5	F6	AOGM5/AOGF6
A	O	V	M1		AOVM1
A	P	G	M7	F8	APGM7/APGF8
A	P	G	M9	F10	APGM9/APGF10
A	P	G	M11	F12	APGM11/APGF12
A	P	V		F8	APVF8
A	B	G	M13	F14	ABGM13/ABGF14
A	B	G	M15	F16	ABGM15/ABGF16
A	B	G	M17	F18	ABGM17/ABGF18
A	B	V		F14	ABVF14
WELLINGTON	SCHOOLS	INTERVIEWS G – focus group V – follow-up	GENDER AND NUMBER M – male	GENDER AND NUMBER F – female	CODES
W	T	G	M19	F20	WTGM19/WTGF20
W	T	G	M21	F22	WTGM21/WTGF22
W	T	G	M23	F24	WTGM23/WTGF24
W	T	V	M19		WTVM19
W	C	G	M25	F26	WCGM25/WCGF26

W	C	G	M27	F28	WCGM27/WCGF28
W	C	G	M29	F30	WCGM29/WCGF30
W	C	V	M25		WCV M25
W	L	G	M31	F32	WLG M31/WLGF32
W	L	G	M33	F34	WLG M33/WLGF34
W	L	G	M35	F36	WLG M35/WLGF36
W	L	V	M33/F32		WLV M33

All data from the group and follow-up interviews were analysed, resulting in several areas that needed to be explored further in individual interviews. There were 46 codes identified, and these resulted in four significant patterns (refer to figure 6.1). These patterns were: teacher school influence (T.S.I), social cultural influence (S.C.I.), learning characteristics influence (L.C.I.) and personal psychological qualities (P.P.Q.).

# Phases and Key Results

Figure 6.1: Data Phases and Key Results



## Pattern 1: Teacher-School Influence

The first pattern identified was teacher-school influence and this is referred to teacher and school influences on students' learning. It included the teaching style and approaches, teacher understanding of students, teacher characteristics, school activities, school culture, school location and reputation. The teacher-school influence was significant in the achievement

of many respondents. It was included a number of factors such as T.I.t. (teacher influence teaching), T.I.u. (teacher influence understanding), T.I.s. (teacher influence setting), T.I.ca (teacher influence characteristics), S.I.u. (school influence understanding, S.I.ac. (school influence activities), S.I.c. (school influence culture), S.I.lc. (school influence location), S.I.r. (school influence reputation) and S.I.d. (school influence demography).

**Table 6.2: Teacher-school Influence – A Description and Definition of Each of the Codes that Comprised the T.S.I. Pattern.**

T.S.I. (Teacher-School Influence) This refers to a range of codes relating to school influences as important aspects of success.		
CODE	DESCRIPTION	DEFINITION
T.I.u.	Teacher influence understanding	Students are encouraged and feel positive toward learning when their teachers are aware of their learning needs.
T.I.c.	Teacher influence personality characteristics	Teachers' positive personality characteristics motivate students' positive thinking and behaviour toward learning.
S.I.e	School influence environment	Students are confident and more creative when schools provide appropriate learning environment for them.
S.I.a	School influence activities	Appropriate learning activities such as tutorial, group-work, outdoor activities (etc) create positive learning behaviours.
S.I.c.	School influence culture	The influence of culture (i.e., school and students' cultures) encourages students' positive thinking and confidence in learning.
S.I.lc.	School influence location	School location promotes students' self-esteem and confidence and more so, students' self-belief.
S.I.r.	School influence reputation	School reputation (i.e., achievement in examination, sports, culture, etc.) can assist in terms of lifting students' self-esteem and learning behaviour.
S.I.rs.	School Influence resource	Having adequate resource enhance students' understanding of subject areas.
S.I.d.	School influence demography	Demography promotes positive thinking and learning behaviours. It also promotes students' self-esteem.

### **Teacher Influence: Teaching (T.I.u)**

T.I.u. (Teacher Influence Understanding) relates to appropriate teaching techniques or tactics teachers used in class. All the respondents indicated a range of factors related to teacher influence teaching. Examples of these factors have been pointed out by some students. According to these students, their teachers had been creative in their approach and teaching methods by telling jokes and funny stories, asking motivating questions, using cartoons or referring to photographic pictures and other visual teaching aids which assisted the understanding of concepts as well as their motivation in their studies. For example:

I find my teachers very interesting because they tell jokes and interesting stories to explain their lessons. At times I feel restless in the classroom, particularly after the main interval. I often feel like sleeping during the lessons, but my teachers used lots of funny examples and jokes to relate to the topic they teach, which made me listen and willing to learn. (AOGF2)

Our teachers gave us more practical learning activities and many of my friends and I enjoyed that style. (APGM9)

They do not use complicated English words when they teach. They make sure we understand everything they say. (WTGF22)

They also asked many questions about topics to make us think. I find such an approach very useful because it made me think deeply about the issues discussed in lessons. (WCGM29)

My teachers often discuss issues related to my schooling with my parents. (WLGf24)

I do not necessarily have to put up my hand all the time if I do not understand something. My teachers understand me and they approach me whenever I needed help. (WLGf34)

These statements by some students indicated the importance of applying appropriate tactics and approaches for Samoan students.

Other students stated that their teachers gave more examples when they explain new ideas. For example:

I understood things taught in class because our teachers applied many Samoan examples in lessons. For example, they used Samoan terms to explain new concepts we came across. (APGM11)

My teachers related the teaching stuff to situations we can relate to, such as the traditional Pacific Island approaches or those that are familiar to the young people today. My teachers taught us based on our desires and learning needs. (ABGF14)

My teachers use lot of resources in class to refer to as examples when they explain things – they always use resources such as posters, maps, artefacts, teacher aides or community members. (WTGF24)

The teachers of the students have also applied other approaches such as the use of fa'asamoa in class. More than half the respondents believed that their teachers understood that they needed these skills because this would lead to successful learning. As a result they taught them how to utilize these skills in learning. All these students appeared to have strong links with their churches and community and fluent in the Samoan language. The following three students have highlighted examples of what they said. According to these students, being organised in their schoolwork has helped them focus in their studies.

They often use fa'asamoa to explain new English words. (WTGM1)

Fa'asamoa is my first language therefore the process of understanding English terms is not the same as the papalagi students. When I come across new words I always look for their meanings in the dictionary then interpret in Samoan. So, there are always the two languages involved when we need to understand English, and that takes time. (AOGF2)

There are wall displays in class particularly for Polynesian cultures/languages. We often refer to these displays to get ideas from particularly when we write historical essays (APGM13).

These respondents revealed an important issue related to the teacher understanding students - that is, teacher understanding saves time by trying to identify the students' learning needs. What this implies is that a teacher understanding of students leads to a better learning environment and positive



learning attitude which in turn leads to successful achievement (Bell, 2000; Mable, 1990; Pasikale & Wang, 1998).

Gruber (1981) and Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) ideas about teacher approach describes the point indicated by the students. The writers both suggested that teachers should always be focusing on their students to understand the approaches suitable for them. These suitable approaches motivate students as well as assist the students with regards to discipline and direction in their studies (see also chapter three). Bronfenbrenner (1990), outlined in his ecological system theory the impact of teacher understanding of students. He believed that the interaction between teacher and students influences students' and sometimes the teachers' beliefs, perceptions and behaviours. Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasised an important point that is relevant to the schooling lives of some respondents – that is, students' successful educational development depends on the nature of students/teacher interaction.

Another important issue that arose from teacher influence understanding is that teachers' understanding of the students' social characteristics assists in the identification of appropriate teaching approaches. This is confirmed by the literature (Esera, 2001; Iata, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007; Pasikale, 1998) which discussed approaches that were significant for Pacific Island students. For example, the use of Pacific Island terminologies, tutors, or extra tutorials for the students were identified as being helpful for these students.

Research by Podmore and Wendt relating to *Aoga Fa'asamoa* (2006) has identified important approaches for Polynesian students in New Zealand. They argued that the Polynesians are diverse in learning needs because of the changes in their cultures. They pointed out that Polynesian students are encouraged to learn when teachers apply the desired learning/teaching approaches for these students, such as group learning, peer learning, applying the *fa'asamoa* and the Samoan resources in learning, using Pasifika teachers to teach Samoan students, using churches and communities as bases for learning support. These types of links have been emphasised by Bronfenbrenner (1990) in his ecological system theory (see chapter five).

Many respondents indicated that students become successful in their learning when teachers implement practices that meet the students' cognitive learning needs. Three respondents indicated examples of what these students said:

Our teachers understood that we like working alongside our friends, so they placed us in groups with our friends. (APGM15)

Sometimes I say the wrong answers in class discussion or exercises but my peers did not mind that because they know me. I am happy that my peers accept me. (WTGF20)

I am part of the top group in my class and I am pleased that I am in that group because it encouraged me to live up to the standard of that group. I sometimes learn from the members of my group. I learn how to pronounce words and apply language phrases properly as well as the body language to expressing meanings. They have brilliant ideas. (WLVM33)

According to these respondents, their teachers understood that they like learning via group activities so learning groups were arranged for them. One of the significant factors raised by the respondents was eye contact. In *fa'asamoa*, eye contact is not encouraged, because it is viewed as a sign of arrogance. However, some Samoan students have shown that they have adapted well to the culture of New Zealand, and they have used this aspect effectively in their studies. For example, through eye contact they learn how other students pronounce words as well as their body language which are important in expressing meanings and so on.

These findings indicate that the teachers of the respondents understood the students well enough to be able to apply adequate approaches and resources for these students' cognitive needs. It also emphasises the importance of teachers who are equipped to teach Pacific students. "A better understanding of the learners' cultural values enables the development of strategies to not only mediate but also to facilitate the achievement of learning goals and outcomes" (Fusitua & Coxtan, 1998, pp. 23–38).

However, three the students indicated that their teachers did not always understand the difficulties of being Samoan. For example, some students

stated that some teachers treated them the same as the *papalagi* students in class (use of English) which discouraged many other Samoan students.

Some teachers assumed we are the same as papalagi people and they treated us the same as pakeha students. I mean that they applied the same teaching methods (e.g. speak fast) for all students despite the fact that some Pacific Island students are not fluent in English, and they needed assistance. (AOGM3)

I think papalagi teachers need to understand that the achievement level of Pacific students is much lower than papalagi students meaning that these students need specific approaches to facilitate their learning needs. I mean the approaches they understand. (APGF12)

Some teachers thought that all Samoans are the same and they applied the same approach for us. They did not know that some Samoans are comfortable with the traditional approaches while others are more comfortable with palagi approaches. (WTVM19)

The points raised by these students are that many teachers did not realise the difficulty of having English as a second language. Some teachers assumed that all Samoans were the same and they applied the same approaches in classroom learning/teaching. They rushed, and not explain English terms properly. Some teachers applied Samoan terminologies assuming that all Samoans understood them but they did not know that some Samoan students had limited understanding of *fa'asamoa* and some had different views of the culture because of the influence of lifestyle of New Zealand. The students for this research as well as some academics (refer to chapter three) all agreed that such an approach has created difficulties for many Samoan and other Pasifika students.

It is apparent from the students that some of their teachers showed negative attitudes toward the students because they did not understand the lives of Samoans in New Zealand. According to some students teachers perceived them (Samoans) as the problematic people.

Sometimes we (Samoans) are labelled as troublemakers simply because we are Samoans. We are also perceived by many as poor, dumb and stupid because we are Samoans but that motivated me to work hard and be

successful in my studies. (APGM7)

It is a struggle trying to fend off criticisms because we (Samoans) are perceived as the bad ones. I guess we just have to show the papalagi that not all Samoans are the same. (WTGF22)

I think the papalagi students will face the same situation many Samoans are facing in school if fa'asamoa was the language of instruction in New Zealand education. (WLVM33)

According to these respondents, such a negative influence by some teachers has discouraged many Samoan students. However, they have used the negative views to motivate them to achieve higher results in education.

Teacher influence understanding (T.I.u) also refers to the teacher's understanding of students in terms of knowing them culturally, socially, spiritually and psychologically. All respondents indicated the significance of such an understanding to their achievements. The following respondents pointed out some examples:

When I made mistakes they did not correct you in front of the class but they kind of lead you by asking more questions toward the right answer. Sometimes, the teachers provided clues and we had to find answers based on them. (WTVM19)

My teachers understood that my friends and I liked working in groups, and they often set task requiring this method for us. (WCVM25)

They understand that we are sensitive in some areas, so they tended not to question our decisions. Sometimes our teachers refer us to Samoan tutors or other Samoan teachers to deal with sensitive issues in fa'asamoa. (AOGF6)

I feel embarrassed when teachers tell me off in front of the other students. Sometimes, teachers tell off my friends in front of the other students and they give up because of that. (APGM1)

I think teachers should understand Samoan students and to achieve that, they must understand fa'asamoa – our culture explains what and who we are. (WLVM33)

Some respondents indicated that their teachers encouraged them to explore new areas by asking appropriate questions.

Sometimes my teachers asked questions relating to sports, movies or culture when they realised that we were bored. (WTGF20)

I consider myself as a slow thinker, but my teachers assisted my understanding of subject areas by asking questions related to the things I am interested in which made me able to contribute in class discussion and other class activities. (AOVM1)

These statements indicated that teachers' understanding of the students enabled the application of appropriate approaches they were familiar with and this facilitated deep and imaginative thinking on the part of the students.

Tamasese, Carmel, Charles and Alister (2005), Mulitalo-Lauta (2000), Podmore and Wendt (2006) and Tupuola (1996) have all discussed the importance of understanding *fa'asamoa*, stating that an understanding of it also contributed to a greater understanding of Samoan people (refer chapters three and four).

Undoubtedly many Samoan teachers would understand Samoan values, which is very important to Samoan students. According to Mulitalo-Lauta (2000), the value of *fa'asamoa* includes being friendly, compassionate, love, obedient and tolerant, and in education, and it is not unreasonable for Samoan students to expect these characteristics from their teachers.

There were two significant areas related to teacher influence revealed by the respondents. Firstly, teachers' positive influence encouraged better learning behaviours from the students. Secondly, individual Samoan students prefer not to be identified as an individual out of the context of the group.

Hunter reported that research (Dominion Post, August 16th, 2006, p. A7) in some New Zealand schools in Porirua revealed that many Polynesian and Māori students do not always ask questions or make enquiries in class because they believe that if they do other students will refer to them as being dumb. In the experience of the researcher and in relation to *palagi* students, it seems that many Samoans are reserved people, who generally prefer to

only discuss many matters amongst family members. Some teachers demonstrated the advantage of understanding *fa'asamoa* in this respect and many of these students appreciated it. It is apparent that Samoan students tend to feel embarrassed if they are corrected in front of other students. Jones (1991) confirmed several of these points. She pointed out that Samoan and other Pacific Island students are shy people and many failed in their schooling because their teachers did not understand them and the teachers applied approaches that were not suitable for these students. For example, it was noted that for many of these students some teachers exposed (for example told off, corrected, or blamed wrongly in front of others unnecessarily), which contributed to their failing (Jones, 1991).

T.I.u. also implies and reinforces the view that teachers' understanding of the students' native language and culture could be helpful in the students' schooling. Three quarters of the students indicated that *fa'asamoa* was significant to their schooling and some of these students indicated:

I felt more comfortable when Samoan teachers were around because they understand me. I think it's because they understood *fa'asamoa*. They also seemed to know the things I am interested in like music, sports, food, current events, and they used those effectively to encourage me. (APGM7)

I feel happy and encouraged when my teachers apply Samoan concepts in class. They have a very good understanding of the culture even though they are not Samoans and I am more open to them than those who do not understand *fa'asamoa*. (WTGF20)

When we discussed topics that involved *fa'asamoa*, also led by a Samoan teacher, my friends and I tended to enjoy and dominate these discussions. We were more familiar with these contents because we practise them. It's like you've already known them because it's in your conscious mind. (WCGM25)

These respondents indicated that their teachers' understanding of Samoan students has motivated them in their studies. This involves an understanding of *fa'asamoa*, understanding the nature of the students.

Other respondents pointed out that teachers' understanding of the teaching/learning approaches and the condition of Samoan students in New Zealand motivated them and many of their Samoan friends.

Our teachers understood that we like working alongside our friends, so they placed us in groups with our friends. (AOGM3)

Our teachers gave us more practical learning, like activity work, and many of my friends and I enjoy that style. (APGF14)

Our learning style is what makes us interested in class, because we understand it. (WTGM23)

I think if teachers understand the learning style of Samoan students, then they will be able to apply appropriate approaches for these students (WLGf32).

If we did not use our preferred learning style, I think we would not be able to achieve the results. Our learning style is important to us because it allows us expansive thinking. If we follow another learning style, then we would be more worried about the learning style and not the work we are given. (WCGM27)

Other students indicated that the involvement of Samoan teachers in classroom teaching would have been helpful for educational development of Samoan students.

It is much easier for us (understanding learning contents) when we have Samoan teachers around. They have a natural understanding of Samoans and they can relate well with Samoan students. (WTGF20)

The presence of Samoan teachers makes me confident though. I think it is because they are Samoans (WCGM23).

They can enhance Samoan students' understanding of stuffs by using the Samoan language and culture. (ABGM13)

One of the significant findings by the AIMHI (Fusitua & Coxon, 1998) investigative groups was the involvement of 'native' teachers in teaching. This is recognised in New Zealand by many schools, and has been useful to many Samoan secondary students. More than three quarters of the students

stated the significance of Samoan teachers to their achievements and the respondents pointed out some examples of the points they made. It was noted from the interview data that the presence of Samoan teachers in classrooms made these Samoan students feel more relaxed and comfortable. It is likely that many students were more comfortable and at ease with Samoan teachers because of their understanding of *fa'asamoa* in terms of church communities, *aiga* and other cultural activities. It could be argued that the students themselves also believed that Samoan teachers have a better understanding of Samoan students because they have a better understanding of *fa'asamoa* in terms of language and culture (Baba, Mahina, Williams, & Nabobo-Baba, 2004).

Tupuola (1996) explained the role of native culture/language in the schooling of Samoan students by pointing out that many Samoan students relate well to lessons especially when their culture/language is being used (Tupuola). This is because culture/language shapes knowledge and the understanding of the world (Hunkin, 2001; Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001). This suggests that Samoan and other Polynesian students will always feel more comfortable when their native language/cultures are involved in their schooling. As indicated earlier by Podmore and Wendt (2006), the students' language/culture can be applied in the most effective ways by teachers to enhance the students understanding of learning concepts. The literature has emphasised the importance of the native language and culture to the students (Baba, Mahina, Williams, & Nabobo-Baba, 2004), and the students themselves confirmed its significance in their schooling, particularly those who have English as their second language.

Alton-Lee (2003) indicated that an understanding of Pacific Island students' learning needs by teachers encourages students to succeed. It means that when teachers understand the students' culture it impacts positively on their attitudes/perceptions of the students, and more so, their roles in teaching. She added that teachers/educators can obtain a better understanding of Pacific students via their cultural background, gender, personality, family and wider affiliation. When teachers understand these aspects they will also be able use positive approaches to encourage these students.



The findings of Baba, Mahina, Williams and Nabobo-Baba (2004) relating to the performances of Samoan and other Pacific students in New Zealand secondary schools in the past confirms the need for these students' learning needs to be identified. According to them, many Pacific secondary students failed because their teachers did not understand them. A number of the respondents in this study also indicated that the teachers' recognition of their learning needs has led to their positive attitudes in their learning, and also enhanced their understanding of the learning contents.

These learning styles are associated with *fa'asamoa* and family practices involving listening, rote-learning and practical work. As stated by Tupuola (1996), these learning styles have always been required in *fa'asamoa* as well as the *aiga*. A number of respondents confirmed this, stating that their learning styles are learnt in their *aiga*, and they attributed their schooling achievement to their *aiga* because of that.

Teacher influence; understanding also relates to teachers' awareness of students' cognitive style. According to some respondents:

In our classroom, or most of my classrooms, we had to sit to face one another. That's how we wanted to communicate with one another. We have that eye contact that we used when we communicated with our peers (ABGM15).

I deliberately look people in the eye and debating issues with peers because that is when I can communicate properly with them. I feel that if someone does not look me in the eyes when he/she talks to me, I hardly believe that person. My teachers look me in the eyes when they talk to me and that makes me trust and understand them. (APGF10)

I feel that it is disrespectful to the teachers if I look straight into their eyes. To me it is sign of defiance and refusal to obey instruction and our teachers understand that. (WTGF21)

I have been taught not to answer back when I am talked to by adults. My teachers understood that I do not answer them when they talk to me. (WCGM27)

These statements indicate that teachers' awareness of the students' learning styles and way of thinking is important to the students. This has implications for classroom setting such as seating arrangements, teaching aids display and the methods of class communication. The data revealed that particular arrangements can result in many Samoan students being motivated to study more diligently.

Classroom setting and the student-teacher relationship is generally acknowledged in the literature as being of importance for development of thinking and achievement (Bennett, 2003). One of the effective approaches related to this was consistent disciplinary approach by teachers. It helps develop a better relationship between teachers and Samoan students (Kinloch, 1976). Kinloch suggests that Samoan students show a positive attitude (for example with enthusiasm and creative thinking), when teachers show a consistent positive approach in class. She indicated that in the past, Samoans reacted positively toward smacking because teachers/parents applied it consistently for discipline and there was an expectation it would be used. However, since the 1980's smacking was not permissible in New Zealand (Patterson, 1982) which meant teachers must consider alternative approaches for classroom discipline for these students. Tupuola (1996) pointed out that increasingly many young Samoans in New Zealand do not favour traditional Samoan physical punishments and this is probably because of the influence of the New Zealand culture. He added that physical punishment negates the relationship between teachers and students which could lead to students losing focus and possibly end up failing. Research by Jones (2001) indicated that physical punishment only informs students that certain behaviours are not appropriate, but does not provide a model for good behaviour which means, it is only effective for a short period of time. Favourable learning environment/approaches more conducive to development of the students and cognitive growth need to be established. Schoeffel and Meleisea (1996) suggested that it would be more helpful for Samoan teachers to be involved in teaching because of their advanced knowledge of the culture/language which is crucial for the development of approaches to motivate these students to think deeply.

## **Teacher Influence: Personality Characteristics (T.I.P.c)**

Teacher influence: personality characteristics (T.I.P.c) refers to the teacher being perceived as having interesting personal characteristics that motivate students. This factor is about the teacher's overall personality that defines that person. Various influences related to this factor were revealed by the following students.

Depends on the teacher. If I do not have a good teacher then I do not get along with the subjects he/she teaches. I understand what a good teacher is, like the way they teach things. I usually get more interested in their subjects. (WCGM25)

Good sense of humour; so they tell jokes and good stories. (AOGF2)

An outgoing teacher is who I would want to be. An outgoing teacher is the one that chats to the students like students themselves. Teachers like that are very easy to approach for help. (WTGM17)

According to these students, the teacher characteristics for all teachers included being active, creative, resourceful, generous, kind, trustworthy, passionate, positive, fair, and a sense of love.

Another significance of teacher's personal characteristics is that they can provide a warm safe environment for some students. For example, three respondents stated that:

Teachers must also show acceptable behaviour/characteristics to the students that will make the students want to study in. Like for example, positive, friendly and generous personality, resourceful, trustworthy, fair and compassionate. If a teacher possesses all these then everything he/she teaches will be appreciated by the students. (AOVM1)

We are taught by our parents and church minister about love and we also feel safe in an environment where there is love. We are encouraged to learn when our teachers show alofa or love (friendly, patient, fair, compassion kind, etc.) in class. (APGF12)

School is not your home so, it is important to have teachers who have welcoming characteristics to make you feel at home. (WTGF24)

As for most students, Samoan students prefer working in a positive environment where teachers are friendly, kind, compassionate and honest. When teachers show these characteristics the students become confident and motivated in their studies. In the literature related to education for Pacific Island students, the focus of investigations has been mainly directed at the students' characteristics (Livingstone, 1997; Ministry of Education, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007), but this research has identified that the students themselves also viewed teachers' characteristics as important factors in their schooling.

Piaget (1950) discussed the importance of teacher characteristics to children's educational development. According to him, teachers' positive characteristics (for example being happy, friendly, fair, loving, caring, attentive, and so on) encourage s positive learning behaviours from students. He added that such characteristics draw students' attention to learning instruction. He also indicated that students tend to become restless and bored in class when teachers do not show interesting characteristics, therefore teachers must be equipped to overcome that – interesting teacher characteristics create students' positive learning behaviours (Piaget). It is worth noting that when teachers show these attributes, the Samoan students noted that they would accept them.

### **School Influence: Environment (S.I.e)**

Another important factor was school influence: environment (S.I.e). School influence environment (S.I.e) refers to the students' preferred learning environment and this is related to the issue of parental over-sight of development. Some students explained how they feel when they are being watched or being overseen by their parents which to them limits development of independence. For example, three respondents indicated that they would rather work alone without their parents 'watching' them and many other respondents supported these students' views.

It's awkward to have parents around because you can't show your side. When you are at school it's like you are at your type of environment that you want to learn. With the parents in class, their being there alone prevents us from communicating in fa'asamoa. They only want us to listen

to the teacher all the time. I guess if your mom and dad were to sit next to you, you wouldn't learn much. It would be awkward. (AOVM1)

My parents believed that students must respect their teachers by not talking unless they are asked. There are many students in my class, and it is impossible for my teachers to meet everyone's needs unless we speak up. But, that may not be possible if we have our parents in classroom, because they believe that is rude. (APVF8)

They (parents) do not know the school curriculum and they can be disruptive if they are in class. (WTGM19)

Two students seemed to have been working freely because their parents were not involved in their schooling. They believed having their parents around in the classroom would prevent them communicating freely with their peers and teachers. Many other students supported the points indicated by these respondents.

Many of my friends and I feel comfortable in class when we are not under any pressure, like being watched by teachers or parents. We do not seem to think straight or be creative in our studies when our parents are around because we have this feeling that we have to do things based on teacher and parents' expectation. If school can provide a more relaxed learning environment for us, I am sure we can be more successful in the end. (AOVM1)

Learning English involves communicating with the other students. Having our parents around prevents that because they believe that is an outrageous behaviour. Many of them believe teachers are the experts and students must listen to them. (WTVM19)

These findings suggest that students' independence and freedom are important considerations in the schooling of Samoan students. Independency is highly recommended in New Zealand education because this is where students explore learning contents from a wider perspective (Pasikale, 1996). For Samoan students, teachers must have a clear understanding of how independence can be best applied for Samoan students and be mindful of the parental role for each individual student.

But, four respondents believed parents should be part of classroom learning however, probably because they were more aligned to the traditional guardian role of the parents. To these students, their parents were the key to their schooling success. Their parents' presence in class encouraged them to be more involved and participate in learning.

I think the influence of parents in school is important, particularly for the naughty students. Their parents will help teachers in terms of discipline.  
(ABGM13)

It feels like home when parents are part of class environment. Their presence makes me feel confident to speak and interact with the other students. I think it's because I've always had close bond with my parents.  
(WCV21)

My parents sometimes partook in class activities which assisted my understanding of learning contents. (APGM9)

Sometimes some students took advantage of the freedom they had in classroom. Instead of using the opportunity to share academic ideas with other students, they showed unacceptable behaviour. (APGM11)

The literature does emphasise the importance of parents' involvement in the schooling of their children. According to Esera (2001), the views and roles of parents in the schooling of their children can assist their children with regard to teaching and learning approaches. Bronfenbrenner (1990) indicated in his ecological system theory that parents' relationship with their children is vital to their development (see chapter four). Such a view is contrary to some aspects of *fa'asamoa* – which holds with the traditional belief that teachers are the experts and they are responsible for teaching/education. Interfering with teachers' jobs is a disrespectful act and a breach of Samoan protocol as teachers must be respected because they are the keys to wisdom and better life (Tupuola, 1996). It could be argued that some students who did not want their parents to be part of their classroom learning are strongly influenced by such tradition of *fa'asamoa* which means that teachers must find alternative approaches to facilitate these students learning (Alton-Lee, 2003).

### **School Influence: Activities (S.I.a)**

Another important factor was school influence: activities (S.I.a). This refers to a range of school activities such as school trips, outdoor activities, tutorial, group-learning and so on that can contribute to the schooling development of Samoan students in New Zealand schools. One respondent reflected on the importance of school trips to his development.

On various occasions my school visited other schools, churches and communities, which helped my schooling in terms of developing my communication skills and broadening my understanding of others.  
(WLVM33)

One of the activities indicated by most respondents was afternoon-tutorials and this helped them and many of their friends. Examples of the points these students made are as follow:

I reckon, more tutorials. We do have tutorials after school, and my friends and I have been attending them because we needed assistance in relation to the things we did not understand. We (my friends and I) have been fortunate because many teachers volunteered to take these classes.  
(WLVM33)

Maybe those who are struggling during school-time, and shy to speak in class, are the ones who need to attend in these tutorials after school. Some of my friends found learning during school time hard to achieve because of the English language, as well as they are shy to ask questions in front of other students. After school they have been very open with regards to asking questions about the things they did not understand. This was because there was no pressure from the other peers. (ABVF14)

I find tutorials after school useful to me. I hardly do schoolwork at home because my family are busy with fa'asamoa. Staying behind after school to attend tutorials allowed me to do my homework. Many of my friends have also found these classes useful to their learning. (WCFM25)

According to these respondents, afternoon-tutorials were study groups after school organised by their schools for students who needed assistance in certain areas of their schooling. These classes were often in the late

afternoon because teachers understood that many Polynesian students who attended these classes assumed that Pakeha students would identify them as slow learners if they knew they were involved. Another reason for conducting these classes in the afternoon was because of teachers' availability. As stated by the respondents many Samoan students in their schools found these classes helpful, because they are very shy, and this can impact upon their willingness to ask questions about their study. But attending these tutorials appeared to help motivate many of the students. The data identified such tutorials as being helpful in developing their questioning and communication skills, which helped improve achievement.

Another activity that assisted the development of many respondents was cultural festivals. Some of these respondents indicated that cultural activities have helped develop their communication skills as well as understanding of the other students.

Polynesian festivals are important to me. They provided the opportunity for me to meet other Pacific students and share ideas with them. (APGM9)

I find our school cultural day an important day for my development. I learn more about fa'asamoa as well as other cultures from cultural festivals. Understanding other cultures is important – it makes you become more considerate of other people. (WCVM25)

Cultural festivals help improve my understanding of my culture and promote Samoa. They also make me proud of my identity (Samoan). (WTGF22)

According to Bronfenbrenner (1990), school is one of the forces influencing human development. That is, schools interact with students influencing one another – through school, students communicate with different people. In this research, school has impacted positively on the development of all the respondents and many of their friends.

Another significant activity which assisted the education development of many respondents was sports. These students had similar views regarding the influence of sports to their learning which was pointed out by one respondent:

Sports as well are very important to me. To play against other students



encourage me to work hard on my skills. It is not a pleasant feeling when you lose a game particularly when you know your opponents are just the same as you. (WLVM33)

Sabbath and Sunday school sharing was identified by some respondents as significant to their developments. Sabbath school is Seventh Day Adventist Bible study classes held in the churches on Saturday (Sabbath) only. Other churches also have Bible study classes and they conduct theirs on Sundays.

Sharing during our Sabbath School lessons had been challenging for me. We shared ideas from the lesson and we are challenged by the issues raised. This had been very useful to me because it made me study my lessons to know where other students are coming from when they voice their opinions. I once got caught up in that situation where I did not study my lesson. I felt so bad after the Sabbath school because kids looked at me as though I was dumb. (WCVM25)

I am encouraged by many youths in my class – they are so creative in thoughts about the Bible and they always raise new issues that I have never thought about. Obviously, they have studied the Bible deeper than I and that has challenged me. (AOVF8)

Discussions in Sabbath school have helped improve my speech skills. I have learnt to speak in front of other students and adults without being nervous. (WTGM19)

My favourite activity at church is Sunday school – we share ideas and debate issues with other youths and teachers and that feels like you are part of lessons. Unlike Devine services, we just listen to the preacher and sing which is boring. Sometimes they (preachers) discuss Biblical issues that we do not understand and they do not elaborate on them. (WTVM19)

Another important approach that assisted the development of many of respondents was group discussion. Three respondents pointed out the points raised by the students.

But, I feel peers would be better off. If you are sitting beside someone who is struggling you can just help him. (ABGM15)

Sometimes we spoke our own language and people were kind of wondering what we were talking about, and we just translated it. (WLGf34)

Sometimes I get motivated when I sit beside more able students. They encourage me to work hard and be successful in my work. (WTGF20)

There were three important issues related to group work raised by these students. Firstly, working alongside students of the same cognitive levels motivated some students. Secondly, some students were encouraged when they work alongside other Samoan students. And, thirdly, working alongside more able students encouraged positive learning behaviours.

The research literature by Johnson and Johnson (1998) clearly indicated the benefits of group work for all students and the value for intercultural understanding. According to them students learn from each other when they are working alongside other students or friends in group activities. This is because, such an approach provides a non-intimidating environment where students can be relaxed and creative (see also chapters three and four). This approach is likely to be appropriate for Samoans because of a range of factors. It promotes academic and social learning within a safe-learning environment.

### **School Influence: Culture (S.I.c)**

School Influence: culture refers to the culture the students used which assisted them achieving the results in their schooling. There were two cultures identified. One was the student's culture, and the other was school culture. The students' culture is referred to as the traditions and routines initiated by the students in their learning. For example students have their own ways to approach the lessons and these have helped motivate them. For example, a number of students indicated that they prefer their own learning traditions (student culture) and they rather use them in their learning. For example:

As you continue to work hard and achieve well then success becomes just like a culture, something that you'll always have when you face a task. (WTGM19)

I believe an individual can create a success culture as long as he/she continues to work hard and has a desire to succeed. (AOGF4)

I have my own routine that I follow and that has assisted me in my studies. One of my routines is that I stay up late to do my work (12 midnight). I prefer that time because that is when everything is quiet and still. (WLVM33)

Many of my palagi friends already talked up their chances of achieving their goals when they finish school. I think they will, because they really work hard, and they always score higher in examinations. (AOGM3)

Some palagi students wanted to go to university to undertake certain subject areas when they finish secondary school. They are now achieving what they have said, because they worked hard for them. That motivated me to do the same. (WLGf36)

The students' cultures have already been noted as important factors for school approaches in some schools. Bronfenbrenner (1990) indicated that humans interact with the forces around them influencing their perspectives. For example, in this research, the respondents' interactions with their own cultures have helped them become successful learners. It is apparent that for these students their traditions are different from the *fa'asamoa* – that is because these students have worked out the most appropriate approaches that benefited them.

The culture of the school also emerged as a significant aspect of student success. School cultures according to the respondents are traditions set out by the schools based on the history and ideologies. Five respondents pointed out the points indicated by many of the students – that is, many Samoan students believed that because their schools have reputations and were producing high academic achievers they were also motivated to study hard to achieve good results.

Our school has this tradition of producing high number of students entering university every year. All students in my class want to be university students when they finish seventh form probably because they know failure is something this school is not used to (WCVM25).

We are one of the top schools in the region because of the high candidates entering university every year and graduates with high honours this school has produced. (WTGF20)

Our school has strict rules and students have to abide by those rules to be part of the school. (AOGM1)

Our school motto states that in order to be successful students must abide by the school rules. (APGF10)

My friends and I have been successful in our studies because we follow the school rules. (WLG35)

School culture was an important area in these students' achievement. These students identified their school as having traditions and rules, which all students were expected to follow. They also believed their school cultures helped discipline them in their studies. School influences where culture refers to students being positive in their thinking and attitude because their schools have established a success culture motivating students (S.I.c). For example, in one of the schools (WCM1), one of the traditions was goal setting. Many of respondents noted the positive significance of this tradition on the achievement of *papalagi* students, so it also motivated them to set their own goals.

### **School Influence: Location (S.I.I)**

A range of factors relating to school location, (usually high socio-economic areas) was identified as significant for successful achievement. Some students who travelled to school from a distance rationalised their behaviour to study hard because they wanted to make up for the money they had spent travelling to school and paying school fees. School influence location refers to the students being motivated and encouraged in their schooling because of the location of their schools (S.I.I).

Being enrolled at a school in the city allowed me to learn and experience the town life-style. I have seen many people working in higher profile professions such as cops, lawyers, teachers, members of parliament and executives, and that motivated me to succeed to become like one of them in the future. They are respected and admired by many people, and you can easily identify them. (AOVM1)

My schooling costs a fortune and my parents work very hard to meet such expectation. I work hard at school to make sure the money they spent on me is not wasted. (APGF10)

However, these students also believed they were better off at these schools because they would be exposed to more employment opportunities, high profile people, and different life styles that could be used to motivate them.

Living in Wainui can be discouraging especially for many students who could not afford to enrol in the schools in Wellington. Wainui's economy is not as booming as Paraparaumu and other suburbs. I suppose there are not many things to look forward to – there are not many big careers within Wainui unless you do real-estate or labouring jobs. So, you don't really have anything to look forward to within your own community as a career. But, in town there are so many jobs you can get. (WCVM25)

I think having enrolled at a college located a distant away from home helped us reflect about the importance of home. (WLGGM31)

I am glad that school is situated far away from home because there's so much going on at home that I would be easily distracted. (WLGFM32)

Some students believed that being in a school outside their own community lifted their self-esteem. For example, when they travelled in trains people tend to look at them because of their uniform. These students believed their uniform was admired because their schools were very popular and admired in terms of producing high academic achievements.

My school is very popular in terms of academic achievement. Every time I am on uniform many other students tend to admire me. I think, they probably perceive me as a bright student, and that made me happy. (AOGM3)

It is embarrassing if I fail particularly because everyone in my community knows that I am in one of the top schools. I study hard to make sure I do not fail (WLGGM33).

One respondent suggested that because his school was situated in the middle of town in a high socio-economic suburb, he found that many of his friends were able to visit high profile companies where he met many rich people.

It's good that I am enrolled in a school in the city because I have learnt more about places where you can apply for jobs. I think this is very

important because I wouldn't know where to go if I was enrolled at a school outside the city. (WCGM29)

Furthermore he stated that:

I want to be like the high profile people in the future and I have to study hard to achieve my dream. I believe successful achievement in education is the way to achieve a better future like the ones I saw in town. If I had been enrolled in a school in a poor suburb I would not be motivated. (WCVM25)

Perhaps these comments can be used to explain why many Pacific parents preferred to enrol their children at schools outside their own suburbs. Thrupp (1999) found that many Pacific students were re-enrolled at schools in higher socio-economic suburbs because their parents believed these schools would help their children achieve better results. For example, in Porirua many Pacific students are enrolled in schools outside Porirua because the parents of these students believed their children would not achieve the result from the local schools (Pasikale 1996, Wang & Apa, 1998).

Six respondents, who had to live in boarding schools, believed they had been able to focus on their studies better because their schools were a distance away from their home and communities. Two respondents stated the significance of being in boarding to their learning. According to them enrolling in a boarding school away from home meant there were no disruptions from *fa'aleaiga* (family affairs), community-based cultural and sports activities, movies, entertainments and so on. For example:

I am glad I am not living at home because my family has *fa'aleaiga* almost everyday and all family members are expected to take part in them. (WLG31)

*Fa'aleaiga* costs a lot of money and many of my friends could not continue their schooling because their parents have spent most of their money on *fa'aleaiga* and hardly anything on education. My parents are aware that if I have no school fees then I would be suspended which is embarrassing so, they have to pay my school fees first. (WCVM25)

Mageo (1998), Mulitalo-Lauta (2000), Singh (1999) and Tupuola (1996) discussed *fa'asamoa* in relation to family, and they noted that sometimes this

has a negative influence on Samoan students in terms of decision-making and schooling. This was borne out by some students who believed that ever since they started attending boarding school they had been able to focus more on their schoolwork. At home they couldn't do this, because of the other responsibilities. Some Samoan students believed that they become more successful in their schooling if some of the family requirements and obligations did not distract them. However, some students believed *fa'aleaiga* assisted their development. For example:

I am involved in fa'aleaiga and still manage to do my schoolwork. Being part of fa'aleaiga has made me aware of the importance of family to my educational development. It made me understand how to communicate with family members which is very important when I needed their assistance regarding my schooling. (AOGF4)

Being involved in fa'aleaiga makes me understand family values that motivated me to study hard. (WTGM17)

Fa'aleaiga has made me understand more about myself and other family members. I think this is very important because it made me realise that I have an important role in aiga. (WCGM27)

These influences support Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ideas about the forces that influence students' developments. According to him, one of the primary forces that influence students lives is family. Students, he believed interacted with their families and this had an influence on their minds (refer to chapter four). Such an interaction is important in the understanding of students' cultural needs and desires. In this research, the students were clear about the influence of these forces in their lives. Teachers need to understand the nature of the students' interactions with such forces and be prepared to assist.

### **School Influence: Reputation (S.I.r)**

School influence: reputation refers to students being motivated by their school reputation. Most of the respondents viewed their schools as an important part of their identity, and that made them more determined to succeed in their schooling. These students claimed that their drive for success was due to their desire to make a better name for their schools,

meaning they would have to work hard in their schoolwork to get better results to promote the names of their schools. They understood that their schools were recognised as low achievement schools, because of the growing number of students failing examinations (Ministry of Education, 1990; 1992; 1999; 2003). Five respondents summed up the points indicated by these respondents.

My school is like my family. If I do well, say for example, achieving higher result in school examinations or winning sports, it means I am giving my school a good name. If I misbehave and fail examinations, I am letting my school down. (APVF8)

My school is an important part of me because it provided me with the education I need for my development. (WTGF22)

We are motivated to succeed to prove that not all students from our schools are failures, and I want to show our critics that our schools are not as bad as they think. (WCGM23)

Many rich schools in other parts of Auckland believe we are low achievers probably because our schools have many Polynesian students. That made me wanted to do well in my schooling to prove to them that we are not all dumb. (ABVF16)

Many Samoan students who studied in this school in the past did not have successful education. That is why we are all viewed by other rich schools as low achievers, but they are wrong because, many of us have been successful, some even gained higher marks than many of them. I needed to work hard to prove these critics wrong. (AOVM1)

These students appeared dedicated and committed in their studies and were determined to promote their schools because they were important parts of their lives and identities. This accounts for many Samoans who attribute their successful achievement to their schools (Pasikale 1996, Wang & Apa, 1998).

Some respondents suggested that having experienced teachers could assist with their schools' images. These respondents seemed concerned about the standard of their schools, particularly as it related to teachers who lacked an adequate understanding of the New Zealand curriculum.



Having experienced teachers who can assist students with regard to their learning needs will benefit not only the students but also the school. (ABGM21)

Our school has Samoan teachers that we can link with whenever we have difficulty in relation to our schooling which had been an advantage to us. If all other schools who have many Pacific Island students enrolled recruit Samoan and other Polynesian teachers, they will also be benefiting from it. (WLVM33)

I believe teachers must be well informed of the changes in New Zealand education. They must have a better understanding of the curriculum because we rely on them. (AOGF4)

While Samoan teachers assist our understanding of some English terms, they seem to be unfamiliar with the education system and that discouraged me a bit. I think by providing training for these teachers will be good for them and the schools. (ABVF14)

Some students suggested some providing some kind of assessment for their teachers to ensure they are well equipped in their profession.

I think all teachers must undertake some kind of assessment to make sure they understand the curriculum and be familiar with approaches for Pacific students. (AOGF4)

Our school has many Samoan teachers who did not understand the New Zealand curriculum. I think there should be some sort of assessment for teachers to make sure these teachers are up to the task. (AOGM3)

There are always changes in society and teachers must be aware of them. Some sorts of refresher courses or assessment are appropriate to equip them for the task (teaching). (WTGM21)

School reputation according to these respondents relates to teachers' expertise in the art of teaching. In the past, the central control system of the New Zealand education system emphasised the grading of teachers in relation to expertise and ability in the art of teaching (Barrington, 1992). Although this approach does not exist today (Livingstone, 1991), the findings for this research suggest that many students recognise teacher expertise as

an important aspect of school reputation. That is, teachers' expertise promotes students' learning and the name of their schools. This indicates the importance of providing well trained effective teachers and employment of them in the ranges of schools.

These findings indicate that many Samoan students are motivated to work hard and succeed because of they want their schools to have good academic and teaching reputations. This is also a reflection of *fa'asamoa* where it is traditional for many Samoans to dedicate their effort and time for the sake of the groups they involve in (Tupuola, 1996). Many Samoans dedicate to their groups by keeping and promoting good reputations of their groups. The literature (Meleisea; 1987; Tiatia, 2001) indicated that many Samoans prefer to work in groups because group efforts and achievements are better and many of these people believe these are more satisfying than a single individual's effort and achievement (O'Meara, 1990). These academics indicated that group work has always been the foundation of Samoans' development because they have been taught about it in their families and communities. They added that many Samoans would dedicate their time and achievements to the groups they affiliated with because they treat them as part of their lives and they want them to have good reputations. The data clearly indicates that there are similarities between the respondents' characteristics and views, and *fa'asamoa* which supports Bronfenbrenner's concept that what people learn through the cultures and that culture becomes part of our beliefs, behaviours and desires (Bronfenbrenner, 1990). For these respondents, the reputations of their schools are important to them because they understood about the importance of being part of a group with the best reputation and how this would benefit them. An important consideration arising from this is that good academic reputation is important to many Samoans and that a deeper understanding of how reputation impacts on these people lives, beliefs and desires will assist the identification of their learning.

This research also revealed that some respondents have been motivated to succeed because of the higher expectation placed on them by teachers, parents and members of society. To these students, belonging to schools

with high success rate motivated them. They indicated how this assisted them in their schooling:

Our school expect us (seventh formers) to pass our bursary examination and become university students next year and that motivated me to study hard. (AOGF2)

It is a lot of pressure for us being looked at by our school as university candidates for next year and we have to work hard to achieve that expectation. It is the culture of our school and we have to abide by it which is very good – it encourages us to study hard. Our school has a very good history regarding higher achievements. Many students from this school went to university and now working in higher profile jobs. This has motivated me to perform up to that standard. (WCVM25)

Everyone in my church expects me to achieve higher result in my schooling because I am studying at high profile school. It is embarrassing if I do not go to university next year because everyone else in my church who studied at this school also graduated from university. (WTVM19)

Many students from other schools look up at us particularly when we wear our school uniform. They view us as bright students because our school has a history of producing high achievers. That motivates us to study hard because it's not nice if we fail. (ABVF14)

These students stated that their schools have higher profiles because of the level of achievements attained in previous years. They also stated that being in higher profile schools placed a higher expectation on them to perform up to that standard which motivated them.

According to some students, their school reputation had acted as a role model to them, for example, these students' schools are recognised as having students' participation as part of curriculum and decision making. Students said that when they have been allowed to express their views regarding the running of their schools that this is valued. These students believed that it is traditional for their schools to recognise students' views and that reflected on school policies which demonstrate fairness to all students.

Our school has fair policies. I mean students are given the opportunity to voice their thoughts about the running of the school, and that assisted in the

student and teacher understanding of direction for future development.  
(WLG35)

I think the way in which our school operates has taught me about the importance of fairness and equality. It has reminded me about the importance of respecting others no matter who they are. I think, this is very important in anyone's development. (AOVM1)

Every time students of my school achieve high they are rewarded. Some of my friends were rewarded because of their outstanding performances in sports, academic and cultural activities. I think that is very good for them. They said to me that they want to be consistent, meaning to work hard and be rewarded all the time. I also feel the same. (ABVF14)

These findings therefore indicate that school reputation can also be considered as an important influence for Samoan students. Teachers must work hard to promote the reputation of their schools, meaning all students' (including *palagi* and other ethnic students) learning needs must be met. The microsystem concept of Bronfenbrenners' ecological system theory explains this influence as it highlights the fact that an individual's immediate surroundings impacts on development, and in this circumstance, the high profile of the students' school encouraged and motivated them to study hard. Teachers/educators need to realise the importance of keeping a high academic profile for their schools and teachers/educators can assist by being successful in their jobs.

Recognising the students' learning needs is also identified as an important factor for many Samoan students. Esera (2001) and Podmore and Wendt (2006) have noted in their research that including Pacific students in school councils made them realise that they are valid members of their schools. The evidence certainly seems to suggest that these students perform better when they feel involved and given a voice. It can be argued that these students had the opportunity to express their views because their school respected them, and they were motivated by this. As indicated in the literature (Tupuola, 1996) young Samoans' views are not accepted in *fa'asamoa* because they are viewed by *matai* as not mature enough (see also chapter three).

### **School Influence: Resources (S.I.r)**

School influence: resource refers to students being encouraged and assisted in their understanding of subject areas because their schools had been able to provide adequate resources for them (S.I.r). The respondents identified a range of resources that assisted in their understanding of the learning concepts. The availability of computers, the internet and many relevant resources assisted many of these students get access to more academic information, which helped broaden their understanding of the learning concepts such as assignment topics and other aspects of their schooling.

Our school has the resources that we can relate to in our studies. We have inter-net link, music centre, sports equipments and uniforms, modern gymnasium and art centre. (AOGF2)

After school, I stay at school to do my work. Our library has most information required for my research studies. I used to go to the council library and sometimes the national library. Now I can get the information I want from school. (WTVM25)

My school has all the resources we need which assisted us in our schooling. There is no excuse any more relating to lacking resources. (WCGM27)

One student indicated that when her school employed Samoan teacher-helpers it assisted her understanding of English and other learning content. She also noted that many other Samoan students benefited from it.

Our school has teachers from different ethnic backgrounds which the students can link with in some areas of their schooling. This is very important to us because sometimes we have issues that papalagi teachers do not understand, but having Samoan teachers around can relate to us accordingly. Issues such as Samoan culture, religion and Samoan language require the assistance of Samoan teachers. (APVF8)

Another student pointed out that having a Cook Islander person as a dean in his school assisted him and many other Pacific Island students in his school. He valued the importance of having Pacific Islanders in the teaching roles because of their general understanding of the Pacific cultures.

We don't have a Samoan class because there is no Samoan teacher here. However we have a Polynesian dean (Cook Islander) that we can relate to outside class. He understands *fa'asamoa* because it is similar to his own culture. Sometimes he links with the teachers if he comes across anything, such as cultural misunderstanding, or the things that we couldn't say to the teachers. (WLVM33)

Polynesian teachers understand our needs but, I prefer to have Samoan teachers because there are aspects of our culture that other Pasifika teachers do not understand. (WLVF32)

A research review related to resources for Pasifika students undertaken by Baba, Mahina, Williams, and Nabobo-Baba (2004) noted the advantage of having ethnic minority teachers, who understood students' cultures involved in the schooling of these students. As suggested by the respondents, one of the needed resources for them are Samoan teachers as the teachers assisted by translating some English terms to *fa'asamoa*, explain learning instructions and other areas of their schooling. According to Macpherson, Spoonley and Anae (2001) and Ministry of Education (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007), New Zealand schools must be encouraged to recruit Polynesian teachers because they have a greater understanding of Polynesian students. In the minds of many, this could probably be one of the most important resources that could be made available. While Polynesian teachers have a general understanding of Polynesian cultures there are differences in these cultures and that must be cautiously considered (Pasikale & Apa, 1998).

### **School Influence: Demography (S.I.d.)**

Two respondents identified the ethnical composition of schools as contributing to successful achievement and many other respondents agreed. These students believed that the influence of *papalagi* and sometimes the Asian students helped them focus in their studies. School influence demography refers to students being confident and positive in their schooling because of the demographic composition (including the influence of the other ethnic and *papalagi* students) of their schools (S.I.d). The students regarded the *papalagi and* Asian students, as models because they concentrated on their schoolwork and this helped them focus on their studies.

I suppose, the demographic make-up of the school would be different if it was moved from suburb to suburb. I mean, in my suburb you probably get a lot of Māori students, a lot of Pacific Island students and the rest would be Pakeha. By being in town, we've got quite a big Asian international student sector, and most of the school is predominantly white, and if we move to Porirua it will change again. (WCVM25)

My school has many *papalagi* students which is good for me because it motivates me to study hard. You know, being a brown skin in a white orientated school such as my school is not easy – some students expect you to come last in school examinations. I do not want to come last. (APVF14)

One student indicated that being in Pacific Island orientated schools motivated her and many other Samoan students to succeed in their studies.

To me, being in a school dominated by Samoans motivates me and many other Samoan students. We are aware that many people perceive us as low achievers because of the demographic make-up (Samoan orientated) of our school. I study hard to prove them wrong. (AOVF8)

Duncan and Raudenbush (1999) and Johnson and Johnson (1989) discussed the importance of a demographic make-up of school to educational development. According to these writers, demographic make-up of school involves structure, setting, population, types of students and so on. According to AOVF8 the demographic make-up of her school encourages positive learning behaviours such as students working alongside those they know best like her peers and friends, setting educational goals, sharing and communicating with peers and teachers. Johnson and Johnson added that students sometimes use other students as role models.

Two respondents indicated the disadvantages of the demographic make-up of their schools. They stated that their schools have Polynesian clubs and many Samoan students spend more time in these clubs and less on academic learning and that many of these students failed as a result. According to these respondents, effective demographic setting involves having different ethnic and *papalagi* students in school. They believed that working alongside other ethnic and *papalagi* students would motivate many

Samoans students to study hard. They added that the unbalanced programmes of some schools have disadvantaged many of their friends.

Many Samoans and other Pacific Island students in our school belong to the Polynesian group. They spend most of their time preparing for school cultural festivals and they fall behind the other students. (ABVF14)

If we spend more time on the other subjects and less on *fa'asamoa* we will have better results. (WCGF32)

Many Samoan and other Pacific people believe Polynesian orientated schools spent more time in cultural activities than examinable subjects and many failed as a result. Such view was confirmed by AOGM5 and WTVM19 who stated that many Pasifika students spend more time in Polynesian clubs than academic studies and many of them failed the school examinations. It appears that the schools which had large members of Pacific Island students (like low decile schools) tended to be more involved in cultural activities and less on examinable subjects required in examination. These respondents believed, cultural activities distracted many students. This prevented them from focussing on academic pursuits.

Sometime cultural activities are distractive, particularly when it's close to examinations particularly when you have to attend school cultural activities. I think these activities should occur sometimes during the holidays instead. (AOGM5)

Many of my friends spend most of their time practicing Samoan speeches or dance but less time studying academic subjects, and in class they do not contribute to discussions or group activities. They also had poor results in examinations. Some of them even missed class and they only show up when we have cultural activities. (WTVM19)

The question then should be asked whether *fa'asamoa* is important for the students' learning. Piaget (1950) researched effective learning and teaching strategies and thus emphasised the importance of balance programmes for students. According to him, a balanced programme gives students the opportunity to explore learning contents from different angles. For example, students could use cultural, academic, political and spiritual areas to explore



meanings, which is important for lateral thinking. Teachers must therefore utilize the application of a balanced programme for students.

## **Pattern 2: Socio-cultural Influence**

Socio-cultural issues were identified by the respondents as another influential factor in their schooling achievement. This issue is also explained in the chronosystem layer of Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological system theory. According to him, the chronosystem level includes social forces such as friends, church, culture and family, and they impact on the individual. In this research social forces refer to 'friend influence: confidence', 'friend influence: help', 'learning skill', 'religion influence skill', 'religion influence: sharing', 'religion influence: faith', 'religion: discipline', 'religion influence: learning', 'family influence: sharing', 'family influence: understanding', 'family influence: parents' expectation', 'family influence: advice', 'family influence: discipline', 'family influence: positive characteristics', 'cultural influence: understanding', 'cultural influence: decision-making', 'cultural influence: discipline', 'cultural influence: sympathy', 'cultural influence: skills', 'cultural influence: skills', 'communication influence: interaction', 'communication influence: understanding', 'economic influence, sport influence: learning skills', 'sport influence: confidence' and 'sport Influence: role-model'. A range of significant factors indicated by the respondents are described in table 6.2 – the codes, their descriptions and definitions.

**Table 6.3: List of Socio-Cultural Influence**

<b>Socio-cultural Influence</b>		
Socio-cultural influence refers to factors relating to students' life which impacts on their schooling and mindset. Factors identified in codes and definition as indicated in the table.		
CODES	DESCRIPTION	EXPLANATION
Fr.l.con.	Friend influence confidence	The influence of friends helps the students become confident learners.
Fr.l.h.	Friends influence help	Friends assist students' understanding of learning concepts.
R.l. sk.	Religion influence skills	Religion can assist in developing students' learning skills.
R.l.s. R.l.sh.	Religion influence sharing	Student's confidence and understanding of others develops more through sharing activities in church.
.l.f R.l.f.	Religion influence faith	Faith as taught and recognised in church can assist the students' confidence and self-belief.
R.l.d	Religion influence discipline	Religion encourages appropriate discipline required in school.
R.l.l	Religion influence learning	Religion influence assist students' educational development and confidence via church learning centres and other activities.
F.l.s.	Family influence sharing	Family sharing earning curiosity and encouragement.
F.l.u.	Family influence, understanding	Family Influence via parents and family members' understanding of the educational needs of their children encourages a student positive attitude in education.
F.l.exp.	Family influence expectation	Family influence through parents expectation and involvement impact upon students' awareness and positive thinking/attitude toward learning
F.l.adv.	Family Influence Advice	Family influence through help and advice encouraged the students to seek excellence.
F.l.pas.	Family Influence passion	Family passion motivates students learning – family positive attitude and support motivate students to succeed.
F.l.d.	Family influence discipline	The behaviour of the students at home impacts upon their behaviour in the classroom.
F.l.pc.	Family influence positive characteristics	Family positive characteristics encourage students in their schooling.
C.l.u.	Cultural Influence understanding	Cultural understanding (i.e., teachers understanding students' culture and students' understanding of one another) assists in the development of learning/teaching approach/ methods for student as well as promoting the students' confidence in learning.
C.l.mcsd.	Cultural influence modern change and students' decision	Students' decision regarding the future for them is crucial for their educational and life development.
C.l.dsp.	Cultural influence discipline	Traditional discipline helps students focus in their schooling.
C.l.sk.	Cultural influence skill	Students' culture can assist in the development of learning skills for them.
Cm.l.intc.	Communication influence interaction and confidence	Interaction helps develop students' understanding and confidence of the world and other people – a significant factor for their educational development.
Cm.l.u.	Communication influence understanding	Communication helps students understand about the circumstance relating to their learning – it motivates them to succeed.
E.l.	Economic influence	Economic influence encourages positive thinking and attitude toward learning.
G.A.c.	General activities communication	Group activities develop students understanding of the world which is important in their educational development.
Sp.l.l.	Sport influence learning	Influence of sports assists students' confidence as well as promoting their self-esteem.

### **Friend Influence: Confidence (F.I.cn)**

Friend influence: confidence refers to students' confidence built by the influence of friends (F.I.cn). Three respondents indicated the importance of this factor to them and their friends:

I have a mate in my accounting class. Everyone is up there, and we just try to be up there to their level. You don't want to be left behind or be told by teachers about what to do because it's kind of embarrassing. It makes us want to try and be better than the others in our own way. (APVF8)

Being involved in a group of Samoan students, it helps you, like even things up. In learning, you know that when you fail at something they are not gonna laugh at you. They all understand because if one Samoan doesn't pass the other Samoans don't say "I hate you" because they all understand and they are not gonna put you down. (WCVM25)

Working alongside friends encourages me and my friends more, because we tend to compete with each other by setting goals to achieve. It is also important that we work together with people that we get along with because that makes you feel at home. (WTVM19)

According to these respondents, their confidence in their schooling was developed because they were able to work alongside their friends in the classroom, enabling them to share ideas. This approach viewed by Cole (2002) was seen as important for motivation (see chapter four).

Two respondents stated that many of their friends motivated them because they were at the same level and competing against each other. They preferred to work alongside their peers or friends than with their teachers because they sometimes felt embarrassed if their teachers told them what to do.

My friends and I like working alongside students of the same level as I (achievement level) because we have the same focus (to achieve) and also we do not look down at each other. (AOGF4)

Working alongside peers encouraged us to share ideas goals and ambitions. We found this approach very encouraging. We do not like the teachers to be around too much because we do not want to be viewed by

the other students as slow learners. (WTGM21)

Johnson and Johnson (1998) indicated that students can effectively learn from one another by sharing ideas, modelling and helping one another. How the teacher arranges groups is therefore important. Johnson and Johnson emphasised the importance of heterogeneous groups and where friends may not always be working together. The development of group solidarity and rapport within such groups is important. This can then be used to promote peer learning and non-threatening environment for them.

Of relevance to this are the findings by Bell (2000), Helu-Thaman (1996), Johnson and Johnson (1989), Jones (1991), Ministry of Education (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007), Singh (1999) Singh and Sinclair (2001) which have indicated that students are motivated when they are exposed to an appropriate learning environment based upon learning needs. Peer learning appeared to be favourable to many Samoan students. Tupuola (1996) discussed the advantage of peer learning for many Samoan students and stated that young Samoans learn much quicker from friends than from *matai* or parents. So this could explain why these students preferred peer learning. Another explanation would be the competitiveness of Samoans. It is of interest here that the competitive nature of Samoans has been identified in the literature (McCreanor, Penney, Jensen & Witten 2006), which could also account for some Samoan students' attitudes toward their schooling. These academics have noted that many Samoans are motivated particularly when they work in groups where they compete against one another in group tasks for superiority and to win senior roles. Such an attitude was reflected in the view by ABVF8. It was noted that some students seemed motivated and competitive particularly when they work alongside other students in group tasks, and they also achieve well in their schooling because of that. This factor is often over-looked in conceptions about Samoans (and other Polynesian groups) (Jones, 1991).

### **Friends Influence: Help (F.I.h)**

For some participants, success was linked to students helping other students (F.I.h). One respondent stated that many Samoan students like him have English as their second language and they needed help from their *papalagi*

friends in areas such as correcting grammar and English writing. According to one student:

I am lucky that I have many friends (Samoans and pakeha) that I have been able to work with in class. They often support me like correcting my grammar and help me with my writing. We often study together like, after school in the library and sometimes in one of our houses. I think their presence in class has influenced other students not to laugh at me any more. (ABVF14)

Some students are motivated when they work alongside their Samoan friends. These friends have similar goals and cognitive levels which gave them fair and even competition. Two respondents commented in relation to this factor – friends influence: Help.

Other than the positive environment at home, positive peers/friends also help, but that depends on the type of friends you are involved with. At our school students work really hard because they all want to go to university. That positive attitude toward education has encouraged me to achieve my goals. Not only that but by just being in a class of students who achieve high in school examinations also encouraged me to do the same. It is a bit of a shame anyway if you find yourself at the bottom of the class every time, isn't it? (WCVM25)

My friend and I are in the same class. We often compete against one another in subject areas and that helped improve our achievements. I would not compete against the papalagi students because they have the advantage over me in English and that is unfair. (APVF8)

It was also noted that be a friend to high achieving students helped develop confidence, especially in situations where Samoan students felt they are being looked down at by other students.

I like working alongside more able students to measure my own ability. If I do not do that then I would not know how much I have progressed in my learning. (AOMG3)

I want to compete with the palagi students so I do not mind working alongside them. (WTGF22)

However, one of the respondents commented that schools were treated as a meeting place to socialise for some Samoans which of course has consequences.

Many of my friends just go to school to meet their friends. They said that school is sometimes boring because they did not understand the subjects, so they chose to be with their friends and did what they wanted. Many of them failed examinations, and now roaming the streets. For me, I choose to befriend the smart students or those that are focussed in their schooling.  
(WCVM25)

These views suggest that some aspects of the students' social life assist their educational development and students need to apply these aspects appropriately to help them with their schooling. For example, to be friends with more able students assisted these respondents because they believed they could get help from them, and in fact this did help their English and confidence. The point these respondents made has also been raised by Jones in her research relating to Pacific secondary students in New Zealand in 1991 (refer to chapter three). This suggested that the problem of being friends with the 'wrong' friends was what hindered the students' performances in the past and is also happening today.

The cultural difference theory is relevant also here. As discussed earlier in chapter four, Osborne (2001) argued that sometimes students fail when they do not understand the culture of their school. In this study, failure was linked with boredom, meaning that students become bored when they do not understand the lessons or teaching/learning methods and approaches applied by their teachers. Jones (1991) discovered this in her research which indicates the need for teachers to understand their students. However, students themselves suggested that mixing with the 'right' people assisted their understanding of learning, by acting as a bridge to extend learning. An important pointer from this is that many Samoan students are motivated when they work alongside the right students/peers. Teachers therefore must sort out peer-learning groups carefully (Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Piaget, 1950). This research indicates students can benefit if they have the right choice of friends.

### **Religion Influence: Sharing (R.I.sh)**

The churches are important in the lives of many Samoans (refer to chapter three). In education the significance of the churches was mentioned by some respondents. The data indicates that some Samoan students have been able to utilise the skills they have learnt from their churches in their schooling. Skills such as communication, sharing, debate, listening and so on were identified as significant to the successful achievements of these respondents.

My church has been very supportive of my schooling. It has established learning centres that we can go to if we need assistance regarding our schooling. I am a shy person but since joining these groups, I have become more confident especially communicating with adults. That has also helped my confidence in class. (AOVM1)

Sunday school activities have taught me about the importance of listening to other peoples' view points. When I listen to someone else speaking, I can tell whether he/she is a confident speaker. I have also learnt more about speech structure by listening to others speaking. This has also assisted me in academic writing and speech at school. (WTVM19)

We are more relaxed in Sunday school because there are no examinations to worry about. We are relaxed when we share ideas and that is why we enjoy it. (WLGf34)

The data also indicated that church activities such as bible studies motivated many Samoan students because it gave them the opportunity to express their views.

We have group discussion in our church. Every Sunday during Sunday school youth have their own class which involved discussion and sharing. Sometimes we have debates on biblical and social issues which I found very interesting. These activities have also been helping me becoming a confident speaker. (WLVM33)

I support that religion helps education. I am very dedicated to my church, and that is through participation in Sunday school and church services. I also take part in other church activities during the week. These have helped improve my interpersonal skills and most of all my confidence to speak in front of others. Church has never been in the way of my schoolwork.

(APVF8)

I enjoy working alongside my peers because we treat each other the same and we do not perceive ourselves as superior than other people. We all work at the same level so, we help one another. (ABGM15)

It is relevant here that Pasikale (1996) noted in her research that Samoan students tended to work well in groups, and it was a method that was encouraged in their schooling. According to some respondents, it was much easier for them to learn in small group activities, because they are shy when there were other students around. They could ask questions and learn from each other. This has obvious implications for the Samoan students' education and teacher practices as it relates to the social construction of knowledge, skills and attitudes. For example, through small groups students can learn from one another through speaking and listening. These skills were perceived by the students to be significant in some of their academic learning. Skills such as involvement in debate, speaking, listening, speech analysis and writing were taught in some Sunday Schools.

### **Religion Influence: Faith (R.I.f.)**

Religion influence: faith indicates that the students' churches impact upon the students' self-belief and confidence in their schooling. These students were taught that faith in God is the main source for success meaning that they had to believe that through God's power they can achieve the results. These students believed that in order to be faithful to God they needed to work hard. Some respondents commented on this influence stating that:

I believe God will give me the intelligence to do well in examinations because I am faithful to him. In the past I achieved top marks because I prayed to God to give me the courage and motivation required for my studies. (ABVF14)

I prayed everyday and attended church services and these have strengthened my belief and faith in God. These commitments have reminded me that I can achieve the best result through faith in God. I prayed to him to give me the strength and enthusiasm to drive for a better future and he did. I believe God has done a great deal for me because I have achieved higher results in examinations. (AOVF14)



It's a skill that we must all have. If you are faithful that you can do this then in the end you become successful at it. If you are not faithful in your own ability then you won't succeed. (WTGM19)

For many Samoan students, it is the teaching and doctrines of their churches that influenced their beliefs about God and life.

It's not that religion has helped improve my learning techniques. Religion is my way of receiving God. If religion hasn't been for the purpose of receiving God I wouldn't regard it as an important aspect of my life. God has done so much for me, like my own achievement. There is no doubt in my mind that God provided for my needs because I pray all the time asking him to give me the strength and intelligence to do things and enthusiasm to study. I felt that every time I study I always have that energy to carry on for a long time and I believe that was the help from God. (AOVF8)

Su'a, a church minister believed that being faithful in God is the key to success (Popo, Su'a, personal communication, October 15, 2003). One respondent stated that faith in God has helped her succeed in her studies.

Sunday school teachers have also taught me about faith in God. This has helped me focus on my work. It's like when you feel tired or bored then something else refreshes your mind. My mom has always wanted me to believe in God and be part of the church. Although she's gone this has always been a reminder of her and I thank her because it's working. I have also learnt in church about the power of the mind (through faith) that we can do anything. (WLVM32)

There is a growing awareness of the importance of spirituality and learning. For example, Vialle, Lysaght and Verenikina (2005) wrote that spirituality is generally an important part of learning and teachers need to incorporate it to assist students' achievement. They indicated that everyone has some form of spirituality and they referred to perceptions formed in the mind which are important in the understanding of learning approaches and practices. For example, spirituality as applicable for Samoans is linked to *fa'asamoa*, that is, many Samoans are spiritually connected to the culture through meditation (Podmore & Wendt, 2006). Another important point related to church was that discussed by Taulealeausumai (1997), where according to him many Samoans are affiliated to churches. They are taught about church doctrines

and cultures and they perceive and behave accordingly. He elaborated further by stating that church teachings/doctrines are spiritual guides toward receiving God which is 'truth' to these people. Teachers can establish learning activities related to these people's spirituality such as questioning, reading of stories, and studying the lives of spiritual people/churches to motivate these students. For teachers to identify the learning needs of students relating to spirituality they must obtain a better understanding of students, particularly the cultural underpinning related to the spiritual dimension (Vialle, Lysaght & Verenikina, 2005).

It was also noted that some church boards believed their Sunday schools could help the education of their young people, so they recruited Samoan qualified teachers (primary and secondary) who understood the New Zealand curriculum.<sup>8</sup>

### **Religion Influence: Discipline (R.I.d)**

The influence of religion on discipline was identified as an important aspect of success (R.I.d). This influence refers to the influence of churches on the students' life and educational discipline. According to a number of the participants the disciplines of patience, perseverance and honesty (which are taught in the church) can also be applied usefully to academic learning.

In Sunday School, we learn about how to live life. It makes us understand about the importance of discipline, which benefited us. Sunday school also assists our understanding of religion which is important for life development – that is, we are taught that we are rewarded according to the effort we put in our work. It encourages us to work hard and enthused in our schooling. (WLVM32)

Religion is a big part of my life. It teaches me the discipline I need in life. It also teaches me how to think psychologically about things like, looking beyond things. (AOGF8)

Our church has a youth pastor. He's got focus group on Tuesday night. That is really helpful with our educational learning. He also communicates with our parents and sometimes with the community leaders regarding

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<sup>8</sup> Su'a stated at the seminar held at Ketesemane Church in Porirua (2003) that he encouraged state-school teachers who were also members of his church to be involved in Sunday School. This is because they have the skills and understanding of the teaching approaches that are the most appropriate for many young people of his church.

issues relating to our development. He's there as a supportive worker. If we have any problem or concern, we talk to him. He also encourages us to live a Christian life. (WLVF33)

I support that religion helps education. I am very dedicated to my church through participation in Sunday school and church services. I also take part in other church activities during the week. These have helped me improve my interpersonal skill and most of all my confidence to speak in front of others. Sunday school teachers have helped me focus on my work. At times I felt tired or bored, but their encouragement has kept me going. Church has never been in the way of my schoolwork. I have also learnt in church that through perseverance and self-belief we can do anything. I have found this very useful in my studies. (ABVF14)

These students believed that their churches helped them understand more about life that also led to an understanding that discipline and hard work will always be rewarded in the end.

Students facing difficulties received counsel from elected youth pastors, parents and other church members in charge of these centres as pointed out by WLVF32. Esera (2001) suggested in her earlier study that this particular support could be helpful in the schooling of Samoan students. In this research, the students were able to concentrate on their studies without being disrupted, and tutors were also relaxed because these centres were Samoan-based, meaning that they were able to relate to students in Samoan or English or both.

As stated earlier by Murphy (1997), religion is important in the education of other ethnic students, and he attributed this to belief, discipline and learning behaviour. He stated that the influence of the religious culture assisted many Asian students' educational discipline which was led to their successes. Bronfenbrenner (1987) indicated in his microsystem concept that religion is one of the influences impacting upon students' development, which explains the lives of many Samoans such as these respondents. An important consideration arising from these respondents is that their churches encouraged the learning skills required for academic learning and these have helped improve these students' educational developments.

## **Religion Influence: Learning (R.I.I)**

Religion influence: learning refers to the influences of the religion/churches on students learning (R.I.I). In some churches, homework centres for students are provided. Specific features of these homework centres that were significant to success were highlighted by some respondents.

Our church has a study centre. It's like a homework club where we could do our homework, and tutors are there to assist us. They are just like teachers. If you need help, they would assist you. There is a maths tutor, as well as an English tutor there. There are also other tutors to assist students with regards to other subject areas. (WCVM25)

Students also help one another at homework centres. I like that because students seem to understand and relate to the other students much quicker than adults. (AOGF2)

We work hard at home work centres because there is only a limited time these centres can open each night. (WCGF34)

Apparently, many respondents preferred their churches homework centres, because they provided a relaxed learning atmosphere for both students and tutors. There was enough time for students to communicate with their tutors and peers. This was similar for the afternoon classes provided by schools.

It is more relaxed to study at our church homework centre because it's outside school hours. (WCGM31)

At our church homework centre we share ideas with friends. (AOGF4)

There are also church members and they encourage us to work diligently. (ABGF14)

Su'a Popo maintains that Samoans are more comfortable when studying at their own pace (Su'a Popo, personal communication, June 12, 2003). Some churches even had counselling centres and many students are encouraged in their schooling because of the good advice from these centres.

But according to some three respondents, their churches sometimes impacted negatively on their schooling.

My church sometimes has too many meetings and I have to attend them because it is compulsory for the youths. These meetings are very disruptive particularly when exams are close. (AOGM3)

Our church policy prevents me from the things I could be good at, for example, I am good in rugby, but I can't play rugby on Saturday because it is my Sabbath and I have to go to church on Saturday. (ABGF16)

Our church leaders often tell us that faith in God is the key to wisdom and success. They believe God first then school after and they keep on referring to biblical heroes such as Solomon, the twelve disciples and the prophets whom God gave the intelligence to lead Israel and they did not need to go to school. I think many Samoan students fail because of such belief – they simply put their schoolwork aside and do church stuffs first and many miss or do not complete assignments as a result. (WCVM25)

These students were born in New Zealand and of Samoan and *palagi* orientation. The students believed God not only guides them but their study is their full responsibility. These respondents believed in God, but they seemed to perceive God differently from the others. What is implied is that although religion remains a significant aspect of the lives of many Samoan, some questions need to be directed upon its usefulness or its central importance to success in schooling.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1990), the influence of individuals' socio-cultural influence can vary from one individual to another, and that depends on the interactions between the individuals and the socio-cultural forces. Bronfenbrenner's concept can be used to describe Samoan students such as AOPGM3, ABGF16 and WCVM25 who hold a different view of God and church. Educators need to understand that Samoans have different beliefs and perceptions of God and should be able to utilise them to facilitate Samoan students' educational needs. This research project has found that some students have been disadvantaged in their schooling because of their churches conservative nature which means that some variations are needed in the approaches depending on the students.

Many students may not agree with the view that God only provides the guidelines toward success because they believe God provides for all their needs. Three respondents summed up these students' views:

I think, if you have faith in God, then you will be motivated to do your homework. You need to do the work and not asking God to do it for you. Look, many Samoan students have failed school and they are dedicated church members. If God does the work for us then what's the point of going to school. (ABVF14)

God cares if you put him first before anything else. He will assist you with regard to schoolwork as long as you believe in him. (ABGM13)

God has told us that if we ask him about anything in this life he will give. (WTGM21)

Two respondents indicated that churches should stop being conservative and be open to new ideas because change is needed. Tiatia (2001) noted this indicating that young Samoans' input should be recognised by their churches because of their broad experience of modern society. She added that recognising young Samoans views motivate them to be part of church operations and it makes them realise the importance of their views for future development which is also important for their self-esteem.

In church, we (the young members) do not say anything regarding decision-making of our churches. It is like shutting up and do what you are told which is not right to me. I have heard some ideas by some church members and they are not wise and unimaginative. Young members' views are more relevant for the church development today because they know what's going on. (AOVM1)

My church leaders do not regard our (the young people) as important. They believe we do not have a deep understanding of the bible and fa'asamoa so they think we should be listening to the elders and matai. These people only encourage the church traditions which do only encourage adult members and not the young members. I hope that one day they will open their minds to the young people's views which have many modern ideas for the continuity of the church in the future. (APVF14)

Indeed, some students were casual with regards to church attendance because they needed to focus on their schoolwork. Some respondents commented in relation to how they coped with church pressure:

My dad understands that sometimes I do not have to go to church particularly when I need to do my homework. But, many of my friends believe that even if they are behind in their work, they still have to attend church sermons because, they believe that through faith in Christ, they can overcome that. I believe God will never do your work for you even if you are faithful to him. I think it's you who is responsible to your schoolwork. (WCVM25)

Some of my friends who had been dropped off from school believed the Holy Spirit is their helper and they did not study hard because of that. They were wrong, they should have put more effort on their schoolwork which means that they needed to miss church sometimes. (APVF14)

In this respect, these students attributed their achievement to their effort and not their churches. These students believed church was only for spiritual matters and not educational, and they tended to avoid church sometimes to focus on their schoolwork.

In Lewis's (2002) discussion of religion and the human mind, it was suggested that religion is an assemblage of meanings and imaginings that may be contentious, continuous or discontinuous, depending on the individual. In this research, many students such as ABF14, ABGM13 and WTGM21 hold on to their traditional church beliefs. According to these students, their faith in God assisted made them to become successful achievers in education. The other students however, hold a different view in relation to church and God and believe that changes should be made to church traditions to suit all members. They also believe changes are worthy for future developments of their churches. It was clear from the respondents' views regarding the influences of their church and religious beliefs on them that there are variations and that depended on the forces surrounding, for example, the influence of friends, parents, the New Zealand culture, churches and so on. The situations such as those involving the Samoans students can be related to Bronfenbrenner's (1990) concept of cultural variation, where he indicated that people are diverse in belief and views and

he attributed that to the nature of their interaction with the forces of life that is the socio-cultural forces. This implies that religious cultures/beliefs can be used to motivate some students and that teachers/educators must first understand the individuals to be able to utilise church cultures/beliefs in classroom learning for these students.

### **Family Influence Sharing (F.I.s)**

The family influence sharing indicates that the students are motivated and encouraged in their schooling when they share ideas with their families (F.I.s.). All the respondents have indicated that they have learnt new ideas via sharing ideas with family members. Five respondents have highlighted all the points indicated. According to these students:

Being around with other family members is very important to me. It allows us to learn and understand each other. Having close relationship with your family leads to their full support. (AOGM3)

My parents have taught me many things about life and one of those things is their supportive role in our education. Particularly my mother, she is Samoan, and she is more involved in fa'asamoa and other community affairs. At first I thought this was not helping me with regards to my schooling, however my mother's contribution in the community has been the reason why many community members cared about my schooling needs. These people (Samoan Community at Wainui) are like my parents. They showed that they really care as well as they had high expectation of me. Because of that I feel that if I do not do well in school it's like letting my people down. (ABVF14)

My parents do their best to support me financially and they are also active participants of the school Board of Trustees which is important for my future development. (APGF10)

When my mom was at school she was good at math and like sometimes, I just asked her for help. She helped me out on occasion and that helped improve my understanding of math. She keeps on reminding me that math is really important in life, and that I must study it. I just stick with math anyway. (WTVM19)

I am lucky because my mom is really behind me and I get along with her.



My parents are separated but my mom kept on giving me good advice and direction which assisted my studies. We talked a lot, just close-bond with her and that I really want to do well for my mom. If you get along with your parents then you would also like to make your parents feel proud of you. It also makes you want to do better at school. (ABVF14)

Two respondents indicated that listening to grandparents' stories of Samoa, motivated them to research the history of Samoa.

When I was little, my grandpa used to read Samoan myths to me. That has just educated me about the struggle that Samoan people had like, the "making" of a Samoan independent nation and the "dawn raid" here. So, that's kind of motivating me to take history, my favourite subject. (AVBF14)

Bed time stories by my grandpa explained many things about life and I have learnt a lot from those stories. (WCGM25)

Half of the respondents felt that it was very important to them to have their Samoan relatives/friends around because their influence made them understand one another and appreciated their family fellowship more. These respondents' views were summed up by (AOVM1), (WCGM19) and (WTGF22):

Well, being a half-caste, it's different because you're considered to be palagi, and doing palagi stuffs. I don't really go to church that much, just because my parents stopped going. I also hang around papalagi people mainly. Visiting cousins is like once a month. It's kind of disappointing because sometimes it's boring hanging around papalagi people. You know that you are not hanging around the people that you want to, like the Samoan people. I could understand my Samoan side more if I have more time with them. (AOVM1)

It is very important to know your extended family because Samoans always work as family and community units – you need to know who you should work and share ideas with. I suppose family is who you trust. (WCGM19)

If you know your relatives then you will also have more helpers to assist you. (WTGF22)

Taking part in family discussions (for example sharing or debating certain issues), motivated some respondents to learn more about family and community issues which assisted their confidence in class discussions. These respondents' views were similar and these were highlighted by (ABVF14). She pointed out the relevance of family discussion to her, sisters and brothers' education development.

Every Sunday when we have to'ona'i (Sunday lunch) my family debates subjects/issues. We (young people) have to read up so that we can keep up with them, they are really smart. They debate issues related to Don Brash, Helen Clark or events relating to ethnic minority groups in New Zealand. They are grandpa, mum, uncles and dad. They sit around the table, eat and debate these issues. (ABFV14)

Family was identified by Bronfenbrenner (1990) as one of the closest forces in human development. His ecological system theory highlights family as an important part of the microsystem layer which involves interaction between the individual and his/her immediate environment. Bronfenbrenner's concept can be used to describe various family influences identified by the respondents in this section and that they could be considered for future educational development for Samoans students. According to these respondents, their family influences such as sharing of ideas, for example moral, spiritual, financial and so on have encouraged them to study harder. According to Moffat (1995), family influences have helped many Asian students becoming successful achievers in education (refer to chapter two). He pointed out that sharing within these peoples' families (including financial, ideas, and responsibilities) encouraged many young Asians in their schooling.

### **Family Influence Understanding (F.I.u)**

Family influence: understanding was also identified by the respondents as an important factor that contributed to their success and this is also linked to the microsystem layer of Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological system theory. Two students responded favourably in relation to this factor:

It is good to have a balance and parents just have to understand the things their children had to do... like, if we have schoolwork then we do not have

to go to church. This can lead to successful achievement. (WTGM19)

I do not participate in the church and community activities that my parents are involved in, but they encourage me to do well at school, like telling me stories about the struggle they came through, and the benefit of better education. They always talk positively about our education. I think that has encouraged us (me and my cousins) to drive for success. (ABVF14)

In this research, these students' immediate environment (family) had positive influence on their educational development. These students stated that their families understood their learning needs and they provided assistance which helped them. Family influence understanding refers to assistance provided by family members for their young peoples' education (F.I.u.). These respondents indicated that their parents understood their learning needs and they provided relevant support which assisted their understanding of learning contents and made them confident learners.

The Samoan family understandings of their children were considered to be significant aspects to the schooling of Samoan students because family was the key to the lives of Samoans (Tupuola, 1986). Esera (2001) also noted the importance of family to these people and he pointed out the importance for schools to recognise family contributions because of their significant value to many Samoans. The points indicated by the respondents in this section remind that family contribution is important for educational development for Samoans and should be used as a means for motivation and encouragement.

### **Family Influence: Parents' Expectation (F.I.exp)**

Another important influence of these students' families was parents' expectation. This refers to students being motivated to succeed in education because their parents had high expectation for them to succeed (F.I.exp). The expectations of Samoan parents were also a significant influence in the schooling of many respondents. For example:

I guess I was quite fortunate that my parents have always advised me about the importance of education. Unlike other Samoan parents that are more supportive to the kids' rugby than their education. (ABGF16)

My dad in particular checks my work from time to time. He also keeps a record of my tests results. He's concerned when my results are down. (WLG33)

We are not rich of course and we are also not poor like people in the remote areas of Africa and China. As I have mentioned before, my parents prioritise education – they made sure that I have all that I needed for school. I also understood that my parents wanted us to have a better future so I studied hard and aimed for higher things. (WCVM33)

These students indicated that their families had high expectations toward their schooling and that led to family members' participation in their schooling. For example, some parents contributed by advising their children about the importance of successful education. Some parents contributed by giving financial contribution to assist the development of their children's schools. These parents also participated in their children's studies for example in their homework.

As indicated by Moffat (1995) in his research of Asians in America, many Asian students succeeded in education because their parents placed a higher expectation for them to succeed. Moffat also noted that these students understood that the only way to live a successful life in America was to be successful in education. Like these Asian students some Samoans were aware of their parents' expectations and they studied diligently to succeed and meet those expectations. It was noted by Pasikale (1996) that many Samoan parents wanted their children to succeed in school to help their economic well-being in New Zealand. The data revealed that many family members expected their young people to succeed and were also motivated to assist because of the potential they have shown. It was this expectation that also made the parents of some of the respondents involved in certain ways which also supports Bronfenbrenner's (1990) idea. According to this psychologist sometimes the individuals also influence his/her environment and he pointed at how students influence parents, friends, neighbours, teachers and community and so on. It means that sometimes students' parents, relatives, teachers, communities and peers react positively or negatively toward students dependent on students' performances. In this

current study, the parents/relatives of some students reacted positively because they noted the students' potential.

### **Family Influence Advice (F.I.adv)**

Family influence: advice refers to family advice which assisted the students in their schooling – that is family members assisted by giving the students advice about the methods and direction relating to subject areas (F.I.adv). Quarter of the respondents felt that parents, (especially if they are well educated), could help with academic work. These findings indicate that there is a range of views about the specific role of parents in education – that is, some students believed it was inappropriate to take advice and guidance from their parents whilst others expected to have such advice. Examples of the points indicated by these students are highlighted by the following respondents:

We view our parents as the teachers and we have to listen to them and do what they tell us to do. (WTGM21)

My dad was a teacher and he understands the current curriculum. He discussed with my teachers steps I needed to undertake in study. He also checked teachers teaching strategies to see if they are appropriate for my learning needs. (ABVF14)

I have learnt from my parents about the difficulties we could be facing in the future if we do not have successful education. I think we are lucky to have parents who have such an experience to direct us in the right direction. I do not want to become a labourer all my life like my parents. I am thankful to my parents that although they struggle but they worked hard to make sure I do not go through the same way. (APVF8)

Some of my friends said that their parents sometimes forced them to do their homework even if they did not want to. They said that they would do their homework more efficiently when they feel like it. But, forcing them to do things they are not ready to do can only end up failing. They also said that this has been the method their parents went through when they were at school and unfortunately it did not provide good result for them either. (WLVF32)

I do not dislike my parents, but some of the things they said were not

suitable in our schooling. For example, they advised that we should do this and that to make us good lawyers or doctors, but that's not what we want. I wanted to become an entertainer because that's what I want to do when I grow up. I do not say to my parents what I feel because they might get angry at me but I will pursue what's best for me. (WLG35)

For other respondents however, although their parents did not achieve higher education themselves, and their advice on other related areas of their schooling did encourage them. These parents' influence on their children made the children aware, for example, of some of the negative and positive aspects of life particularly in relation to decision-making and life-choices.

My parents did not have higher education however, their advice is very important to me. They did not tell me what I must undertake in my studies, and they talked about what they must have done in the past to assist them. They also shared with me their experience about the consequences of poor education. The things they said I have learnt from for the sake of my schooling. (APVF8)

My parents have limited education because they did not have the opportunity many of us have in New Zealand. However, they understand that discipline is very important in anything. I think that is very important. (AOGF4)

The data indicated the value of family to many respondents. It is clear that the interaction of these students with their families impacted upon their beliefs and attitudes toward learning. Bronfenbrenner's (1987) concept (microsystem) can be used to describe the circumstances involving these students. According to him students' immediate environment are family, school and neighbours and these forces have immediate influence on students because of their immediate interactions with students. Two respondents responded in relation to this:

Sometimes my relatives in Samoa phoned my parents wishing me good luck for my education – that encouraged me to keep up and study hard. I know they will all be proud of me if I get good result in examination. (AOGM3)

It is encouraging when you know there are many people (family) supporting

you. It makes you work hard and want to show off in front of them. I mean showing them that you are smart and wise. (WLGf34)

The differences related to family advice between these respondents' views could be influenced by their interactions with their families. Meleisea (1987) wrote about the schooling life of many Samoans stating that sometimes many Samoans view teachers as experts and they believe they should be solely responsible for the education of Samoan children. It could be this influence that impacted on some respondents who refused advice from their parents for this research. This suggests that not all Samoan students have the same views related to family advice and teachers must be aware of that.

### **Family Passion (F.I.pas)**

Family influence: passion was also identified as one of the family influences that had been significant in the achievement of some Samoan students. It refers to positive attitudes and supporting roles of family members in the schooling of their children (F.I.pas). Three respondents commented in relation to this factor. According to them their family members have shown positive attitudes towards their learning and that motivated them to succeed in education. These respondents indicated that they attribute their achievements to those who supported them.

Sometimes my relatives (grand-parents, uncles and aunties) gave me money for my schoolwork. (APGF10)

I attribute my success to my parents, my people and myself. As I have mentioned before, the positive attitude of my people to me has impacted positively upon my achievement.

My parents' involvement in school and their supportive role financially has helped me focus in my studies. It's like paying back the good work they have done for me. There is nothing more important to me than pleasing my parents. In the end it's more like benefiting me but honour must be attributed to my parents who helped me get there. (WCVM25)

Iata (2001), a Samoan academic who researched the schooling life of Samoan students in New Zealand, wrote that Samoan parents are

passionate about the schooling of their children because they wanted them to have a stable economic life in New Zealand.

### **Family Influence: Positive Characteristics (F.I.pc)**

Another influence of family according to the respondents was family positive characteristics. This refers to student and family members' positive thinking and role that assisted in the educational development of many respondents (F.I.pc). Twenty respondents believed positive attitudes toward learning encouraged them in their schooling and these respondents' views are summed up below.

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 disagreed with my parents 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. (APVF8)

My parents and relatives have worked very hard to provide for my education although we have limited financial backing and that encouraged me to study hard – to make them happy. (APGF8)

My family always support me – they take part in school activities such as picnic, fieldwork, cultural festivals, gala, graduation and so on. Their involvement encourages me to study hard to succeed for them. (WTGF16)

All the respondents acknowledged that their families contributed in terms of providing moral support which assisted their schooling. They also felt that it was their responsibility to make sure the efforts of their parents and other family members were rewarded. All the respondents had similar views in relation to family positive characteristics and this was pointed out by (ABVF14):

To our parents, like... they've been there ever since we were born. They've seen all we've done, and like, took care of us and did everything to sacrifice for our benefit, and that's what we've got to do for them when they get old. We've just have to look after them. (ABVF14)

Holt (1999) discussed this characteristic of Samoans, and attributed it to a loving attitude between family members within the culture. In this research



project he found that many students believed in the traditional values and that reflected their *fa'aaloalo* (respect) to their parents. Church teachings have also encouraged this because it reflects love.

### **Cultural Influence Understanding (C.I.u)**

Cultural influence: understanding was also related to students' successful achievements and three respondents identified various cultural influences that contributed to the understanding of this pattern. Cultural Influence: understanding refers to the students being successful because their culture has been recognised by their schools (C.I.u).

I know for a fact that us Samoans are quite lucky because we have a Samoan dean that we sometimes rely on for help, not so much that she speaks Samoan to us but she understands our culture, so she relates to us accordingly. One of the deans is a Cook Islander and he is more familiar with *fa'asamoa* so we feel more at home when he's around. (WLVM33)

You know that when you are happy everything sinks in. If you are culturally insulted you just don't want to do anything, and sometime it creates a rivalry between you and the teachers and sometimes your peers. My teachers know that I am fluent in *fa'asamoa* so they placed me in a mixed Pacific Island group, which I felt happy about. (AOVM1)

I feel like I am part of the school because *fa'asamoa* is recognised in the school curriculum. It makes me proud of my identity as well as motivating me to study hard. (APGF16)

These students believed their teachers recognised that Pacific students are sensitive in certain areas of their schooling. For example, they are shy if they are spoken to in their own languages in front of *papalagi* students and sometimes shy to tell the teacher to slow down. This research revealed that it was the teachers' better understanding of *fa'asamoa* which was significant in the students' confidence.

Cultural influence has been highlighted by Bronfenbrenner (1990) as part of the macrosystem layer, and his concept could be used to describe the situation of Samoans in New Zealand because it is relevant. He argued that culture influences the individual's beliefs and he also pointed at other forces

such as law, politics and modern ideas that influence the individual's cultural beliefs. Important influences such as those indicated by the respondents will assist the understanding of Samoan students in New Zealand.

### **Cultural Influence: Modern Change and Students' Decision (C.I.mcsd)**

Cultural influence: modern change and students decision refers to the influence of modern change in the mindset and decision-making of the students (C.I.mcsd).

The data in this section indicates that some respondents prefer the modern *fa'asamoa*. It was pointed out by two respondents that modernising some traditions of *fa'asamoa* assisted their educational development. They believed that some traditions of *fa'asamoa* were sometimes too demanding, and they would therefore like them to be modified to suit their contemporary life-situation.

I think that sometimes that tradition is kind of dominating the teaching curriculum and its kind of old. I think *fa'asamoa* needs modification because many youths don't understand it. (WGCM27)

I think the curfew of *fa'asamoa* has prevented many students from doing the things they want, like debating issues with parents or challenging their views, taking time out to do further studies (may be in the library or with friends) especially for girls and recognizing the students' right in their families. If the students are given the flexibility to express their views and the independence to choose for themselves, they will be confident and more creative in their thinking and more importantly, this gives them a wider experience of life. (AOVM1)

However, twelve other respondents (e.g., students with a Samoan and European heritage) decided to follow *fa'apapalagi* because it suited them. Two respondents summed up the points these students stated:

I have mainly the palagi culture that influences my learning. While *fa'asamoa* is important to me, I prefer to use *fa'apapalagi* in learning because it suits me. I guess I am lucky that I have the freedom to choose what's best for me. (AGBM13)

I suppose things have been easier for me in a way because I am half-caste

and I have been able to relate to my palagi culture to get what I want. I have not been criticised by the other Samoans because of my background but they did not know that I value fa'asamoa just like them. I believe the way to adapt to life in modern society is to take advantage of the most suitable approach to life. (WCVM33)

However, two other respondents drew on both *fa'apapalagi* and *fa'asamoa* to help them in their schooling because they were of Samoan and *palagi heritage*. According to these respondents, being students of *palagi* and Samoan heritage, they had the advantage of applying both cultures in school.

I suppose I pick up different traits from different cultures. I mean, if it's not gonna help me to be better in life then there is no point picking it up you know, it's kind like pick and mix. (APGF10)

I am glad that I have the option to choose the most suitable culture to adapt to life in New Zealand. I understand both fa'asamoa and fa'apalagi and I used them effectively in my schooling from time to time. (WCGM25)

Three respondents raised some important points relating to their success and their views were shared by many other respondents in this research. According to them, students enjoy learning and as a result were successful when they make the right decision relating to their learning. They believed that students tend to work thoroughly and diligently when they enjoy the tasks they are given.

Well, if you put your mind to it you can do anything. It's not really that you have to pick a subject that you are strong in - it's the subject that you enjoy. I mean if somebody that is not so good at chemistry or math at the beginning of the year but they enjoy it, you know, by the end of the year, they can be one of the top students in the class. Just through their enjoyment and the pleasure they've gonna get from learning and discovering new theories and what not... so, being good at subjects helps a lot. (WCVM25)

If you like doing something then you will be successful in that. (AOGM3)

You tend to stay longer and work intelligently when you are given a task that you are familiar in. (WTGF16)

What's the point of being smart at something if you do not perfect your work? Some of my friends are smart cookies but they are lazy. They just rush on with their works and move on, and they are struggling because of that. (APGM9)

Three other respondents pointed out that decision-making is important in terms of choosing the right subjects for achieving their academic goals, particularly when they enrol at university – these respondents views' were supported by all the other students.

I like history, English, geography and accounting. I thought these will help my study in commerce and maybe law at university. (APGF14)

I've always wanted to be a historian and I am undertaking English because there is a lot of reading and writing involved in history at university level. (APVF8)

I want to have my own business when I grow up. I am learning book keeping at the moment but when I get to university next year, I will be majoring in accounting and commerce. (WTVM19)

Other respondents indicated that their parents' advice motivated them in their schooling.

Our school has done really well in sports for boys and girls. That has almost influenced my decision but, through the advice of my parents and what I have learnt about the unsecured future of professional sports people in New Zealand, I realize the importance of having a better education. I mean, to be a top sports person, you need to be fully fit, be under twenty, and be injury-free. Once you are over thirty, you are considered over the hill and it's time for you to look somewhere else. If you have had better education you can score a better job but, those who did not have a better education, I don't know... I think they'll end up becoming labourers when they finish their sporting career. Those who get injured, well, it's a waste of time, isn't it? (AOVM1)

The Bible say that those who respects and listen to their parents receives not just everlasting life but also wisdom. Parents are more knowledgeable than us therefore we need to listen to them. (APGF12)

But, according to other respondents, the decision making must come from the students themselves because they know more about themselves than anyone else. For example, five respondents indicated that they could become successful if they follow their own decisions. It could be because they know their strengths and what they are good at.

English and maths are the keys to other subjects so I have to major in these subjects. If you are good in these subjects then you can relate to other subjects as well. (WCGM23)

World wide English and maths are what people normally use to communicate with and have common understanding. Where ever you go, English and maths are commonly used and you've got to be good at these subject to be able to succeed in life. (APGF10)

It comes back to what we want and it shows through how hard we try on what we do, and it will show up. (WCGM31)

It is your decision that leads to success. I mean if someone decides for you and you are not enjoying doing what has been decided for you then what's the point doing it. (WCVF32)

I am glad that my parents let me decide what is good for me. They do not influence my decisions because they know the consequence if I do not enjoy what I do or learn at school. All they did was guide me through my decisions. (WTGM19)

Relevant here is Samuelu (cited in Araki, 2003) who discussed Samoan life and the importance of recognising individual's views in cultural (*fa'asamoa*) and educational development. He indicated that incorporating new ideas in *fa'asamoa* would enhance the traditional values of *fa'asamoa* (refer to chapters three and four). One of those ideas was indicated by the respondents, as they believed that sometimes they made their own decisions relating to their education and their parents accepted those decisions. This is something that is not recognised in *fa'asamoa* because of the notion that the views of senior members are more valuable than those of the young people (Tupuola, 1996). This research discovered however, that some traditional approaches of *fa'asamoa* assisted some respondents while modern ideas have also assisted some other students. The parents of the respondents

have accepted some modern ideas including the young Samoan views regarding their education which motivated the respondents more. This change in thinking is an indication of changes in *fa'asamoa*. The advantage of incorporating modern ideas in the culture was pointed out by Tiatia (2001). She believed that the young people's views are the key for the future of *fa'asamoa*. Their views would add new direction, value and meaning to the culture which is useful for the continuity of the culture in contemporary societies such as New Zealand. An important consideration arising from these findings is that both the traditional and modern ideas of *fa'asamoa* are relevant for educational development for Samoans. Educationists must be mindful of what is relevant for Samoans students.

Research by Education New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1999; 2000; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) revealed that student centred learning can be effectively applied to cater for diverse needs such as those by the Samoan students. The student centred approach recognises the students' views whether traditional or modern (May & Wright, 2007). Implied in this is the view that students' decision making is a very important part of identifying learning needs. As pointed out by one respondent, students tend to become more successful when they choose to undertake subjects they want.

### **Cultural Influence: Discipline (C.I.dsp)**

Traditional Samoan discipline has also been significant in the education of some respondents, particularly those of full Samoan inheritance. Cultural influence: discipline has been identified by a proportion of the respondents and they were all positive about it. This factor refers to the influence of *fa'asamoa* on the students' discipline (C.I.dsp). The data indicated that some students favoured the Samoan traditional discipline which is smacking (*sasa*) and they believed it should be used to discipline the Samoan students who misbehave in class. These students indicated that they are being smacked by their parents and they are aware of the reasons why they get smacked and it worked for them.

According to the Samoan culture you get the strap from your parents if you misbehave repeatedly. Like you get 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. (WTGM21)

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. (AOGM3)

It's the consequence of your actions (hiding). (ABGM15)

It's like you've got grounded for something that you have done wrong..., it's like helping you. It disciplines you because you know, getting hit again will hurt more. (AOGM1)

If my parents were not strict with regards to discipline, I wouldn't be as successful as I am now. I would be joining the gangs like many Samoans who are involved in gangs and other crimes now. We have learnt about honouring parents and family as well as being polite to other people. (ABGM13)

This type of discipline according to Holt (1999) and Tupuola (1996) is how Samoans were disciplined in the past. According to Popo Su'a, a church pastor in Porirua, smacking is a recommended Christian tradition even today, because of what is written in the Bible (personal communication, June 15, 2006). He is undoubtedly not alone amongst Samoan adults in holding this view. Although smacking is not permitted under New Zealand law it is interesting to note that more than half of the respondents felt this form of discipline helped them focus on their studies. It could be argued that these students were aware of consequence of misbehaviour (smacking) and they studied hard to avoid being smacked at home.

Another factor related to cultural influence: discipline according to Samoans is *fa'aloalo* (traditional Samoan respect). Many Samoans are encouraged in their *aiga* to respect teachers and adults (Erika, Etuati, Ete Fereni and Tupuola) and by doing that they must abide by certain traditions such as not looking people in the eye and addressing them by acknowledging family roots and surnames. The findings related to this factor reveal that the preferable disciplines by many Samoans are those encouraged in their homes. Teachers must therefore understand Samoan family discipline to be able to assist Samoan students.

As discussed earlier by Berk (2000), the family is the first prolonged and intimate interaction system an individual encounters. It is a primary group, typically with personal loyalty, affection and close relation among all members. Positive environment at home, that is positive relationships between family members, creates positive attitudes by students and this impacts upon educational development. Whether the best environment at home is achieved by corporal punishment or not is something that needs to be addressed by the Samoan community, who must now be mindful of the new laws in New Zealand regarding smacking (*sasa*).

### **Cultural Influence: Skills (C.I.sk)**

Cultural influence: skills refers to the significance of *fa'asamoa* (language and culture) in the development of educational skills (C.I.sk). Two respondents reflected positively on how they used *fa'asamoa* to assist their English.

I am fluent in *fa'asamoa* and that has helped my confidence and understanding of English. The structure of the Samoan language (essay) is similar to that of English. Every time I write essay in class I always refer to the Samoan structure to assist me and I have been getting good marks by it. Sometimes I use a cross-cultural approach such as writing English essays using both English and Samoan ideas to express meanings which I found very effective in written expression. (WCVM25)

I think if Samoan students do as I am doing they will be much better than the papalagi students. I'm saying this because I also apply my knowledge of *fa'asamoa* (language) in my English expression, which has been a big advantage I have over my papalagi peers. Look at that Samoan lady who has just received her PhD in English literature in Auckland this year and Albert Wendt who is now a professor of English in Auckland University. Not many Samoans even think that a Samoan can go this far especially in the English language. I think it depends how badly you want it. (WMVF32)

According to these respondents, *fa'asamoa* can be useful in developing English for Samoans. They applied their knowledge of *fa'asamoa* in English writing (essay writing) and also used Samoan meanings which added deep meanings to their essays. These respondents have shown that *fa'asamoa* can be used to improve skills in English language learning and learning style and can provide the discipline for Samoan students.



Geva (2006) discussed the advantage of ethnic students' language skills in the learning of English and goal achievement, writing that a better understanding of one's own language and culture enables the development of strategies to not only mediate but also to facilitate the achievement of learning goals and outcomes. This means that there is an important role of students' traditional culture/language in their schooling development.

### **Communication Influence Interaction (C.I.intc)**

Communication influence: interaction was identified as another significant factor in successful achievement. It refers to the significance of communication links such as student/teacher, parents and students/student which impacts upon confidence and successful achievement in education C.I.intc).

Many papalagi teachers can only understand our learning needs when we communicate with them because they are not Samoans – they do not understand fa'asamoa which is an important part of our learning. It is very important that we have a consistent communication link with these teachers to maintain their understanding of what's relevant for our schooling.

I reckon you learn in pairs but you'll learn more in a group where you share your opinions and understandings of things with the other students. (APVF8)

I understand my friends more than teachers probably because we have the same needs and speak the same language (English). Even when we speak Samoan, we understand each other more than the adult Samoans (WTGF22).

Our level of fa'asamoa is much different from that of the adult Samoans. We have our own way of expressing our ideas. Some would say that it is kids' language but to us, it is the language we understand more. (WGCF32)

The interaction between students and the forces in their lives is important to the understanding of their learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1990). In this research, the respondents have identified the forces that motivated them. For example, some respondents have indicated that communication through students interacting with one another was significant in building their confidence. An

important part of this for all students was to understand how to communicate in *fa'asamoa*.

Peer group learning was another important approach related to communication influence (C.I.intc) for Samoan students. This refers to students achieving better results via learning from other students (group-based approach). According to two respondents, peer or group learning has helped improve their achievement.

Sometimes we have a student exchange programme where we spend a day or two in other schools. This has allowed me to communicate with other students (i.e., sharing ideas and goals). (APGM9)

I feel peer learning would be better if you are sitting beside someone who is struggling, you can just help him. (ABGF18)

All the respondents suggested that certain social aspects of their life also contributed to broadening their knowledge of the world, and most of all helping them become more confident. The respondents have similar views - that is their schools assisted them by providing related activities which made them become more confident and these were summed up by three respondents.

They (school) also provide us the opportunity to interact with people from other groups, and that could also lead to success because it makes us more confident as an Islander and want to be as successful as anyone else. (WLVM33)

I have been placed in a group responsible for interviewing other students about their experiences of social life in New Zealand. I love doing that because I like talking and inquiring about things. (ABGF14)

I like outdoor activities and my teacher provided lots of those activities for my learning. (WCGM27)

It is apparent from these respondents' views that cooperative learning approaches were favourable to all the respondents. It could be argued that these respondents preferred cooperative learning approaches because these approaches are closely associated with *fa'asamoa* and this could provide an explanation for such characteristics of the respondents. According to

Samoan educators such as Meleisea (1987), Aiono (1996), Tupuola (1996), Hunkin (2001) and Wendt, (2006), Samoans are accustomed to peer-learning because it is recognised in *fa'asamoa* and also part of their everyday life. Many respondents viewed peer-learning as an appropriate approach for them because it encouraged them. However, this approach has not been fully exploited in many schools (Huitt, 2001).

The respondents indicated that they felt comfortable using the peer-learning method because they could share ideas and work cooperatively with peers rather than with the teachers. Peer-learning can be viewed as another option for Samoan students. As mentioned earlier, emphasis must also be placed upon the appropriate selection of peers, because Samoan students tend to relate well to peers they feel comfortable with. In Jones' (1991) investigation, peer learning was not fully recommended by the teachers probably because of the influence of teacher-centred learning. Many students could have been encouraged to learn from one another with the teachers' guidance. Teacher education is therefore important. Teachers need to be skilled and knowledgeable about effective methods to apply peer-learning for Samoans and other ethnic students who also like this approach. Pasikale (1998) also discussed this indicating that students are comfortable when their voices are recognised as part of their schooling. It could be argued that these students are encouraged to do their best because they feel that they are part of school.

The social nature of the Samoan students' learning is the key to their success – that is, it provides a comfortable environment, familiar ideas to the students and encouraging the students to be creative. Bronfenbrenner's (1990) concept can be used to describe the social nature of Samoan students learning. In his concept, he noted that students learn well when they interact socially with peers and friends because they understand each other's ideas and are not intimidated by one another (refer to chapter four). He also pointed out that students are more creative and imaginative in ideas when they are relaxed and interact socially with friends/peers. He believed better and creative ideas arise when the mind is relaxed mind and not interrupted. The respondents for this current study showed a positive attitude toward learning when they were comfortable and not interrupted.

### **Communication Influence: Understanding (C.I.u)**

A better understanding via communication between students and their parents was identified as another way of making students feel positive in their schooling. This refers to students being motivated to succeed in education because they understood their parents' desires and sacrifices for their education (C.I.u). Important points related to communication influence: understanding (Clu) were pointed out by one respondents. According to him, communication with their parents provided a better understanding between them.

My parents have explained to me about our financial situation. What more can you ask for if you are quite satisfied. I do not compare myself with the rich students in the school, I am just thankful for the sacrifice made for me. They may have the modern computers, calculators, cell-phone and other things but, for me, as long as I have the necessary things to do my work that is more important. I thank my parents for the support that they gave. They may not be the best but they did the job. It's not really the quality of the assistance (equipment) but how they are being used is more important to me. (APVF8)

Another important point raised by two other respondents was that communication between the parents and students had made the students considerate and positive toward their parents. That is, they have now understood the hard work their parents have put in toward their schooling. These respondents' views were supported by all the students for this research. According to them:

I am satisfied with what I've got although I am not rich. I think it depends on the individual about how he/she takes it. Some students drive to be like, feeling rich in front of classmates but that is when the problem starts. On one hand their family might be struggling and therefore they are unable to be supportive in other areas such as time, participation or attention. On the other, if these students do not get the measure of their classmates then they would end giving up school maybe because of shame and embarrassment. (ABVF14)

I am aware of the struggle my parents are going through with regard to my education and I am working hard to succeed in order to win a better paid

job for them. (WTGF22)

Another important point raised in the data was that some Samoans were feeling negative about their schoolings because of the prejudice views of *papalagi* against them. These respondents suggested that an understanding of *fa'asamoa* by *papalagi* in particular could also lead to better education for Samoan students. It is possible that some *papalagi* felt negative about Samoans because they did not understand *fa'asamoa*.<sup>9</sup> Three respondents suggested that it is important to understand other cultures to help provide a positive educational environment in New Zealand, and they considered this likely to be helpful to their schooling as well.

Say Pakeha people visiting Pacific homes and learn more about the culture and why we think like that. (WGLM31)

I think some pakeha people will understand fa'asamoa if they mingle with Samoans and behave like them. (AOGF4)

I think spending sometimes in Samoa will give these people (papalagi) an understanding of fa'asamoa. They might not have the money to go there so, the Samoan communities in New Zealand must show them how we live as a community. (WCGF32)

The Ministry of Education (2003; 2004; 2005) and Pasikale (1998) all agreed that a better understanding of Samoan and other Polynesian cultures by teachers and the students themselves will assist their education.

Research by Codd, Harker and Nash (1990) about the factors impeding Pacific students' academic learning identified low socio-economic wellbeing as one of the determinants. They wrote that many Pacific families in New Zealand were not economically well-off as *palagi* and this had a negative impact on the schooling of many Pacific students. However, three respondents for this research indicated that low-economic status motivated them and their friends to work hard and even become successful as a result. It is possible that if the students understood their financial circumstances,

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<sup>9</sup> Erika spoke in a seminar at the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Porirua 23rd October 2001 regarding ways to assist Samoan students' performance in schools. He stated that many Samoan students have been discouraged in their schooling because their Pakeha teachers and peers did not understand them in terms of *fa'asamoa*. Erika also suggested that this lack of understanding of *fa'asamoa* could be the reason why some Pakeha people dislike many Samoans.

they would appreciate what they have (stationary, uniform, and uniform and so on) and their parents/relatives' support/efforts towards their education.

### **General Activities Communication (G.A.c)**

General activities: communication refers to out of class activities that students are involved in which also assisted their educational development (G.A.c) and this was identified by the respondents as another important factor for educational successful achievement. All the students for the interviews shared the same views and these were pointed out by AOVF8 and WCV25. This data indicated general activities can be used as a means for motivation and encouragement for Samoan students. According the respondents they are motivated and hence become successful in their school works when they are involved in various activities.

We are involved with other curricular activities outside the classroom. I'm in the hockey team and it's all white except two Samoans which is my friend and I. She just joined last year but before, it was just me in that team. We are very involved in this event, it gives us the opportunity to interact with the other students in the team, which made us confident. I believe it doesn't matter what skin-colour you are, you must interact with the other students to assist your development. (AOVF8)

Ever since I've been involved in a lot of stuffs I've picked up skills which I can actually apply in my learning, such as for example, I am a member of the students' health council and I've been given projects to do, and I have to meet a deadline, so that actually helped me with my schoolwork – that is, speed and accuracy. (WCV25)

Other activities such as sports, picnic and clubs were also identified as significant factors for success.

My family have picnic sometimes, and that is very important to me, because sometimes I feel bored if I stay home all the time. I feel more relaxed when we have picnic particularly if I have been studying hard. My parents do realise that I need a break from schoolwork, and that is why we sometimes go out for picnic. (WCV25)

The city council has every year organised cultural activities that we sometimes partake in them. I think that is very important to me. Being part

of those activities made me understand about other cultures. (AGPF10)

The city councils in New Zealand have established communication centres that we can go to and interact with other people. These centres have helped improve my communication skills, and broaden my understanding of *fa'asamoa* and the world. (AOGM9)

This finding supports that of Pasikale (1998), which highlighted the importance of Pacific Island students' involvement in outside classroom activities. Pasikale pointed out that many Pacific Island students sometimes feel negative about their schools because they perceive themselves as foreigners possibly because of their ethnicity. Getting them involved in activities such as school councils or communication centres could make them feel positive and focus in their school work. Such types of interaction were also identified by Bronfenbrenner (1990) as a significant factor for students' development (refer to chapter four). For these respondents, being involved in general activities such as community tasks assisted their understanding of English, interpersonal skills, their culture (*fa'asamoa*) and other areas related to their education.

### **Economic Influence (E.I)**

Economic influence was another significant factor identified in relation to student success. It refers to students being motivated and feel positive (in thinking and attitude) in their studies because they were aware that successful achievement for them in education leads to a better economic wellbeing for their families (E.I). Three respondents reflected upon their economic status and stated that:

I have been encouraged to work hard in my studies because I want to help my family's economic development. We are not rich, but our goal is to prosper, and that relies on us (the young people). My parents said that if we study hard at school we can be successful in the end. We believe successful achievement in school is the answer to our problem. (APVF8)

You could also use the "lack" of money as a motivation to do better – you don't want to be poor in the future. (AOGF2)

Many people look down at us because we live in the poorer suburbs like

Otara and Mangere. They also perceive us as dumb students because we come from these areas. (ABGM15)

Twenty other students stated that they were motivated and encouraged to work hard in their studies because they wanted to improve the economic well-being of their families. These respondent's families had lower economic status, and consideration needs to be given to whether this can also contribute positively to, rather than negatively to their schooling.

Three respondents in this study were aware that they had limited financial backing compared to their *papalagi* peers, but their parents and other family members, despite the struggle involved, did their best to support their children. This is perceived in *fa'asamoa* as *o au o matua fanau* (children are precious to parents). To these students, the value of their family contribution was more meaningful to them than the quantity of material support. They also understood that their parents and relatives have made sacrifices for them, and that inspired them and their siblings to succeed in their studies. According to these respondents:

I remember when my parents had to put us in a church care based institution (where we did not have to pay fees) because they did not have enough money to pay for a proper school. We were doing well despite that because we enjoyed school. When my dad found a job we all went to the state's school and that's why I am here. It's been a struggle to get here and I take that as a motivation. On the other, I am aware about our financial situation so I try to be as conservative as I can to help my parents. (WCVM25)

The key to success for our family is successful education for us. My parents said that power and authority is via successful achievement in education. They work hard to see us arrive at to this level although they are not economically well of. (AOVM1)

Nothing will please my parents than being successful in education. Their passion is for us not to struggle in life. I work hard at school (studying) because I want make my parents proud and provide them a better life. (WLGf34)



Most respondents (particularly those from the low socio-economic regions of New Zealand) indicated that their local schools were somewhat 'handicapping' because of the schooling low scholastic profiles. These respondents were aware that they were from low socio-economic suburbs such as Otara, Otahuhu, Mangere in South Auckland or Porirua, Naenae, Newtown and Wainuiomata. However it appeared that the idea of low expectation of success encouraged them to work hard in their schooling. All the respondents' views were summed up by the following three respondents.

Living in Porirua discourages many Samoan students but not me. I am pleased that I have been living in Porirua all my life to learn how people felt about it. Many people believe that Porirua is a black spot. That inspired me in my schooling – I study hard to prove them wrong. I want them to understand that Porirua is just the same as any other suburb in New Zealand. (WCVM33)

Porirua is not a wealthy suburb like Johnsonville, Karori or Whitby, because many people from Porirua work in labour related jobs. I am dedicated to my schooling because I want to win a good job (better pay) to help my family. (WTGM19)

I want to show palagi students that we are not as dumb as they perceive us. (AOPF10)

As mentioned earlier, most respondents dedicated their studies to their families and communities, and they also attributed their successful achievement to their families and communities. Tupuola (1996) discussed the philosophy of Samoa relating to *aiga* and communities, stating that '*a tele lima ua mama fo'i se avega*' (more hands makes a task easier to accomplish). In this study parents and family members worked cooperatively by encouraging and supporting one another which also impacted upon the desires of many students such as these students. As stated in the data, the parents and community members supported their children, despite having limited economic wellbeing. It was the result, it was believed that *alofa* (love) motivated these respondents to work hard in their studies. In this respect, Samoan students need to be encouraged to understand the value of *fa'asamoa* and family customs, as well as parents realising the importance of their support in the mindset of their children.

Ethnic communities in other societies have also benefited from family and community assistance, despite having limited economic backing. Harri's (1990) research on the schooling of Aboriginals in Australia revealed family input in the schooling of those students as the main source of their successful achievements (refer to chapter two for detailed discussion). The findings indicate that limited financial backing can in fact be used as a factor to inspire Samoan students to succeed in their schooling.

While low socio-economic status encouraged these respondents to succeed, a proportion of the respondents believed adequate financial support (for example paying for school tuition, stationery, trips and other school needs), could assist them in terms of meeting their learning needs and goals. According to these respondents:

We do need financial backing. I feel that I cannot fully commit to lessons if I do not have the appropriate stationery. If my parents are struggling financially I would also be struggling at school. (WTGF20)

Schooling requirement today involves technology and to get access of those technologies is important to our understanding of learning concepts. Having sufficient financial backing is crucial – we will never be the same (achieve higher) as those who have the resources unless we have adequate financial support. (AOVM1)

It is impossible to obtain higher understanding of learning concepts if you do not have sufficient fund to provide for the resources, field trips and other school activities. (ABGF16)

Some of my friends have missed important parts of their studies because they have been sent home due to non payments of tuition fees. (ACGM31)

Adequate financial backing according to these respondents helps facilitate their learning needs. Another important point raised by them was that education today is different from that in the past. According to one respondent, today's learning involves experimentation and exploration and those require financial support which means students must meet such requirements. Another respondent added that some students could not participate in some learning activities or get access to the resources because

of lack of money and consequently they did not have sufficient understanding of their subject areas.

Young-Loveridge (2004) discussed the negative consequence of low socio-economic status on the schooling of many Samoans and other Pasifika students. She indicated that many Pasifika students' self-esteem was considerably lower than that of Pakeha students because they had limited financial backing. As a result, some of their schooling expectations (for example uniforms and stationery) were not met. In class, many of these students did not complete homework, had no friends, and sometimes did not attend class, and these were significant factors in their low and average academic results. Jones's (1991) findings indicated that not all Samoan students feel the same with regards to their low economic status. She noted that some have been motivated to study hard because they wanted to help their parents and improve their family wellbeing. In this respect, careful consideration needs to be made regarding low socio-economic status of the students.

### **Sport Influence (Sp.I)**

Sport Influence was identified as a significant factor in education. A number of respondents stated that the influence of has motivated them to succeed in academic subjects (S.p.I). A range of factors related to sports influence were identified. For example, one respondent believed sports encouraged him to study hard, and he referred to high profile Samoans who play for the All Blacks for encouragement. He stated that:

You can just look at those Samoans who play for the All Blacks as role models and inspiration. I mean if they can achieve that level, we can also do the same. That can apply in education particularly for those who may not be as good in rugby. (ABVF14)

According to one respondent, sports helped his studies particularly learning skills.

I reckon, trying to mix school with sports like asking the coach to help you, like applying sports terms in academic study will help you understand. (WCGM27)

Three respondents indicated that it helps if teachers and coaches help one another by sharing teaching approaches. For example:

It helps if teachers and sports coaches work together as a team to share ideas and methods for Samoan students. (WTGM21)

Perhaps sports coaches can visit students' classroom once a fortnight to share ideas with the teachers and students. (WCGM27)

Teachers as well can spend time observing sports coaching and take note of methods and approaches applied. (ABGM15)

Three respondents believed sports helped them become more confident and competitive and develop a willingness to win. These students indicated that the influence of sports (including skills, methods and approaches) assisted their confidence in their schooling in particular.

I do rowing because I want the muscles but, what really struck me was that in our school or in sport in general, you have the white students that dominate one sport, the Islanders dominate the other sports, the Asians dominate badminton and table tennis and the Māori, the same thing. With the rowing, I am the only Islander in there, all Europeans. That made me work hard – I want other Samoans to see that they can do rowing like the papalagi students. (ABVF14)

Being involved in rugby has improved my learning techniques. I apply drills we used in training in my subject areas and it worked. This technique has helped me remember things. (WCGM31)

It helps if teachers and school coaches work together as a team. (APGM7)

Another respondent believed that emulating a role model (for example a successful rugby player) helped him focus and work hard in their studies. This student's view was also supported by many other respondents for this research.

To me, one of the influences that helped my education would have to be a role model on the rugby field. Some of them are just seen as being good rugby players but not necessarily good role models. Unlike many All Black players, they are also well educated and good role models. I do not want to just being a good rugby player. That's why education is the best option for

me. (ABGM15)

Sport influence according to these respondents assisted various areas of their development. Their understanding of the learning concepts had improved when their teachers started using sport learning approaches such as drills and memorising skills as part of academic learning. Some respondents were motivated to be successful in their studies like top Pacific Island sports people in New Zealand. Some respondents suggested that other Pacific students will benefit in their studies if sport's teaching and learning techniques are applied by school teachers.

Sport influence is described in the chronosystem layer of Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological theory. This layer is concerned with changes in circumstances that influence students' development (refer to chapter four). Bronfenbrenner's concept indicates that there are influences outside students' immediate environment that impact on their behaviours and beliefs. This has implication for some students such as those identified as their success in sport motivated them to study hard to be successful in academic learning as well. These students have identified a range of significant sporting influences in success. This finding suggested the importance for teachers/educators to have a broad view/understanding of the forces that influence students to assist in the development of educational approaches for them.

This relationship between sport and academic learning was discussed by Bandura (1997). He stated that practical learning, observation and the teamwork approaches that sports players apply in practice can also be applied in classroom learning. He added that these approaches are recognised as part of sport's culture and sports people would have to understand them (Bandura). Bandura's claim was supported by a proportion of respondents for this study who stated that sport skills have helped them in their academic learning where, being good in sports requires an understanding of learning approaches and methods like academic learning (Piaget, 1950).

Bandura's (1997) concept of social learning can be used to describe the influence of sports cultures of New Zealand to many young people including

Samoans. For example, many young Samoans have learnt that many All Black players have high academic qualifications, and that motivated them to concentrate not only in rugby but also their schooling. Novitz and Willmott (1989) studied the sporting culture of New Zealand and at that time wrote that many parents and other family members supported their children playing rugby in particular. Many Samoans today are still influenced by this culture. An example of popular opinion amongst Samoans and other Pasifika people in New Zealand relating to the sporting culture of New Zealand was revealed by Paul Holmes, a radio and television commentator. According to him, many Samoan young people preferred playing rugby because of the support of their families, and they are very skilled (60 Minutes, October 28, 2003). In fact many Samoans were motivated to achieve a higher level of rugby in New Zealand because of the need to become famous rugby players (60 Minutes, October 28, 2003).

Important considerations arising from these findings are, that education can be used to enhance sports particularly in decision-making and confidence and that an educated mind makes better decisions which is important for confidence (Bandura, 1997)

### **Pattern 3: Student/Teachers' Learning Characteristics Influence**

Students' positive learning characteristics (L.C.I) were identified as important factors for successful achievement. This refers to student/teacher characteristics that motivate students' learning. A range of factors are associated with this code and these are detailed in codes, description and explanation in table 6.3.

**Table 6.4: Student/teachers' Learning Characteristics Influences**

<b>Learning Characteristic Influence</b> This refers student/teachers' characteristics impacting upon successful achievement in Education.		
CODES	DESCRIPTION	EXPLANATION
L.S.I.prl.	Learning Skill Influence Practical Learning	Practical learning assists some students' confidence in learning as well as their understanding of the learning concepts.
L.C.I.con.	Learning Characteristics Influence Listening and Concentration	Listening and concentration leads to better understanding of concepts which is important for educational development.
L.C.I.h.	Learning Characteristics Influence Sharing Concerns	Students' understanding of learning concepts is broadened via sharing with others.
L. C.I.cn.	Learning Characteristics Influence Considerate	To be considerate of others encourages positive learning behaviour of student's understanding of learning concepts.
L.C.I.co.	Learning Characteristics Influence Confidence.	Confidence encourages students to explore a wide range of areas related to their work.
L.C.I.p.	Learning Characteristics Influence Passion.	Passion encourages hard work and positive learning behaviour.
P.C.I.a.	Personal Characteristics Influence Awareness	Student awareness leads to students heading the right direction to achieve their goals.
P.C.I.p.	Personal Characteristics Influence Pride	Students' pride encourages them to succeed.
P.C.I.pr.	Personal Characteristics Influence preference	Students' favourable learning styles and approaches assist their confidence and understanding of concepts.

**Learning Skills Influence: Practical Learning (L.S.I.prl)**

Practical learning was identified as the much preferred learning approach for Samoan students. Three quarters of the respondents in the interviews preferred practical learning in terms of experimentation and sharing rather than theoretical learning. These students preferred practical learning approaches because these are recognised as parts of *fa'asamoa*. (L.S.I.prl). Two respondents commented:

Practice makes perfect. To me it is a challenge when I come across new English terms that I do not understand. I write them down, and then look up these terms in the dictionary when I study at home. (ABGF16)

It is boring just staring at the teacher and doing nothing. I think practical learning gives you the experience to assist your understanding of learning

contents. Teachers do understand what they teach because they have learnt and practiced them so students can do the same. (WCGM27)

Two other respondents indicated that sometimes their teachers had lots to teach and for the students they had to practice in their own time to catch up. In order for these students to understand learning contents, they had to practice at home or other places outside their schools.

Practical learning is what we like the best. Sometimes our teachers have other things to do, like helping other students, therefore practical learning is not always happening in class, so what I do is to get together with my friends and we practice the stuffs that have been taught in class. Sometimes, I just practice by myself when I study at home. (ABVF14)

Going through the stuffs learnt in class at home is very important to me and many of my friends. We practice the new stuffs we learnt in our own time and that's why we remember them. (WCGF28)

Tupuola (1996) noted that practical learning is always required in the learning of *fa'asamoa*, because of the history of its traditions – which need to be preserved because they link to lineage, land titles and *matai*. Although the respondents did not have the same view of *fa'asamoa*, they stated that *fa'asamoa* is an important part of their life at home and church. It could be the influence of *fa'asamoa* on these students that made them prefer practical learning.

Murphy's (1997) research explored the educational achievement of Asian students and discovered a similarity between these students learning style with that of Samoans. Practical learning was viewed as an important factor that contributed to the success of many Asia students. In countries such as Australia and the United States many Asian students have been so successful because of practical learning (refer to chapter two for detailed discussion). Murphy pointed out that these people tended to prefer practical learning because it was important in their culture. He believed that the influence of the Confucius culture on these people, (which is based on observation, meditation and practical learning), encouraged them to rely on practical learning and many of them become successful achievers in education. These findings suggest that the teachers of Samoan students



must understand how practical learning approaches are utilised in *fa'asamoa* to assist educational development of Samoans, particularly for those who are competent in *fa'asamoa*.

### **Learning Characteristics Influence: Listening and Concentration (L.C.I.Icon)**

Listening and concentration were listed as significant learning characteristics contributing to success. This influence refers to students being successfully focussed in their studies because they are better listeners (L.C.I.Icon). According to the respondents, *aiga* (family) was where they learnt about the importance of listening, and they were able to apply it successfully in classroom situations. To these students listening is learnt from home, meaning that they were taught by family to listen to instructions.

The kids also must listen to their parents and not be easily distracted by the messages on the media and from others about a better future. (WCGM27)

We are told that listening to parents is the key to successful future, and that's how we do things at home. I think that has influenced me in school. I also believe, it's respecting others if you listen to them. (ABVF14)

We are taught to listen to our parents, matai, the elderly and pastor, because they have wisdom and better understanding of life. I believe listening to their ideas will assist you in terms of direction and understanding of the world. (WLG31)

Some respondents themselves indicated that the influence of the *fa'asamoa* on them and that has influenced their learning. They stated that they were encouraged to practice the traditional *fa'asamoa* to give them direction in life.

We live *fa'asamoa* at home because it shows us the right direction in life. In New Zealand, many Samoans tend to do their own things because they believed it is their right but many of them ended up in trouble as a result. The traditional *fa'asamoa* gives you the respect that will lead you to better things. (ABVF14)

Our parents told us that children should respect and listen to their parents for them to live a prolong life and to be successful. (ABGM7)

We are taught by our parents that *fa'asamoa* is the key to success. In

fa'asamoa, we listen to others and respect them, we also do the same in school and we learn a great deal from the teachers and other students. (WLVM31)

The study of senses in human development by Cohen, DeLoache and Strauss (1979) is relevant to this discussion. They indicated that learning through listening is an important aspect of an individual's development. According to these academics, the brain recognises messages through listening, and that reflects upon behaviour. This supports the learning style of the respondents. It was noted that these students may not contribute to class discussion, but they are good listeners.

The important idea for educators to be aware of is that not all Samoans are the same as with all ethnic groups. There are intra-group differences and accordingly some Samoans (especially those who subscribed to the traditional *fa'asamoa*) prefer observation and listening. Others may find this style not as useful.

### **Learning Characteristic Influence: Sharing Concerns (L.C.I.sc)**

Learning characteristic influence: sharing concerns refers to students seeking assistance via sharing problems with others such as peers, teachers or friends (L.C.I.sc). As identified by Ete at a Samoan women's conference in Wellington in 2005 many Samoans are shy people and they do not always share problems with other students (personal communication, July 15, 2003). One respondent commented about this characteristic of Samoans:

I do not like sharing my problems with other people such as those that I do not know. They might be thinking that I am stupid or dumb so I have to be careful who I speak to. I do not mind talking to the teachers as long as no one else is listening. (WTGM21)

But according to the other respondents:

It's better to be honest and share your problems than try to keep problems to yourself and not even doing anything. (AOGF8)

I suppose you've got to be open to others at what they have offered - open to others beliefs. If you are not going to be open to what the teachers say then you know, you are not gonna take that on board. You have to want to

listen to them. They know what they are talking about so, I suppose you've got to be open to their ideas. (WCVM25)

These findings indicate that not all the respondents are the same. Samoan academics such as Aiono (1996) and Tupuola (1996) indicated that being shy is part of *fa'asamoa* (a symbol of being humble) and many Samoans are influenced by it (they are shy). However, for some students, particularly those who were born in New Zealand, they are more comfortable sharing with others.

The sharing of concerns with adults is probably learned in New Zealand (in comparison to Samoa because of the emphasis upon individual needs and programs). In Tiatia's (2001) research, she emphasised the importance of young Samoans views for future developments of New Zealand/Samoan communities (refer to chapter three) and her argument was supported by a proportion of the students in this research. According to Tupuola (1996), recognising young people's views of family, school and community decision making is part of the New Zealand culture which is encouraged in schools. Research by the Ministry of Education of New Zealand (2003–2007) emphasised young peoples' rights as an important aspect for their development implying that their views can be considered in decision making. Communicating with other members including adults was emphasised in Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological system theory. He indicated the importance of communicating with other people such as parents, teachers and other family members in development (refer to chapter four for detailed discussion). These claims suggest that sharing ideas with others is significant for successful achievement and teacher/educators must understand how to utilise it to benefit students.

### **Learning Characteristic Influence: Considerate (L.C.I.cn)**

Being considerate toward others was identified as another significant learning characteristic contributing to success by the students. It refers to students being considerate of other people (teachers and students) as a means for success in education (L.C.I.cn). Four respondents stated:

Be "sociable". You get to socialize and interact with a range of different people and through that you would learn about different cultures as well. It

allows others to share with you. I guess you gain a lot of knowledge through socializing with different people. (AOGM1)

It is not good to stick by yourself particularly when other people want to know you. If you refuse to associate with others, it means that you are greedy and arrogant and do not want to share and work with others. (WCGM25)

Asking questions means that you want to know more about another person or something. It also shows that you care. (AOVM1)

It's just like studying and just getting better marks, and you've got it like ask questions like smart questions instead of asking stupid questions that are not constructive. This will just make teachers keen to teach you to the best of their ability, which also makes you a better learner. (WTVM33)

Iata (2001) in his discussion of Samoan life emphasised the importance of understanding Samoan students' characteristics to determine the most appropriate educational approach for them. One of the important points he raised was that some Samoan students sometimes pretend that they understand the teacher but they do not and that leads to failure. Half the respondents supported this claim and this was summed up by three students:

I suppose, it makes it easier for you sort of in a way but, then sometimes it could have a negative affect on someone you know, because they might start thinking to themselves that, "Yeah I'm strong in this subject, I don't need to learn any more. I'm ahead of everyone else". May be that sort of thing might lead to failure. I know for me, I am strong in history, but I still have to study hard by asking more questions. (WCVM25)

It is important when my teachers ask questions related to our lessons because they remind me of what I need to remember. Sometimes I forget things but my teachers kept on reminding me by asking a lot of guided questions. (ABGF14)

Whenever I ask my teachers or other students about issues relating to our lessons I feel encouraged by it. I learn a great deal from them for example, the skills (answering questions), understanding of new concepts, as well as it makes me feel that I am important to other students. (WLVF32)

But other students believed writing down things taught in class, and asking for help guided them most in their studies.

I need to write down what my teacher teaches me so I can remember.  
(WTGF20)

I ask questions, practice the new theories and explore them in different areas. I also share my ideas with other students. (AOGM3)

It's like giving you clues when you ask questions. Sometimes I forget what was learnt but when I ask myself questions about the subjects, I just remember those things. It's like the answers are already in the brain and by asking questions activates that part of the brain where the answers are.  
(AOGM5)

Different aspects of consideration were identified in relation to learning characteristic influence: considerate. According to the respondents, the students can be considerate of others by being sociable, asking questions and staying humble. One respondent viewed being considered by means of asking constructive questions and her view was supported by twelve other respondents.

Asking question shows that you have been listening. It also shows that you care and being considerate. Asking question is very important for teachers as well – it encourages them. (AOGM1)

AOGM1 also stated that being considerate of other students leads to better relationships and this is an advantage for cooperative learning, that is, better relationships between students leads to sharing of ideas. Students helping one another is important in the understanding of learning contents. According to one respondent:

Being considerate and asking question show that you are willing to share ideas which are important for cooperative learning. (WLG31)

One of the focal points of *fa'asamoa* is *fa'aaloalo* (respect) and Samoans are encouraged to respect others. Being respectful according to *fa'asamoa* also means that people would have to be part of a group (team) and being cooperative with other group members (Tupuola, 1996). This characteristic of

the culture influences many as reflected in the views of the respondents in this study.

Jones (1991) noted the negative impact of not socialising with people of different cultures. She found that many Pacific Island students did not get along with *palagi* students so they ended up forming small groups amongst themselves, which did not always help their schooling because many of the friends were low achievers.

The ability to ask questions helps learning if students have questions and doubt (Thalheimer, 2007). According to Thalheimer the benefits of asking questions in learning is that, it guides learner's attention and processing, provides repetition and practices, gives learners instruction and feedback, activates prior knowledge, promotes thinking skills and encourages attention to difficult situation. Asking question is an important skill for the development of all students but particularly important for ethnic minority students because it facilitates elaboration of ideas and hence greater understanding.

### **Learning Characteristics Influence: Confidence (L.C.I.co)**

This characteristic indicates that being confident is important for students' success. This factor refers to the students who have been successful in their schooling because they were confident in themselves, and worked hard to achieve better results (L.C.I.co). Three commented favourably about this characteristic:

Your personal characteristics are parts of you that you don't need motivation to pull them out. You've got to establish a culture (for example, perseverance, enthusiastic, hardworking) from the characteristic that you've already inherited to assist you. It's like playing cards, that is, you pull out the right card at a time. I suppose some people may need motivation to get the best out of them but I believe if you are someone who has better control of yourself then you may not need motivation. (WCLM31)

I think maturity is also one of the characteristics that could help. If you are a person that has self-control you can do your work properly. You can also take on other responsibilities, whereas if you are not matured you won't really care about what you are doing. (APVF8)

It's being confident in yourself that you can pass the exam at the end of the year. I mean, realistically, other students couldn't enter university because they did not undertake the appropriate subjects, for example, the subjects they are strong in. (ABVF14)

These respondents stated that confidence is one of the characteristics they have always had, and that assisted them in terms of decision making, management and other aspects that led to their successes so far.

Huitt's (2001) description of intrinsic motivation has relevance in understanding the issue of confidence. He stated that some students are self-motivated (that is intrinsic motivated) particularly those who have goals set in their minds. The data for this study supported Huitt's claim – as pointed out by the respondents, where they worked hard to achieve their goals and were more confident because of that. These students' statements indicated that they believed they were successful because they had the confidence to set goals. These students also felt they became confident when they were prepared to meet the challenges ahead.

### **Learning Characteristic Influence: Passion (L.C.I.p)**

Student passion was also identified by some respondents as a significant factor contributing to success (L.C.I.p). This factor refers to the students being dedicated and committed to their schooling and having a willingness to succeed. Important pointers related to passion to assist educational approaches for Samoans have been pointed out by twenty eight respondents. All the respondents for this research have similar views related to learning characteristics influence: passion and these are described by the following ten students' comments. Firstly, passion made them prepared in advance for examinations.

...you know, if you really want to pass examination you must prepare yourself long enough for it. I mean, realistically, many of us (Samoan students) have a passion to succeed, like achieving a good pass in bursary to enter university, so we sometimes talk to people about it, but we also have to work hard for it. (WCV25)

I study hard because I want to pass the end of the year examination. (AOGM3)

I am not going to fail. I did not come to this school to end up with a fail grade. I do a lot work to prepare myself for examinations. I feel I will let my family down if I fail so, I have to study hard. (APGF8)

Secondly, the students are passionate to succeed to promote the names of their schools.

My school is like my family. If I do well, say for example, achieving higher result in school examinations or winning sports, it means I am giving my school a good name. If I misbehave and fail examinations, I am letting my school down. (AOGM9)

Our school has a good history in relation to success (academic, culture and sports) and many of my friends and I are aware of that. We study diligently to make sure we pass examinations and give our school a good name. (WCVM25)

Thirdly, pride has led to some students working hard in their studies.

I do not want to come second to anyone. It's a sign of failure. It's not very comfortable thinking that there is another person who is better than you. I'd rather die trying than admitting that some one else is better than me. (WLVF32)

I am proud of being Samoan and I do my best in school to make other Samoans proud of me. (APGF10)

And, fourthly, improving family economic status has led to some students' passion to succeed in their studies.

I want 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. (APGF8)

The other respondents were motivated to do well in their schooling because they wanted to please their parents and families. But they were aware that there are steps they had to take to achieve that.

English is my first language so I do not have much problem expressing my thoughts and stuffs but that doesn't mean I know everything about the



English language. How I understand new terms that I came across is through looking up their meanings in the dictionary and learning about their origins. I also learn from other students by listening to the way they speak and the terms they use. I also do lots of reading in my own time where I learn more new words and phrases. I do these things because I want my parent to be happy about my schooling as well as these are important for the future. (WCV25)

I am quite innovative in my studies because I am aware that there has always been changing circumstances in the teaching side of things, at least I am prepared for any change to come. I also find that to stick to one style of learning all the time is boring so I explore other learning avenues, which have also been a great help to me. My parents are pleased to see me making good progress in my schooling. I always want to do the best for them, making them happy is the least I could do. (AOVM1)

A study of educational achievement of the Hamong ethnic people in the USA by Moffat (1995) revealed that student passion played a very important role in their high achievement rate (refer to chapter two for detailed discussion). Like the respondents for this research, many Asian students in the USA were passionate in their learning because of family and community influence. These findings suggest that family and community involvements in education are important to students and teachers/educators must understand how to utilise them to enhance students learning.

These responses revealed important points to be considered for the development of educational approaches for Samoan students. Firstly, students' passion is a reflection (pride, family) of *fa'asamoa* – teachers understanding of *fa'asamoa* is the best approach to cater for these students' learning needs. Secondly, students' passion reflects the New Zealand culture (being individualistic). Teachers must also understand the circumstances of these students to assist in the understanding of their learning needs. An important point arising from these findings is that these students' passion for success was linked to culture. For example, the application of *fa'asamoa* in the learning of English was the approach undertaken by the respondents who are fluent *fa'asamoa* (language). The other respondents who are not so fluent in the Samoan language utilise local learning styles which was best for

them. So for these students in the study, passion to succeed is important for their educational development and teachers must understand how to utilise it to enhance students learning.

### **Personal Characteristics Influence Awareness (P.C.I.a)**

Personal characteristics influence was identified as another important factor for students' successful achievement. There were a number of related characteristics revealed, and one was students' awareness. This factor refers to students heading the right direction because they were aware of the circumstances involving them – that is, their family and community expectation/needs (P.C.I.a). Six respondents commented according to this influence and indicated that their awareness of family and personal expectations helped them work hard in their studies.

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. (WTGM23)

Sometimes you've got to follow your own ideas because that's what you understand more. (APGM9)

I am aware that my family expects me to succeed because they believe I am the brightest. That is why I work hard in my schooling. (APGF10)

I want to make my Samoan side proud of me. They all depend on me. We've watched my cousins go to college and just drop out. They see me as the one who would put the name of our family up there. (APGF8)

Being a successful student will make my parents proud. (WLG31)

I think being successful in school is what parents expect you to do. My parents have sacrificed so much to ensure that I have a better future, so I do not want them to think that they've wasted their time. I can't pay back what they have sacrificed for me. All I can do is to please them and that is, being successful in education. (WCVM25)

Important pointers related to this characteristic can be used to assist the understanding of Samoans and most importantly, the appropriate approaches to assist their learning. Based on the comments by the

respondents, it is assumed that many Samoan students are aware that their parent's expect them to succeed in education because they had limited education themselves. This claim is supported by Pasikale (1996) research of Samoa in which he found out that many Samoan parents had high expectations for their siblings because they did not have successful education themselves, so their pride would be restored in their children's successful achievements. As for their children such as the respondents for this research, success in education is regarded as honouring parents' and the family name.

The statements by the students also reflect *alofa* (love) in *fa'asamoa* (refer to chapters two and three for full discussion). Many students in this study are aware of their families' sacrifices and they studied hard to be successful for their families. What's more is that these students all viewed their families' expectations as a priority which is a reflection of humbleness in *fa'asamoa* (Tupuola, 1996). Some, although they decided to follow a different path (finding their own solutions to problems) they all want to achieve for their families.

For Samoan students to be aware of their parents' expectation is important. The data revealed the respondents are motivated to succeed in their schooling because they understood that their parents expected them to succeed. This indicates the importance of teachers understanding Samoan parents' expectations. When this is done, goals, motivational strategies and so on are more likely to be implemented successfully.

### **Personal Characteristic Influence: Pride (P.C.I.p)**

Another was students' pride. Personal characteristic influence: pride refers to students being proud of who they are in relation to family, community and economic status/background. In this research these influences has motivated the respondents to succeed (P.C.I.p). Six respondents commented favourably about these influences:

People say that Wainui is a place full of drunk Māori bums, and you know, that doesn't really help because everyone thinks that Wainui is a poor area, but you know,...I mean not all of Wainui is like what the critics meant. There are also community projects there that have been part of our lives for many

years (e.g., sports clubs, youth groups and also churches). Sometimes these criticisms are not true. Like if you're gonna be a multi-millionaire from Wainui then everyone's gonna go: "Wow there goes the man". Tana Umaga is from Wainui, you know, he's the captain of the All Blacks. (WCVM25)

It shows that a Pacific Islander can do as well as other cultures out there in sport- that Pacific Islanders can be great leaders. (APGF14)

I look at us Samoans as the underdogs of our school because lots of us are not rich and so there's that perception that we are also not brainy as well. It's not helping when you look at the yearly statistic of examination results and noted many Samoans are listed in the fail category. For a proud Samoan like myself, I want to make a difference and in order to do that I must be successful. I want to prove to the white people that Samoans are just the same as them. I am also aware that my friends are looking up at me so I want to graduate from university because it is embarrassing if I fail. (AOVM1)

We are proud of our families, and we would like to do our best in our schooling to give our families better names. (AOGF4)

I do not want to let my family down. I make sure I achieve the result in school examinations because that promotes my family name. (WTGM23)

I am proud of who I am, and I will do my best to show that I can be as good or even better than anyone else. (APGF8)

Pride was also identified as one of the forces that encouraged the respondents to work hard in their studies. Most of the respondents said that they were from low or average economic families. However, they did not want this factor to impede their studies. In fact, these students wanted to prove to *papalagi* people that they were just as good as them.

As discussed by Meleisea's (1987), pride is an important part of Samoan culture (refer to chapter three) and many Samoans are passionate to succeed because of that. Meleisea's claim is supported by the respondents in this research. The respondents' comments indicated that their pride and passion are related to *fa'asamoa* which is important for teachers/educators. Teachers/educators must understand how to utilise such a characteristic to assist Samoa student's learning.

## **Personal Characteristic Influence: Learning preferences (P.C.I.pr)**

Personal characteristic influence learning preferences refers to students' preferred learning approaches. The respondents mentioned some interesting suggestions relating to learning styles. For example, specific learning preferences such as short break during lessons, food/drink, music, individually or group work, book research, exploring classroom display and so on in class were identified by the respondents as significant factors for success.

Many breaks during class, for example five minutes break. I tend to focus if there are short breaks during the lessons. (WTGM19)

Food in the classroom. If we are allowed to eat in class it helps us think straight.

May be we can eat during the short breaks, meaning we can find somewhere we can eat and not necessarily in the classroom. (WTGM21)

To me and my friends, food in class has a psychological effect on our minds – it's like celebration and good wishes, particular when we learn new things. I mean food is a sign of satisfaction and appreciation to us. (AOGF4)

We should be able to listen to music while we are doing our work in class. I find that when I am given a task I can focus on it when I am listening to my music. That I won't be distracted by anything else, and I just get on with the rest of the work, and that is sort of easier. (WCGF28)

Two respondents pointed out the importance of a more relaxed classroom environment for them and their friends, where they could move around exploring resources such as wall display, books and other relevant resources to assist their studies. These students demonstrated the importance of relaxed learning environment to them and they believed it can assist many other Polynesian students.

I tend to focus more on my work when no one else is around. I like to work in a place where there is no noise or movement that might distract me. (ABGM13)

I like working and listening to others because that is when I learn new ideas.

When some people are feeling doubt, like I know that sometimes people feel like they can't achieve something but you look at famous people who achieve a lot, you can sort of learn more from them. I think that can help a lot of people, and I think it helps me as well. Seeing like sport stars or someone you know achieved a lot. (WCVM25)

This could be the influence of *fa'asamoa* on these students which makes them preferring having food in class. In *fa'asamoa*, festivities such as commemoration and celebrations require food because it is a sign of acceptance, fortune and good will (Tupuola, 1996). Tupuola added that celebrations without food are viewed as unimportant by many Samoans. It is of significance here that the respondents viewed food as an important part of learning for them. They also believed food in class has a psychological impact on them which is why they rather eat during lessons than outside their classrooms. According to the students, eating outside their classrooms distracted them, and they rather stay in their classrooms where they would still be exposed and focus on the learning requirements. This indicates that food to some Samoan students is not only for refreshment but very much part of learning.

This current research would suggest therefore that it is important for teachers to understand learning preferences in order to promote development. What is important is that the teacher must be aware of the specifics of the individual and the culture to ensure such adjustments can be made.

#### **Pattern 4: Personal Psychological Qualities**

Personal psychological quality was identified as an important pattern related to Samoan students. Significant personal psychological qualities were identified by the respondents in the research. These were viewed as general view influence, goal influence, motivation and prejudice influence motivation. All factors identified in this pattern have been detailed in code, description and explanation in table 6.4.

**Table 6.5: Psychological Qualities**

<b>General View Influence</b> This refers to people's general views which encouraged students to do well in their schooling.		
CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXPLANATION
G.V.I.e.	General View Influence Expectation	People's general view and expectation of the students encourage students.
G.I.	Goal Influence	Educational goals encourage positive learning attitudes.
Pj.I.	Prejudice Influence	Being prejudiced against inspires students to succeed

### **General View Influence Expectation (G.V.I.exp)**

General view influence expectation relates to the students being motivated to succeed by the general views of the Samoans (G.V.I.e). There were few important points raised by some respondents and these were considered as important factors for educational development for Samoans. Firstly, Samoans believe that students who are enrolled in schools with a high European population and high decile ranking are more likely to have successful achievement. For example:

Many people of my church see me as potential university candidate because I am enrolled at a private school. I hate failing because they will laugh at me and my family if that happens. (WCGM31)

My brothers and sisters warned me that I better produce the result because I am the only one in the family who is at private school and it will be a waste of money if I fail. That motivated me to study hard. (APVF8)

Secondly, the Samoans students from Samoa who are educated in New Zealand are expected by their *aiga* and communities in Samoa to be successful because they are regarded as 'bright' students. These students are aware that their community in Samoa would feel negative about them and their families if they fail. Therefore they had to study hard to meet that expectation. Two respondents commented in relation to this:

I come from American Samoa and the expectation of my family and the community is pretty high on me. I mean that when they saw 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 will give my family and I a very bad name. It's like an embarrassment to you and your whole

family especially your parents. (WLVM33)

Being the only university candidate from our church all the church members expect me to achieve a degree and work in a high profile job. That motivates me to study hard. (WTGF20)

Thirdly, many New Zealanders view Samoan communities (for example Porirua, Mangere and Otara) as 'poor' communities (Ministry of Education, 2003), which also meant that the students from these communities were expected to achieve poor results in school. However, ironically this negative view seemed to motivate many respondents to succeed. Two respondents comment about this stating that:

Most white people including other Samoans who are not living in Porirua perceive Porirua as the black spot in terms of crime, unemployment and school failure, and that general view has motivated me to do well in school. (WCVM25)

I think they (papalagi) have the wrong perception/expectation of Polynesian people. We (Polynesians) are all viewed as the darkies in society, like the expression by Paul Holmes on TV3. I am motivated by to do well to show they are wrong. (AOVM1)

Fourthly, the general views amongst some teachers is that Samoan and Pasifika students are not as intelligent as *papalagi* students and they expect them to achieve low results in examinations but that inspired Samoan students to do well such as the respondents for this research.

It's interesting that papalagi teachers might think that you can't speak English so they accept your Samoan and that is discriminating. (ABGF16)

Teachers are sometimes stereotyped about you. They just think that you are not going to do as well as everyone else, but that's just making you want to prove that you are better than that. The students out there have the immediate portrayal that the Polynesian students are not as bright as the white students. (WLVM32)

These respondents' views were supported by Benjamin and Laura (2006) who researched education in New Zealand and noted that many Pasifika



students failed school examinations because of the teachers' wrong impression of Pacific students.

However, such negative expectations were also significant in the respondents' drive for success. The respondents felt they had been discriminated against because *papalagi* students and some teachers in particular perceived them as low achievers, but that motivated them to succeed. It is clear from these respondents that Samoan students' reaction to the forces surrounding them impacted upon their beliefs and behaviour. In Bronfenbrenner's (1990) microsystem concept, he indicated that school, teachers and peers was one of the most influential forces on individual's development (refer to chapter four for detailed discussion) and his concept was supported by the findings of this research relating to the Samoan students in this study. The questions revealed from this are: Whether all Samoans can utilise the negative expectations to motivate them? Should the *papalagi* stop being negative against Samoans or should there be some other resolutions? It is clear however that not all Samoans have the same reaction toward general expectations and these should also be considered for future educational development.

### **Prejudice Influence (Pj.I)**

Being prejudiced against was identified as another significant factor for successful achievement. One respondent pointed out that many Samoans and other Pacific Island students were victims of racial prejudice and he referred to racial slurs against them (i.e., 'punga', 'darkie', 'FOB [fresh off the boat]' and 'over-stayers'). Prejudice influence refers to the negative attitudes and views of *papalagi* on Samoans which was significant to Samoans students' success/failure in education (Pj.I). One student commented in relation to this:

Yeah, we are being labelled as "punga", "over-stayers", "darkie" and many more but that doesn't worry me. Those are just racist people who are just stupid and jealous because we are doing better than them. I think alongside those lines, which have been encouraging to me. I think prejudice has always been a fact of life, and only the weak support that. We've got to accept the fact that prejudices in this life can create negative and positive things - it's just that we need to use it to strengthen our position. (APGM7)

According to this student this negative attitude of some *papalagi* students encouraged him and many other Polynesian students to succeed in their schooling.

Many young Samoans (particularly in the areas of Auckland) have this perception that to combat racism retaliation by using violence is valid and that many have been encouraged to be part of gangs (Jones, 1991). However, some young Samoans today, such as all the respondents for this research, have adopted a different view of winning superiority. The respondents' views were summed by two comments:

I get angry about it but I do not use that anger in a violent way. I use "prejudice" to motive me to work hard and be successful. There is nothing as powerful as being smart to silence the critics especially those who look down on us Samoans. (AMGM3)

These people especially my parents have been through many things in this society. My dad is palagi but when he married my mom, people were kind of looking down at him thinking that he has gone a step down, and my mom especially was kind of segregated against because of her ethnicity and background. They advised me to work hard at school because they do not want me to get the same treatment they received. (WCVM25)

Jones (1991) also noted that some *papalagi* hold the negative views about Samoans and that many students were discouraged by it (refer to chapter three). Sarrup's (1991) research could be used to describe why many *papalagi* are prejudice against Samoans and other Pasifika people. According to him, racial tension is sometimes developed within work environment – that is, working class people, and particularly those working in higher paid jobs, where they tend to feel that they are more superior and better-off than those of low paid jobs. Sarrup's point was supported by the respondents for this research. The respondents believed that they have been prejudiced against because of their low economic status caused by low earnings or unemployment. Such a negative of *papalagi* could lead to failure however, this motivated the respondents to achieve.

## Chapter Summary

One of the research objectives was to identify educational factors that students believe related to success. The literature for the research supported many of the ideas that were identified. However, there were a number of factors that were found to be unusual, for example, eating in class, having small breaks during lessons, music in class, corporal punishment and parents' involvement in class. These factors had special 'values' to a proportion of the respondents where they indicated the significance of the traditional *fa'asamoa* particularly those who practice it at home. These unusual factors had special values in the schooling life of some students and suggestions were made for educators/teachers to be fully aware of such significance. All factors identified in the study were grouped according to similar meanings these were categorised into four patterns. The first pattern was 'teacher-school influence'. The respondents identified a number of related factors, such as resources, school environment, and teacher approach and so on, which indicated the importance of teacher-school influences in their schooling and it was acknowledged that these factors should be considered for future development of education for Samoan students.

The second pattern was 'social cultural influence' where this pattern indicated that Samoan students' social life and cultures are important for their educational development. The respondents indicated various factors such as motivation, self-esteem and confidence, learning ability, understanding of concepts and so on were all related to their social-cultural context. The alignment of school achievement and socio-cultural issues was an explicit identification by the students of the importance of the interrelatedness of contextual elements in a person's life. This linked with Bronfenbrenner's theory, (1990).

The third pattern was 'student/teachers' learning characteristics influence'. This pattern indicated that students/teachers' learning characteristics are important for the educational development for Samoan students. Characteristics such as being considerate, being aware, being focussed and concentrated, being polite and so on were identified by the respondents as significant aspects of their achievement. The role of student/teachers

characteristics in education according to the respondents indicated the importance of personality for educational development.

The fourth pattern was psychological qualities. This pattern highlighted the psychological influences, such as the general views and personal goals that are most common amongst Samoans in New Zealand. According to the respondents, these psychological qualities have been significant for their development and should be considered for future educational development for Samoan and other ethnic groups in New Zealand. The psychological qualities as suggested by the students for successful academic achievement revealed the importance of students' environment for their development (refer to Bronfenbrenner's, 1990 concept in chapter four).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Results and Discussion: Themes

#### Introduction

This study had two objectives. The first was to identify factors that Samoan secondary students regarded as important for successful academic achievement. The second was to identify how this information could contribute to the international literature relating to the education of ethnic minority groups. Data was collected from the students on many factors that they considered important for their success. The interviews were analysed and coded, categorised into patterns and then themes. As indicated in chapter six, there were four key group patterns identified on the basis of common elements relating to success. These patterns were analysed and three main themes emerged. The themes were identified as 1. passion to achieve; 2. capacity to deal with inconsistency; and 3. holistic orientation. The themes provide an overarching understanding of the key findings. These three ideas interrelated with many of the findings and added coherence and additional understandings to the study.

#### Theme 1: Passion to Achieve

Passion to succeed and achieve has been influential in the lives of many Samoans (see chapters three and six) and many Samoans believe it is an important part of *fa'asamoa*. In this study, the information provided by the respondents revealed that passion to achieve significantly influenced them to succeed in education (and many other areas of life). This theme refers to a willingness and desire of the respondents to achieve higher academic results in education and be successful due to their enthusiasm. But it is more than this – it seems that the data indicates a passion about a number of aspects of the students' lives. For example, they are passionate about sport, *fa'asamoa*, customs, community, church life, their families and their values, and those factors are intertwined with the passion to achieve.

The literature (Aiono, 1996; Meleisea, 1987; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Taulealeausumai, 1997; Tupuola, 1996) indicated that a passion to succeed

is an important part of the lives of many Samoans. In New Zealand, this passion has often led to many Samoans working together to achieve desired results such as the establishment of Samoan radio stations, churches, community centres and preschools. For many Samoans, being successful is not the same as for those *papalagi* who frequently display individualistic values (Hofstede, 1980). Many Samoans are taught that unity is value to have and that unity becomes a way to achieve success for them. Many Samoans depend on family and community for stability and many of them benefited from it (refer to chapter three). For example, many respondents indicated that their families and churches supported their learning and that motivated them to succeed for their families and churches (refer to chapter six). The implication here is that – Samoan students are more likely to work to achieve higher academic grades for parents, relatives and even their friends. They are driven by the passion to achieve for others. This theme highlights the various factors that helped facilitate the respondents' passion for success. Teachers, family, community, and sport influences have been identified by the respondents as the forces that motivated them and in return these were perceived to be the reasons why they continued to have this passion. This research found that what was being suggested by the respondents was that these areas merge into a powerful force to drive them to achieve for others and for themselves, and they in turn reflect this passion by being passionate themselves in supporting achievement. For example, some respondents stated that they wanted to succeed to assist their teachers, families, churches and communities but their teachers, families, churches, community passion to succeed motivated them also to work hard in their schooling.

What this suggests is that educators, teachers, parents and family can all contribute in developing an effective learning environment for the students, thereby facilitate, and utilize this passion to achieve. The New Zealand Ministry of Education reports, (2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) and Wood (1998) suggested that educators/teachers should be well prepared to meet students' learning needs by developing appropriate learning activities and resources to support them. An investigation by McDevitt and Ormrod (2004)

indicated that students who are encouraged in learning tend to become more successful in academic learning than those who are not.

### **Teacher and Other Educational Influences**

Teacher influence was identified as one of the relevant factors associated with this theme. The respondents identified various teacher influences and explained the importance of such influence in their passion for success in education. According to these respondents teacher influence included (a) acceptable teacher personal characteristics; (b) appropriate teaching approaches; and (c) classroom settings that encouraged them to study hard. These were also significant factors in their improved achievement in school examinations (refer to chapter five).

#### ***(a) Teacher Personal Characteristics***

Many respondents stated that their teachers' interesting, accepting and appropriate teaching characteristics motivated them to study hard and become passionate about achieving. Educational research related to other ethnic groups revealed the importance of the teacher personal characteristics for successful achievement of many students (for example Harris, 1990; Moffat, 1995; Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintron, 2007). In the Samoan context in New Zealand, teacher personal characteristics are also very important. This has been compared to church leadership which is the most important part of *fa'asamoa* and life of many Samoans in New Zealand (refer to chapters three and six). According to Popo Su'a (2003), a good church leader is also an effective teacher who demonstrates an 'acceptable' personality such as being patient, loving, caring, innovative, creative, fair and honest. These students added that their teachers often display these characteristics in class and these made them feel that they are being loved and accepted by their teachers.

In reviewing the literature (Meleisea, 1987; Levine, 2003; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Tupuola, 1996; Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintron, 2007; Taulealeausumai, 1997) related to Samoa, it revealed that love and respect are connected to the family upbringing for many Samoans – that is, many young Samoans are taught to love and respect one another by being patient, loving, caring and compassionate. In this research, the respondents showed a positive attitude

to their learning when their teachers displayed these characteristics. Teachers must therefore be aware of the significance of their personal characteristics as being an important part of achieving successful learning for Samoan students if they are to develop a passion for learning. This suggests the importance of teachers become role models. Teachers must display the personal characteristics that are acceptable to Samoan students to motivate them.

### ***(b) Appropriate Teaching Approaches***

Another factor related to the students' passion to achieve was the appropriate teaching approach. The respondents identified a number of approaches which assisted them in their schooling. For example, group-activities, tutoring, use of Pacific Island helpers in the classroom setting, recognising *fa'asamoa* in teaching, teacher use of positive reinforcement, and questioning were identified by many respondents as significant approaches in their development (refer to chapter six). This made the students value their learning. The respondents who thought this were Samoan-born who practiced the traditional *fa'asamoa*. Their preferred learning approaches were those associated with the traditional *fa'asamoa* or their cultural upbringing.

The literature (e.g., Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Pasikale, 1996; Tupuola, 1996) indicated that many Samoans preferred the teacher-centred approach because it was an important part of their culture. What is crucial in this finding is that there are various effective ways to apply a teacher-centred approach in schools. As indicated by some respondents, this approach, applied by their teachers motivated them because it was exciting, and more importantly these approaches were familiar to them. This finding confirmed Sullivan's (1998) and the Ministry of Education reports, 2003, 2006; 2007) where positive teaching approaches for many Pacific students are those that fit the traditional method, that is, traditional teaching approaches encourages these students to study in a more diligent manner. The respondents also stated that they were more excited, creative, attentive and imaginative in their learning when their teachers applied familiar approaches in their lessons. They also indicated that their teachers' understanding of *fa'asamoa* (including the culture and language) made learning more exciting and inspiring for them.



These students' teachers applied *fa'asamoa* in learning instruction and these encouraged positive learning behaviours for many respondents and the students' understanding of the activities and learning concepts. An important consideration for educational development arising from this finding was that for many Samoans they tended to appreciate the approaches that are associated with their cultural upbringing because they understood them well. It was clear from many respondents' views that the traditional Samoan approaches motivated them because they are proud of it. These students indicated that they wanted to show the other students that the Samoan approaches were also just as 'good' (see chapter six). The passion for learning arose from their experience and expectations for success bounded by *fa'asamoa*.

Another approach suggested as acceptable by some respondents was corporal punishment. Some respondents, particularly the Samoan-born, suggested that corporal punishment was an important disciplinary and motivational tool for them. These students believed that it was a necessary force to motivate learners, particularly those who showed no respect for teachers and the other students. These students stated that sometimes they misbehaved at home and their parents smacked them. The students believed smacking made them aware of the importance of discipline in learning. It was also pointed out that in class, many Samoan students misbehaved and often 'got away with it' but this that on their achievement, they suggested a need for teachers to 'stamp' their authority and establish control, particularly when students misbehaved and showed no respect for the teachers. These respondents suggested that '*fasi*' (smacking) was a more appropriate approach in this type of situation because it worked for them in their *aiga*. Earlier research by Kinoch (1976) indicated that many church leaders encouraged smacking because it was part of Samoan church doctrines, for example it is stated in the Bible that *E tatau le ta i le tua o le vale* (smacking is appropriate for the unwise) and many Samoans accept this. The findings indicated that passion for some students relates to *fasi* and they believed that the other students would also succeed when *fasi* is applied in their learning. Another important factor arising from this is that the students are passionate when *fasi* was applied because they viewed it as Christian approach.

Some respondents suggested counselling as one of the alternative approaches for disciplining Samoan students and these were the students from families who have accepted the alternative approaches in their lives. They also believed that this approach would work for the other students because it worked well for them. International researchers (for example Vialle, Lysaght and Verenikina, 2005) have also acknowledged the importance of counselling in learning. According to them, advisory and counselling approaches by teachers are more important for student development because they demonstrate appropriate role models and direction. Many respondents indicated that the advisory and counselling approaches applied by their teachers encouraged them to think deeply and imaginative particularly in areas related to problem solving. The approach according to these students worked well for them and they were passionate in their schooling as a result.

Another important approach suggested by the respondents was an alternative teaching/learning approach. As stated by some respondents (see chapter six) many of their Samoan friends and peers misbehaved in class because their teachers did not have good control. It was obvious from the students that their passion is for the Samoans students to succeed and they suggested the alternative approaches to assist these students. For example, they believed, working in small groups would suit these students because the approach is recognised in *fa'asamoa* and many Samoans are passionate to achieve via this approach.

### **(c) Classroom Learning Supports**

There were two other factors related to students' passion to achieve. They were identified as supports, which contributed to academic successes in the classroom and were often mentioned:

1. communication with others
2. resource supports

### **Communication**

Communication was identified as an important factor in the schooling of many respondents. This research has found that the respondents were

different in preferences regarding communication approaches and methods. The respondents have identified number of communication approaches that promoted their passion for successful achievement. These included communication with the fellow students; teacher/students' communication; communication in *fa'asamoa*; communication in *fa'apapalagi*; and parents/students/school communication. The following section describes these factors.

#### *Communication with the Fellow Students – Group Learning*

Some respondents preferred to work in groups where they could share and communicate with their peers, and they were passionate about this face-to-face arrangement because they had been successful with this approach in the past. These respondents stated that eye contact was an important means of communication and many felt comfortable doing this in a peer group setting. These respondents added that group sharing has been part of their family customs, which made them confident in speaking and expressing their views freely in front of the other students. An important point from this finding is that the students are motivated and passionate about success in their schoolings when they understand the approaches applied.

Some other Samoan-born respondents indicated that they preferred the group communication approaches and methods such as group discussion or peer learning because these gave them the opportunity to share their ideas and views freely with the other students and this had motivated them. These students stated that they were passionate about this approach because it is part of their family customs.

#### *Teacher/student Communication*

Some respondents particularly those who were Samoan-born and practiced the traditional *fa'asamoa* at home preferred to listen to their teachers and these were the ones who had just immigrated to New Zealand. They were passionate about the use of the teacher/students communication approach in their schoolings because they were more familiar with it than the other approaches such as the individual learning approach (refer to chapter three). This indicates that for some Samoans, the traditional Samoan communication approaches are an important means for facilitating their

passion to achieve. Teachers must obtain a clear understanding of these students to apply the most appropriate communication for them.

### *Communication in Fa'asamoa*

Another important point related to communication arising from the data was that many respondents sometimes preferred to speak Samoan in group activities and classroom discussion because it was meaningful to them. It was clear from some respondents' views that their passion for successful achievement was related to communication in *fa'asamoa* (the Samoan language). According to them, they were confident that they would be successful because the use of *fa'asamoa* in class made them understand many learning contents and were passionate to achieve further because of that.

Even those who had English as their first language, indicated that they were passionate to learn *fa'asamoa* because it was part of their learning. These students wanted to learn more about *fa'asamoa* because they viewed it is an important part of their identity and that reflected their passion to succeed and enthusiasm in class. Hunkin (1988; 2001) described the importance of a person's own language in communication. This also explains the passion for some Samoan students.

An important point to be considered for schooling is that teachers need to understand that *fa'asamoa* to many Samoans, is more than just a language. It has deeper meaning to these students (Singh & Sinclair, 2001). Mahina, Williams and Nabobo's (2004) educational model for Pacific Island students is a useful approach because it encourages positive learning attitudes from many Pacific students (refer to chapters two, three and six). Esera (2001) has indicated in his research that many Samoan students in New Zealand have struggled because many teachers lacked the understanding of these students. According to him, Samoan teachers need to be involved in the education of many Samoan students in New Zealand because of their experience of a *fa'asamoa* and that these students are motivated and passionate for successful achievement when their teachers are involved. There is a need however to ensure that a growing number of teachers (both Samoan and others) become competent in the Samoan language and culture

because the Samoan student population is increasing. However it is probable that at least in the short term there will be insufficient Samoan teachers to facilitate these students' learning needs.

### *Communication in Fa'apalagi*

Some respondents indicated that they preferred working alongside *papalagi* students to share ideas and learn from them. According to these respondents, communication with the other *papalagi* students in class assisted their English fluency. The students recognised that the teachers sometimes placed them in the *papalagi* orientated groups because their teachers regarded them as successful achievers in many areas of their schooling and this motivated them to work hard (refer to chapter six). These students' passion was influenced by their improved understanding of English as a result of communicating with the *papalagi* students. These respondents stated that working alongside the other more able students had also encouraged them to study diligently because they had the same desire to succeed.

There are different views explaining the links between certain approaches and the passion for the respondents. Firstly, many Samoan students were passionate about successful academic achievement because of the communication approaches that were recognised and used by their families and *fa'asamoa* in school (see also Pasikale, 1996). Secondly (as stated in chapter three), many Samoans were passionate about achieving successful achievement because their preferred learning approaches were part of their learning. Teachers therefore need to be aware of and know the students' preferences so they are motivated and passionate to succeed in education.

### **Resource Supports**

Passion to achieve for the respondents was also related to resources. Many respondents indicated that resources such as teaching aids, teacher helpers, family, church, sport and community that were available for their learning motivated them. They pointed out that these resources provided them with a good understanding of subject areas was and this was significant in their success. They also believed that this has motivated them more. To these students, resources promoted the passion for successful academic

achievement for them. There are many different types of resources and the following section discusses these in more depth.

### *Teaching Aids*

Teaching aids were identified by many respondents as one of the resources which motivated them to succeed in their schooling. Some respondents indicated that their schools have been able to provide the resources required for their studies and that this motivated them to explore, in depth, the topics they studied, for example the use of books, posters, artefacts, inter-net link and computers which the students could use. These respondents also stated that their schools understood their learning needs and they provided appropriate resources to facilitate learning for them. This indicates that when the respondents were provided with teaching aids a better understanding occurred which facilitated their passion to achieve.

### *Teacher Helpers*

One of the significant resources was teacher helpers. Many respondents indicated that there were too many students in their classes, and their teachers did not have sufficient time to consult with every student regarding their learning needs. However, teacher helpers were seen as able to undertake some of the teachers' responsibilities. More significantly, these helpers were Samoans who could probably provide best for these students in terms of understanding their needs, motivation and so on. For many respondents, Samoan teacher helpers encouraged them and as a result, the students realised the improvements made in their achievements because of these helpers. This in turn created a passion to succeed for these students. The influence of the Samoan teacher helpers in the schooling of Samoans creates a passion for successful achievement for these students.

### *Family*

Family influence was another significant factor related to the passion to achieve for many respondents. The literature, Aiono (1991), Fairbairn-Dunlop (2003) and Meleisea (1987), supports a notion that Samoans are passionate to succeed for their families (see also chapters three and six). The input of families in the schooling of some respondents had a significant impact on the students as it encouraged the students to work diligently. For example,

according to some respondents, their families were passionate about successful achievement in education because it gave them a high profile. Family members' involvement in the schooling of the respondents reminded the respondents of their family passion and this motivated them to work hard (refer to chapter six). An important point arising from this finding was that some respondents became successful in their schooling because they worked cooperatively with their families and they had a passion to succeed for their families. Many students believed that being successful in their studies was the only acceptable way to satisfy their family passion. These findings suggest that parents and teachers must understand that, for many Samoan students, the value of family contributions is important to them. Teacher and parents can assist by reminding these students of their values.

Some respondents stated that their passion to succeed was the result of their parents' academic advice for them. It was noted in this study that many respondents have realised that their parents, despite many of them having limited education, can assist in some subject areas. Many respondents stated that in subjects such as history, language and geography, where local knowledge was required, their parents were able to help. Many respondents indicated that traditional cultural knowledge (*fa'asamoa*) was very important in some areas of their studies and their parents assisted in this area because of their vast experience and expertise, and that created a passion for successful achievement for them. Family participation in education should be encouraged to assist these students.

It was also noted that the influence of well-educated parents also played a significant psychological role for some respondents. According to the interview data, some respondents were motivated to succeed in school because they wanted to be as successful as their parents were. Other respondents indicated that their parents had been able to assist them by giving academic help and advice, which helped their understanding and knowledge of some subject areas. Educators need to encourage parents' participation in their children's schooling to understand what is involved and how to help their children. This finding supports the findings of Iata (2001) Livingstone (1997) and the Ministry of Education (2007) who stated that Samoans and other Polynesian students are helped in their schooling when

their families provide a supporting role. Moffat (1995) demonstrated another way to support children. He stated that parents can participate in classroom learning and they can learn and study together with their children. According to Moffat, this approach creates a better understanding between parents and their children as well as broadening their understanding of their children's learning habits and behaviours. This approach worked well for many Asian students in the United States of America. Some Samoan parents may not be comfortable with this approach because of the Samoan traditional beliefs that teachers are the experts (refer to chapter three and six). Teachers/educators can reach out to these parents in their homes because that is where they are more comfortable in (refer to chapter three).

### *Church*

The contribution of the church was also identified as an important force in the passion for the successful achievement for many respondents. Many stated that their churches have been able to assist by providing a positive learning environment that promoted their passion for successful achievement. For example, many Samoan churches supported their students by providing homework and counselling centres (refer to chapter six). The students' families were sometimes engaged in *fa'alavelave* but some respondents stated that their churches assisted them by providing homework centres for their schoolwork allowing them to focus more on their studies. Church doctrines were another reason why many Samoans students were passionate about successful achievement in their schooling. Some respondents stated that faith in God provided them with positive thinking, encouragement and motivation. Church leaders such as Erika Etuati (2001) and Su'a Popo (2003) also agreed that success is sometimes determined by faith in God. These leaders believed faith in God is important in building the individual's willpower and confidence. Church life is obviously an important part of students' lives and teachers must be aware of this if educational achievement is to be enhanced.

Ah Young (cited in Pasikale, 1998) demonstrated how church culture inspired the Pacific students in her institution. At the Training Organisation Pacific Education Community (TOPEC) institution, students were expected to begin and end each schooling day with a prayer because this was seen as an



important part of their cultures. To many Samoans, prayer is very important, because they believe that is how they mediate with God (Pasikale & Wang, 1998). For example, in a ceremony, an opening prayer (at the beginning of a ceremony) sets a good platform, meaning that the ceremony and what follows it has already been blessed and therefore the event will be successful. To close a ceremony with a prayer is to express an appreciation of the blessing of that success (Tupuola, 1996). In *aiga*, morning and evening prayers are encouraged, and all members are expected to participate. According to Young, students were passionate for successful achievement because of the influence of religion in their schooling and many students, for example in the TOPEC institution, left with some form of qualifications, and many of them found employment. This approach has highlighted that Polynesian traditional spiritual traditions are an integral part of education.

However, in many low decile schools in New Zealand, students of different ethnic backgrounds contribute to classrooms and some of these students do not understand the spirituality in *fa'asamoa* because their cultures are different. For example, many Chinese, Japanese, Indians and Europeans do not understand the religious life of Samoan people. However, it would also be inappropriate for teachers to recognise only the spiritual traditions of Samoans in class because these are not relevant for the other ethnic students. Teachers need to be considerate and open to different cultures to develop an understanding of all students. Teachers could apply alternative approaches that were appropriate for a range of students and Jung's (1969) model of spirituality and education may be appropriate to consider. His model provides a learning environment appropriate for all ethnic students. According to him, everyone has spirituality whether religious or non-religious. He added that an individual's spirituality is associated with his/her real self (deeper thoughts and ideas). He continued by suggesting that an individual's spirituality is related to his/her needs. As indicated by some respondents in this research, schools could provide counselling centres where students can go for spiritual guide and encouragement. These students believed they preferred this approach because counsellors deal with their needs only. Spirituality therefore is an important means for establishing the most suitable

approaches and methods to motivate and create a passion for success for many Samoan students.

### *Community*

The Samoan community influence was another contributor to Samoan students' passion to achieve. The literature and data (refer to chapters three and six) indicated that the community contributed to success by providing the resources that inspired many students (Meleisea, 1987; Moyle, 1983; Tupuola, 1986). For example, the respondents reported that when their communities had established communication and other training centres this aided in the development of their understanding of other Samoans communication skills and general knowledge of life. Harris (1990), Moffat (1995) and Partington (1998) all noted that communities can assist in areas such as financial, spiritual and moral support for the students. These researchers found that community involvement assisted many Asian and Australian Aboriginal students achieving satisfactory results in their schooling.

The research data in this study indicated that the community aspect of support was important. Firstly, many Samoan communities were passionate for success and that was reflected in their support for Samoan students. Secondly, the students were passionate to achieve better results in school because they wanted to contribute to the development of their communities. This indicated that for many Samoan students, their passion to achieve involved developing understanding between the students and communities. Such an interaction was also emphasised by Bronfenbrenner (1990) as an important part of human development (refer to chapter four and five). The respondents in this study believed that the interaction between students and their communities created better understanding and they were passionate to succeed as a result of that understanding.

### *Sport*

For the participants in this study sport improved their passion to achieve and this was related to the inclusion of sporting activities in the classroom learning. In the experience of the researcher, sport is a major influence in the lives of many young Samoans in New Zealand and can impact upon learning

outcomes. However, in the international literature, Taylor (1999) argued that sports can have a negative influence in some areas, particularly when students focus mainly on sports rather than education. He referred to many Black Americans who enrolled in colleges simply to play basketball and did not concentrate on academic studies.

Sport (for example rugby) dominated the thinking of many Samoans in New Zealand, and in some cases, it has proven to be a negative influence (60 Minutes, 28<sup>th</sup> October, 2003). Some respondents stated that many of their friends had abandoned school altogether to concentrate on rugby. Some were still attending school, but just to play in their school rugby team and their educational performance was unsatisfactory. In this regard, sport was identified as a negative influence in the schooling by some of the Samoan students.

However, it can be a positive force in education if the students understood its place in the scheme of things. For example, many respondents were passionate to succeed in their schooling because they had been able to apply the memory skills learnt from sports in subject areas. Some students felt that the success of their schools in the sports encouraged them to be as successful in academic learning. Some students even decided to undertake sports related studies at tertiary level. It is important to note that sports can assist Samoan students as long as the students themselves understand the role that sports can play in academic studies.

The international literature also acknowledged that sports could contribute to academic success in other areas. According to Chester and Cave (1981), students could apply the learning skills they use in sports to academic learning. Teachers can also use some teaching approaches used in sports in their classes and these approaches have been significant in the schooling of some respondents. For example, some respondents stated that sometimes they applied a group learning approach in class, which made the tasks easier for them. This approach has also been significant in their development in rugby. The other respondents stated that their coaches motivated them by referring to rugby stars such as Jonah Lomu, Michael Jones and many other Samoans who played for the All Blacks. There is a strong link between

passion and self-esteem and educational outcomes (Huitt, 2001). It is apparent that the influence of sport has encouraged many respondents. Some were motivated to become rugby sport stars while the others used sport to assist their academic learning.

## **Theme 2: Capacity to Deal with Inconsistency in their Status**

Another significant theme identified was capacity to deal with inconsistency. This was linked to the approaches and methods the respondents used to deal with the circumstances they faced such as cultural difference between the respondents' schools, families and churches; low socio-economical status; prejudice views against Samoans; and the effects of change. These circumstances could have the potential to be negative for the respondents, however, they managed to 'weave their way through' which made them successful in the end (refer to chapter six). This theme refers to how the respondents dealt with these inconsistencies and the various approaches used by them to overcome the barriers. Approaches such as effective decision making; having pride; being family orientated; confronting appearance issues; and application of *fa'apalagi* and *fa'asamoa* in education have been effectively used by many respondents to deal with the inconsistencies they encountered in their lives. The following section discusses these approaches.

### **Decision-making**

One of the significant factors related to the respondents' capacity to adapt to inconsistency was decision-making. The data indicated that the inconsistencies in decision-making approaches within families, churches, school and so on have been caused by cultural difference, varying economic circumstances of Samoans in New Zealand, different perceptions of *fa'asamoa* and different church beliefs. These inconsistencies could have resulted in educational failure to many respondents, but they stated that they managed to 'navigate a path' to success. As indicated in chapter six, some respondents have been involved in the traditional decision-making within their families, schools, churches, sports and so on while the others utilised the decision-making approaches of both cultures to adapt. Many respondents stated that they have been able to apply specific approaches and methods

such as using the opportunities that both cultures have provided and have managed to avoid the conflicts or difficulties they would experience in either culture or in the interaction of the two. For example, many respondents stated that they managed to convince their parents that their decisions regarding the subject choice they should undertake was the best. These students understood that many of their friends failed in their schooling because their parents decided for them.

However, it was noted that some respondents were successful because their parents understood the subjects that were appropriate for them. According to these students, their parents were higher achievers themselves and they were currently employed in high status jobs. One respondent stated that he studied history because many of his friends were studying history, but that did not work for him. His father decided that he could become good in mathematics and he achieved better results from it. Some respondents suggested that sometimes Samoan students needed to listen to the senior members of their families, churches and communities because these people have more experience and knowledge about life. According to these respondents, respecting their parents' decisions made them understand more about themselves as well as improving their learning behaviour, self-belief and confidence in class. Some respondents stated that sometimes they had to miss church, sermons or Sunday school particularly when they needed more time to study, and their parents supported them (refer to chapter six).

As discussed in chapter six, some families recognised their young people's viewpoints in decision-making which helped improve some respondents' confidence and self-esteem and the ability to solve problems by themselves. Another advantage of recognising the respondents' involvement in decision-making was that it made other people, such as parents, pastors, teachers, *matai*, and coaches understand the students' needs, and that was important in getting their ideas across. It was revealed that many respondents managed to 'weave their way through' by sharing their views. This provided a better understanding between their parents and other family members. These students' parents realised the importance of recognising their children's decision in their development. As indicated by some respondents, their

decisions regarding their education were more realistic because they understood their ability and interest and their parents respected them. The data also revealed that many students were more comfortable and confident when they understood that their families recognised the decision-making related to their schooling. This indicates that the interaction between the students and families creates a better understanding and this is important in creating a positive environment for the students.

Another important point highlighted in Araki, (2003) work was that Samoans are diverse in perception of *fa'asamoa*. Tiatia (2001) stated that many young New Zealand-born Samoans have their own view of *fa'asamoa* which is crucial in understanding their needs. She added that sometimes the traditional decision-making policies are not applicable for many young people. She emphasised that these people's views should be recognised in decision-making policies because young people's views are more suitable for contemporary societies such as New Zealand. She elaborated stating that the young people's views involve modern ideas that are important for the development and continuity of *fa'asamoa* in New Zealand.

### **Having Pride**

Another approach used by the respondents to deal with inconsistencies in New Zealand was having pride. This approach was related to a range of factors and linked to the well-being of Samoans in New Zealand. For example, circumstances such as low socio-economic, low achievement in education, prejudice and a general expectation of New Zealanders were viewed by many respondents as negative and could have resulted in academic failure for them. According to these respondents, these factors have motivated them to succeed in their schooling. These students stated that they did not want other people to perceive them as poor, dumb or stupid, and so they had to work hard to prove that such misconception was not true

Research related to Asian and African students in the United States of America revealed that these students had the same ambitions and desires as the Samoan students, and these students have also been successful achievers (Caplan, Choy & Whitmore, 1991; Moffat, 1995) (refer to chapter two).

This finding has highlighted that, having pride is the result of interactions between many respondents and their environment. The negative forces, such as prejudice of some *papalagi* against Samoans, the respondents' low-socio economic status and poor achievement record of Samoans, has motivated many respondents to work hard in their schooling. Teachers, parents, church leaders, policy-makers, *matai* and so on need to understand that negative forces such as those related to Samoans could be used in more effective ways to motivate Samoan students. Some Samoans can be taught to resist these negative forces by using them as a benchmark to move forward. The education system of any country can benefit by facilitating positive self-esteem in their students.

### **Being Family Orientated**

Being family orientated was another approach effectively used by the respondents to adapt to life in New Zealand. As indicated in the literature, there are circumstances in New Zealand that have caused problems for many Samoans in the past. Many Polynesians in New Zealand have been affected by low economic status (Statistics New Zealand Income Survey, 2006). The literature has indicated that these factors have also led to failure of many Polynesian students (Livingstone, 1997). But, according to many respondents, they have been able to resolve some difficulties arising from the low socio-economic status of their families by having a close bond with their families as this became a protective factor. For example, many respondents indicated that their family members assisted them by providing financial, educational and spiritual support for their schooling. This support from these students' families encouraged them to succeed in their schooling for themselves and their families.

Another important finding related to the family was that many respondents felt comfortable when their family members were involved in class and other areas of their schooling (refer to chapters three and six). This finding suggests a need to encourage Samoan parents and relatives' participation in school.

## **Physical Appearance**

Another interesting approach used by the respondents to deal with the inconsistencies they have encountered was having what was believed as a 'good' physical appearance, for example being physically fit and strong (refer to chapter six).

It is possible that some Samoan students are being influenced by their families who support this belief. Unfortunately, in some schools in New Zealand, some teachers tended to favour *papalagi* students more and that discouraged many Samoan and other Polynesian students (Jones, 1991). But according to some respondents, they have been motivated by these negative views. Some students trained hard physically which improved their physical appearance and strength matching the others and more importantly, to prove that they were just the same as anyone else. How the respondents dealt with the negative forces such as the prejudiced views against them was an important finding of this study.

## **Application of Fa'asamoa and Fa'apalagi in Education**

Another important approach related to the capacity to deal with inconsistencies according to some respondents, was the utilisation of both cultures (*fa'asamoa* and *fa'apalagi*) in education. The literature and data indicated that there are circumstances in New Zealand where the two cultures express different views, and this could impact negatively on some students. But according to many respondents, they were successful because they have been able to utilise both cultures in some areas of their schooling and have achieved satisfactory results from it. For example, in writing, they navigated between the two cultures to explore ideas and that was an important tool in expressing their views clearly. Some respondents indicated that in group discussion they had to use some Samoan terminologies to clarify their points. These students preferred some Samoan terminologies because they are more meaningful to them than the English ones, and they had to use them when necessary. The teachers also understood these students and they provided the resources for them (for example New Zealand and Samoan posters and artefacts relating to different topics). Some



respondents have the Samoan dictionaries in class which assisted the understanding of both languages.

Many respondents, to gain understanding of learning concepts and the respect of other students, have used the Samoan traditional approaches such as the use of *fa'asamoa* in group and class discussions and *fa'aaloalo* (respect) for teachers and other fellow students. It was noted that these students worked cooperatively with many *papalagi* students because they respected them. According to Aiono (1996), respect is the key to success and many Samoans are taught about its roles in the *fa'asamoa*. Some respondents indicated that they have been able to work cooperatively with many *papalagi* and other ethnic students in class because they respected them, for example respect was that they listened to the students and did not interrupting. For some respondents, working alongside *papalagi* students benefited them because they wanted to read and speak like them (refer to chapter six).

The findings indicated that many respondents were able to use both cultures in ways to assist their development in education. These students' approaches were quite different from those used by the other ethnic communities in other countries. For example, Walter's (1995) model of cultural influence in education demonstrated how it worked well in the schooling of some Asian students in the United States of America as these students were not diverse in their views regarding their culture, and because of that the application of traditional approaches in educational areas was straightforward for them.

Harris (1990) researched the schooling of many Aborigines in Australia and found that these students were encouraged by teachers and communities to practice their traditions in schools. Lateral thinking by the students or teachers was not encouraged because of the need to preserve the traditional Aboriginal values. In New Zealand, Samoans have different views regarding *fa'asamoa*. For some respondents, they have accepted certain traditions of the New Zealand such as freedom of speech and debating views between young people and their parents, the status of elderly and the need for eye contact in communication. However, these traditions were also noted as

sometimes having a negative influence on some students because they were socialised in the traditional *fa'asamoa*. In school activities such as debates or class and group discussion, the students felt unable to contribute, and no consideration for alternative approaches was made for them. Some students however, particularly those who supported the use of alternative approaches in school, suggested that it could be an advantage to all Samoan students if some traditions of *fa'asamoa* were modified, so that answering back, eye contact and so on were permitted. Tiatia (2001) strongly supported this, arguing that young Samoans' views on such matters need to be accepted because they can also contribute to *fa'asamoa* in today's world.

There were important approaches suggested by the respondents that could be considered for future educational development for Samoans. The findings indicated that some Samoan students have been able to decide for themselves about the most appropriate approach related to their learning and that they have been successful from it. These respondents have shown that some Samoan traditional approach such as *fa'aloalo* could be effective in gaining an understanding of complex learning concepts. They also suggested that sometimes students have to adapt to the other students' traditions to assist them. For some respondents their teachers have realised the importance of students learning from one another and they set up their classroom accordingly (see chapter six) for example slow learners were placed in the same group as fast learners and some respondents stated the importance of this approach to them. However, other respondents believed they have their own ideas about how success can be achieved for them. Teachers must understand about these differences to apply the most appropriate approaches for these students. They need to understand the students' learning style and be open to all student ideas.

These research revealed five important issues to be considered for educational development. Firstly, the students are encouraged and motivated when they are involved in the decision-making role of their schools, family, churches, community and sports. This approach encourages a wide range of ideas and positive learning behaviours from the students. Secondly, the students are proud of their identity and they use it to adapt to new situations such as the application of *fa'asamoa* in learning. The findings related to this

theme supported the view by Araki, (2003; and Hunkin, (1988) that Samoans are proud of their culture because it is unique to them (refer to chapter three and six). Thirdly, being family orientated provided alternative approaches for some students, but some modification to *fa'asamoa* is necessary. Fourthly, 'strong' physical appearance encourages some students. The data shows that some students felt positive about learning because of their 'good-looks'. This indicates that looking 'good' is recognised by some students as positive factor for their learning. And, fourthly, the application of *fa'asamoa* and *fa'apalagi* in education has benefited many Samoan students. Both languages and cultures have been utilised by the students which has assisted their educational development. This approach has indicated the importance of understanding both the *fa'asamoa* and *fa'apalagi* for these students. Teachers/educators and policy makers need a deep understanding of these issues to assist the development of the most appropriate approaches for Samoan students. As emphasised by Bronfenbrenner (1990), an individual's development involves interactions between different forces which could vary from one individual to the other depending on these interactions. These findings indicated that an understanding of both *fa'asamoa* and *fa'apalagi* was an advantage for many respondents. Students believed that they have been able to move between the two cultural systems and this has assisted their understanding of the most suitable approaches for them.

### **Theme 3: Holistic Orientation**

The holistic orientation as portrayed by the students was another important theme arising from the data. This concept, as defined by Ferdig (2007), refers to a process where everything is connected to everything else in human life, that is, the physical, mental and spiritual. Ferdig added that human holistic orientation is complex and should not be predicted because it could be different from one individual to another depending on how the individual interacts with their environment. He continues by suggesting that such an interaction becomes embedded in the conscious mind and influences action and behaviour. According to Bird and Drewery (2000), holistic orientation involves the body, mind and spirit. They argued that these factors constitute the 'self' or who we are. These researchers all agreed that

holistic orientation is where everything combines forming one whole, and the individual parts are meaningless unless considered in the context of the whole.

The holistic perspective was referred to by a number of researchers (e.g., Meleisea, 1987; O'meara, 1990; Taulealeausumai, 1996; Tiatia, 2001; Tupuola, 1996) and is related to *fa'asamoa*. All these researchers agreed that the lives of Samoans are based on their culture, and this is a unifying holistic force. They also indicated that changes have impacted upon many Samoan traditions but Samoan values (*alofa* and *fa'aaloalo*) have always been maintained. According to these writers the lives and 'wholeness' of Samoans are determined and defined by Samoan values. Hunkin (2001) discussed the notion of a holistic orientation of Samoan values from the *fa'amatai* perspective where he emphasised the importance of Samoan cultural traditions and linguistic features (see chapter three).

But according to Samuelu (cited in Araki, 2003), the most important aspect of *fa'asamoa* are its values. He argued that Samoans could change or vary their traditions as long as those traditions reflect the unifying components of love and respect. Samuelu supported *fa'amatai* as the core of *fa'asamoa*, but he insisted that in contemporary societies people would have to adjust by accepting alternative approaches in their lives. He believed the traditional *fa'asamoa* (*fa'amatai*) would not survive in contemporary society if modern ideas were not accepted. In fact, he argued that although many young Samoans today do not understand the traditional culture, they support Samoan values. Although these researchers were different in views relating to *fa'amatai*, they all agreed that the Samoan values are very important in the lives of Samoans. This suggests that the holistic orientation for Samoans includes the acceptance of traditions, behaviours and ideas supporting the Samoan values.

The general views related to the holistic orientation of similar cultures, such as that of the Tongans in Tonga and the Africans, revealed some similarities with that of Samoans. Bird and Drewery's (2000) commenting on holistic orientation of the Tongans found many similarities with that of the Samoans. They found that the holistic orientation for many Tongans involves the

physical, mind and spirit, and they referred to cultural traditions and values of family and churches as the main forces related to it. However, Bird and Drewery emphasised that holism for the other Tongans such as those living abroad (for example New Zealand) could be different because of the influence of change and foreign cultures. This has implication for Samoans in New Zealand where it could be argued that change has influenced many Samoans in New Zealand and impacted upon their beliefs and perceptions of *fa'asamoa*. For example, the data revealed that the respondents had different views about their holistic orientation because of the differences in their upbringing. For some Samoans, their identity in New Zealand includes alternative and modern ideas while the others preferred Samoan traditions and these have impacted on their beliefs and mindset.

As indicated in the data, some respondents were traditional in orientation while others believed in an alternative orientation. For example, some respondents indicated that successful learning for them involved the traditional *fa'asamoa* – that is, their families, church, communities, Samoans language and traditional approaches all played a significant role in their achievement. According to these students, they have been successful because their teachers understood them. However, research by Livingstone (1991; 1997) and Ministry of Education (2003) indicated that one of the causes for a high failure rate of Polynesian students in New Zealand has been a lack of understanding by teachers of these students' learning needs. Some respondents confirmed this by pointing out that sometimes the New Zealand educational culture and socio-economic life were so dominant that their own learning needs were not met. Fortunately for these students, they managed to get help from their families, churches and communities which made them successful in their schooling. Many of these students indicated that they had to reach out to their families, churches and communities because they have always been part of their development and that they understood them.

Based on the views of the respondents, their holistic orientation relates to the influences of the churches, communities and family in their lives. These students' views clearly indicated that their upbringing was important to them because it reflects the 'true' values of Samoa and that they have been able to

utilise this appropriately to achieve the best result for themselves. They suggested that approaches such as the recruitment of parents as tutors or teacher aides and helpers; application of *fa'asamoa* in the class and curriculum; and use of Polynesian teachers to teach Pacific students was very appropriate. The students believed that when the traditional Samoan culture in New Zealand was under threat these forces facilitated the development of culture and success.

Many other respondents indicated that some characteristics of New Zealand culture, such as being individualistic, being independent and being open to the views of all members helped their understanding of learning concepts. These students believed they had learnt a great deal from such approaches because it provided a variety of communication and learning strategies which helped them become more creative and imaginative. These respondents indicated that their teachers understood that they were more comfortable with some alternative approaches and they have referred to a student-centred method which they believed suited them. As some respondents stated:

This is a modern society and many things are different. We believe differently from those in the past because of the influence of modern technology and social life. I mean if we try and live the traditional *fa'asamoa* today, it may not work, therefore we adjust according to the condition of society. Fortunately, our parents understood our situation and they supported us.

I think Samoan teachers and many parents need to understand that changes must be made to *fa'asamoa* to suit today's conditions, otherwise it will not survive. My family has made changes based on today's society.

We need Samoan teachers who understand us in terms of *fa'asamoa* today. Our teachers are very traditional in their knowledge of *fa'asamoa*, and they try to teach us old stuffs that do not apply today. What is the point of learning old traditions if we do not practice them today?

These respondents have accepted alternative approaches and methods and have found that some traditional approaches were hard to understand because they were not part of their family life (also see chapter six). It was noted that these students' perceptions of life and *fa'asamoa* influenced their

families who also accept alternative approaches. Although these students have accepted alternative approaches and modern ideas as part of their customs, they all support the unifying Samoan values. Samuelu (cited in Araki, 2003) pointed out that the continuity of *fa'asamoa* in modern society depends on its values and principles and he emphasised accepting modern views as an important part of that. For example, the Samoan holistic orientation is associated with families – that is, their perceptions, beliefs and development are associated with family life. In this study, some Samoan families accepted some modern traditions and that influenced the young people. This suggests that for some Samoan students, a holistic orientation is still a pervasive force despite changes in the culture.

However, many respondents stated that many of their friends failed because their teachers, relatives and even parents did not fully appreciate dimensions of the holistic orientation. Some respondents confirmed that:

Many of my friends said that despite what they wanted, their teachers did not care. They just wanted students to learn what they teach. Many of these students just learnt by heart concepts and they often forget these things.

Many Samoan parents did not understand that the approaches their children practice at home are what they are good at. They seemed to believe that school culture is different and their children must adapt to it. Many of my friends told me that their teachers and parents have prevented them from applying their traditional ideas.

Another interesting issue arising from the data relating to *fa'asamoa* was that other respondents, (particularly those of mixed Samoan and Pakeha heritage,) wanted to learn the traditional *fa'asamoa* because they wanted to understand their roots and they believed *fa'asamoa* has helped motivate them in their studies by means of love and respect. To these students, the traditional Samoan teaching and learning approaches reflected love and respect, and these encouraged them to learn more about *fa'asamoa*. These students believed that through love they were encouraged to study hard because they wanted to dedicate their success to their parents and *aiga*. Although they did not fully understand *alofa* as perceived in *fa'asamoa* they believed it was an important part of their successes in school. *Alofa* was

viewed as a result of the interactions between these students and their families. But, Samuelu (cited in Araki 2003) argued that any changes affect Samoan perspectives of *fa'asamoa*, but what persists is that *fa'asamoa* is based on its values, one of which is love. The issue here is that some Samoan students might be searching for this unifying force and teachers, parents and so on can best assist by facilitating development in this area.

Some respondents suggested that *alofa* has been utilised in their learning through the use of Samoan teachers and tutors in class. The respondents pointed out that they felt more comfortable with Samoan teachers because these teachers understood *fa'asamoa* and they knew how to relate to the students. As emphasised earlier by Esera (2001), Samoan teachers/tutors need to be involved in teaching because they understand these students more than *papalagi* teachers. These teachers can relate to Samoan students through *fa'asamoa* and they also understand the influence of Samoan values (respect and *alofa* or love) in these students' life. An important finding here is that *fa'asamoa* is not just assisting Samoans' understanding of learning content, it also provides an acceptable and comfortable environment for these students. This has been demonstrated in overseas communities where many students succeed because of the caring nature of parents and teachers, tutors and so on. For example, in the United States of America, the influence of black teachers in education was noted to have helped to improve the achievement of many black students (Swain, 1972). Many of these students benefited because black teachers and tutors were involved in teaching and other areas of their schooling.

This suggests that while many respondents may have different views regarding the influence of *fa'asamoa*, they all supported *alofa* (love) and respect as significant unifying influences on their schooling. This is because *alofa* and respect are the foundation of *fa'asamoa* (Tupuola, 1996). As stated in the literature (Tupuola, 1996) wrote – “*E fa'avae i le Atua Samoa*”, which means *fa'asamoa* is based upon God's love. Educators need to be encouraged to understand these influences as are important in the development of educational approaches and methods for Samoans. Livingstone (1991), in his research of Samoan students in New Zealand, wrote that many of these students failed because their teachers did not



understand them. In fact, *alofa* and respect can be viewed as important considerations for such an understanding – that is, *alofa* and respect lead to the students being responsive and dedicated to their studies. These forces encourage unity for many Samoans (Tupuola, 1996).

Anae and Pasikale (cited in Singh & Sinclair, 2001) discussed the importance of traditional culture for many Pacific students and according to them many Pacific Island students embrace their culture and they regard it as an important part of their identities. This has important implications for many Samoans in New Zealand. For example, the data in this study indicated that many respondents were traditional in views about life and they believed family, church and community unity were the keys to a better life (refer to chapter six). The literature (Meleisea, 1987; Moyle, 1984; Tupuola, 1996), notes the significance of *fa'asamoa* in the mindset of many Samoans. According to these academics, *fa'asamoa* is based on unity and love, and the community and family support reflects that. These principles have also influenced many respondents. Some students stated that working alongside people with positive and supportive attitudes in school had significant psychological influences on them. It motivated and encouraged them to work hard in their schooling. This means that for many Samoans, their holistic orientation includes the supporting roles of community, church, community, school and other students. It was clear that these factors acted simultaneously for the success of these students in this study.

An important point arising from the data was that these students' holistic orientation varies. Teachers, parents, educators and educational policy-makers must be aware of these variations and acknowledging these would assist educational personnel to understand students' needs.

It was clear from the respondents that their holistic orientation was a consequence of the forces of *fa'asamoa*. The influence of family on the respondents had impacted on various areas of the students' life such as behaviour, belief, understanding of others, lifestyle, desire, ambition and learning characteristics. The forces that influenced the students' families were somewhat different and that was reflected on the students' views. However what the study did conclude was that students could have

somewhat different holistic orientations but the unifying one was Samoan values (*alofa* and *fa'aaloalo*) which described who they were.

In this theme, various forces interacted and influence Samoans and that was reflected in their views. The interactive nature of *fa'asamoa* was the most influential force in these students development. Bronfenbrenner (1990) wrote about the different levels of interaction in human development (see chapter four). These similar forces influencing the students in this research study. Bronfenbrenner's theory also explained why people sometimes have different views and perception about life where human characteristics, perceptions and beliefs depend on how an individual interacts with the forces in the environment. The findings of this study associated with this theme clearly indicated culture as a central focus, and that culture encompassed many related factors such as social, family, church, New Zealand Samoan identity, and traditional Samoan identity. All these factors contribute significantly to holistic orientation. The data and literature indicated that these factors were crucial in the schooling life of the respondents. The interactions between the students and their families, communities, churches and so on provided a base for understanding and acted as a force for development. It was also noted that the interactions between some families, teachers and schools also assisted many respondents. A deeper understanding of how these forces interact could be relevant for the development of approaches and practices for Samoan students and more so, the development of educational approaches for ethnic minority groups.

## **Chapter Summary**

The three themes discussed in this chapter provided an understanding of Samoan students' success. The first theme (passion to achieve) revealed that the Samoans are passionate for success because of the interactive influence of family, church, community, teachers, friends, *fa'asamoa*, changes and the conditions found in New Zealand. The second theme (capacity to deal with inconsistency) revealed the ways in which the respondents adapted to circumstances involving their schooling. The factors in the first theme were also related to this theme. There were some inconsistencies - for example differences in principles, beliefs, and ideas -

that discouraged some students. However, the respondents in this research managed to 'find their way through' these inconsistencies which was crucial to success in school.

The third theme (holistic orientation) reveals that the unifying force of *fa'asamoa* is integral in the achievement of many of the respondents. The findings related to this theme indicated that the forces for success for these students were perceived from an integrated holistic perspective. *Papalagi* were viewed as more likely to be individualistic in nature but, for Samoans, the path to success according to the respondents involved their families, culture, churches, friends, changes, the culture of New Zealand, teachers and the students themselves. However, to many Samoans, these forces posed difficulties because of the inconsistencies located within the New Zealand culture.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Conclusion and Discussion

#### Introduction

This research project has identified a range of factors that contribute to understanding of the issues that influence Samoan student achievement. The respondents perceived that family is the key to their development. There were other significant forces identified such as fa'asamoa (language and culture), socio-economic background, churches, political influences, influences of lifestyle in New Zealand, teachers' understanding of Samoan students and the changing circumstances of Samoans in New Zealand. These were associated with the circumstances involving the families of the respondents, which were crucial in understanding their views. An important principle arising from the findings of this research is that the students, teachers, parents and certain level of community involvement are crucial to successful education. The respondents identified educational approaches utilising these influences. It was noted that not all the respondents have the same view regarding their preferred educational approaches. Some preferred the teacher-centred approach while the others preferred the student-centred approach. This means that the peoples' (for example educators, volunteers and teacher aides) understanding and experiences and expertise are valued as important factors. This research indicates that there is variation amongst the respondents' needs and desires which teachers must be aware of. The findings for this research supported Huitt's (2001) concept that no one fully understands the impact of the factors relating to student learning unless researchers learn from the students themselves. Listening to students can also assist in the understanding of the teaching and learning approaches for the students. The importance of students' views for educational development was the key in this research and was the rationale for the series of interviews as the data collection with the successful Samoan students.

Successful achievement has been linked by researchers to specific factors (such as economical status, politics, religion, cultural and so on) and there was ample evidence in the data that showed these were significant to the

success of many respondents. The researcher believed that successful students themselves have the most accurate views of what contributed to their success and hence, a phenomenological approach was adopted. The success factors identified by the respondents have been examined in the light of international literature and theories. It appears that these factors have also been crucial in the educational development and success of other ethnic groups. For example, research by Harris (1995) and Moffat (1995) indicated that culture, native language, economic circumstances and change in society were significant in the schooling development and successful achievement of other ethnic groups (also see chapter two).

Many success factors identified by the students have been emphasised in the research literature review and these could have relevance for the schooling of unsuccessful Samoan students. These students also understood each other's learning needs, and even more, the influences that impact upon their lives. The views of unsuccessful Samoan students relating to their schooling are also important as their views contribute to the understanding of their schooling achievement (that is why they failed). However, it was decided that the views of successful Samoan students would be more appropriate for this research because their views were related to how they achieved successful results in school.

## **Overview of the Findings**

In search of a coherent explanation for the respondents' viewpoints, a wide range of theories were identified and considered (refer to chapter four). Considerable emphasis was given to the importance of Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological theory. Some personal views particularly from Samoan church ministers, matai and community leaders in New Zealand have also been recognised because the views of people in these positions were identified by the students as significant factors in their schooling development. Such views assisted in the broad understanding of the points raised by the respondents. A major finding of this research relates to the significance that the learners placed upon socio-cultural factors, and this has particular significance for the theories related to education. That is, the data indicated that many respondents' families adapted to life style and culture of New Zealand by assimilating to the culture and lifestyle of New Zealand. This

was the approach many Samoans preferred to achieve educational goals. The theories such as the cultural differences, cultural deficit, attribution, interpretive ethnography, critical and cultural reproductive theories assisted in the understanding of the forces that motivated many respondents and to an extent they provided an understanding of why some students fail.

Examining the research's broad issues (what leads to success for Samoan secondary students) and the objectives for this research led to a decision to use a particular phenomenological methodological approach (refer to chapter five). There were two objectives for this research. The first objective was to identify what the students believed was relevant for their success, and the second was to identify the theoretical implications from the students' views that could be added to the international literature on minority students' success. As described in chapter five, it was considered that a constructive-hermeneutic-interpretivist-qualitative paradigm would be more suitable for this, because it encouraged the gathering of information from the participants and this was important because the views of the students were perceived as the genuine description of truth for this research. Curtis and Mays (1978) noted that it is not necessarily accurate and complete when we learn to know and understand a person simply by observation because observation can be misleading. They pointed out that observers' interpretations can be based upon personal generalisation and therefore an interview approach was considered important for this type of research.

According to Haskell (2001), it is important to consider the views of educators to assist in the understanding of educational methodologies. He argued that educators establish educational methods based on observation of students. They also obtain an understanding of students via interactions with students in classrooms and they have a broad experience and knowledge of students because they face many different students over time. This means that in education today, educational methods must also recognise teachers' views or assumptions as important factors in education. Haskell's argument has been relevant in some areas of this research. For example, the findings from the interviews and the literature revealed that some Samoans prefer the teacher centred approach because it had been the basis of their family practices. It is apparent that these students preferred the teacher-centred

approach because it is recognised as an important part of their culture (see chapters three and six). It was also noted from the views of many respondents that teachers' views have also been significant in some aspects of their learning. Some factors raised by the students are compelling (for example cooperative teaching, learning, and recognising the students' voice in curriculum development). Many interesting and unique ideas have been raised by the students which can be added to the international literature relating to ethnic education.

This research was conducted in four phases. In the first phase, identification of participants was the objective and a request was made to the Ministry of Education to provide the names of low decile schools in New Zealand. Schools in the greater Auckland and Wellington areas were highlighted as most suitable for the research (refer to chapter five). The principals of all schools selected for this research were contacted regarding the nature of the research including the need for interviews. All gave their positive support, and were given information related to the research. The aim of the researcher was to enable these schools to understand the objectives of the research and assist their understanding of Samoan and other Polynesian students attending their schools. Most of the principals contacted requested copies of the findings for future developments.

This was followed by pilot interviews, which gave the researcher a deeper understanding of the issues to be explored. For example, consideration was given to the student's culture, interview duration, personal views and behaviours. The researcher was made aware that he needed to be cautious about these factors because inappropriate or irrelevant questions could lead to students becoming upset or bored and thus to the collection of invalid data. Also it gave the researcher the necessary confidence to undertake the research. Changes were made to some questions in preparation for the focus-group interviews, which was the next phase (phase 2).

In the focus group interviews numerous significant social factors such as the traditional fa'asamoa, the influence of social change, economic factors, religion, schools, teachers, family, friends, personal views and beliefs were identified. This approach was deemed particularly useful because it identified

key ideas and captured rich narrative data concerning why the students preferred certain educational methods and approaches in their schooling and it identified issues for follow-up interviews.

The factors identified in the group interviews required further investigation, because it was considered that the time (approximately 35 minutes) given to members of the interview groups to explore issues raised was insufficient for a thorough explanation of these views. A further exploration of these issues was required, and these were dealt with in the individual interviews which were phase three of the research.

The literature review for this research also assisted in the understanding of the factors raised by the respondents. The views of the respondents emphasised the importance of their aiga and fa'asamoa and many unique factors arose from their views which provided deeper understanding of their lives, and assisted in the development of approaches for Samoans, something that can be added to the international literature. In phase four, all factors identified (see chapter six) were analysed using a thematic analysis procedure. The responses from individual interviews were analysed to verify their meaning and significance and these were categorised according to patterns and themes. Placing the data into patterns assisted in the understanding of the respondents' behaviour patterns which was an important part of their experience.

Four significant patterns were identified (refer to chapter six). These included teacher/school influences, specific socio-cultural influences, learning characteristic influences and personal psychological qualities. As indicated earlier, a pervasive factor deemed most significant was the family dimension. This was a factor that impacted on all areas such as church, fa'asamoa, personality, perception and the varying primary socialisation experiences of the respondents.

All patterns in this research were identified by grouping data according to the themes that the researcher perceived – that is, all similar factors were grouped together. The identified patterns were carefully examined via comparison with fa'asamoa (culture) which assisted in the understanding of their meaning and origin. At first glance some of the points raised by the



respondents seemed unacceptable for example some students indicated some ideas (like eating in class) that demonstrate selfishness and disrespect to teachers however, after comparison with the principles of fa'asamoa it could be seen that these points are linked to the culture. It was noted that all the identified patterns supported the values (love and respect) of fa'asamoa although there were differences in the respondents' perspectives and interpretations of some areas of the culture. As discussed by Lewis (2002), cultural consciousness determines action and beliefs. For this research, it was clear that the Samoan students' cultural consciousness at least in part determined their pattern of thoughts and action. Educators such as Aiono (1996), Huitt (1999), Kestenbaum (1977) and Araki (2003) indicated that the cultural values of students shaped their perspectives regarding their education. In fact, all the respondents in this study confirmed their cultural values had been the main influence on their schooling development.

There were other issues revealed which do not arise in context of the traditional fa'asamoa. The views of some respondents, particularly the New Zealand-born and those of mixed heritage, regarding their schooling were more independent and less influenced by the traditional fa'asamoa. However, it was noted that although they were different in some respects, their views reflected pride, and the values of fa'asamoa which are love and respect. This clearly indicated the continued importance of Samoan cultural values to these students.

It could be argued that in these students' search for an identity there is an emphasis on pride and a renewed interest in traditional aspects (but with a modern twist) and this provides a platform for a more explicit enunciation of Samoan values within the palagi culture. Such a view is consistent with the notion of voluntary minorities (Ogbu, 1995) which states that such groups work within a system but not at the expense of their own culture. The question is: "Why do some Samoans adopt this approach and others do not?" The answer is simple, the students are influenced by their families which have their own ways of adapting to the lifestyle/culture of New Zealand (refer to chapter six). It was essential for this research to investigate all these views, because they are important in understanding the respondents.

## **Meta Theme and Contributing Themes**

Emphasis was placed on exploring the themes arising from the data. It was decided that this approach would be more suitable for this research because of the need to understand all views regarding the influences related to education for Samoans. In fact the respondents were diverse in views relating to their education, and categorising them in themes assisted in the overall understanding of their views. The overarching meta-theme, the family, was supported by the following three themes:

- a. passion to achieve
- b. capacity to deal with inconsistency in their own status
- c. holistic orientation.

The meta-theme and contributing themes were based on the understanding of the respondents' views. The respondents' views assisted in the understanding of the purposes and logic associated with their actions. These ideas and associated factors are encapsulated in the developed model (figure 8.1) detailed below.

## Samoan Students' Success Model

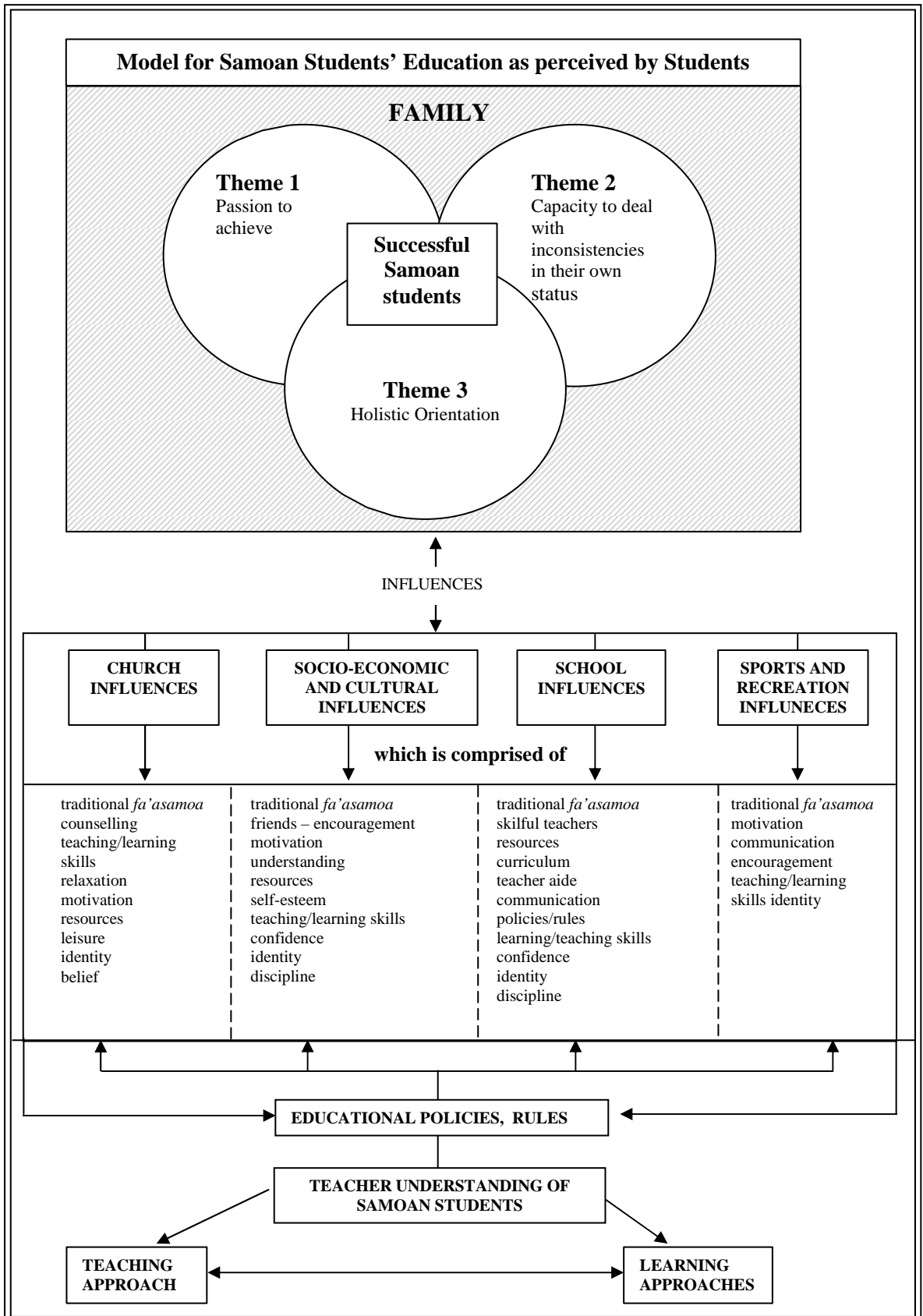


Figure 8.1: Model for Samoan Students Education

The first section of the model is family influence. This section indicates that family is the key influence in achievement for Samoan students. Three important themes arising from the factors associated with family were identified:

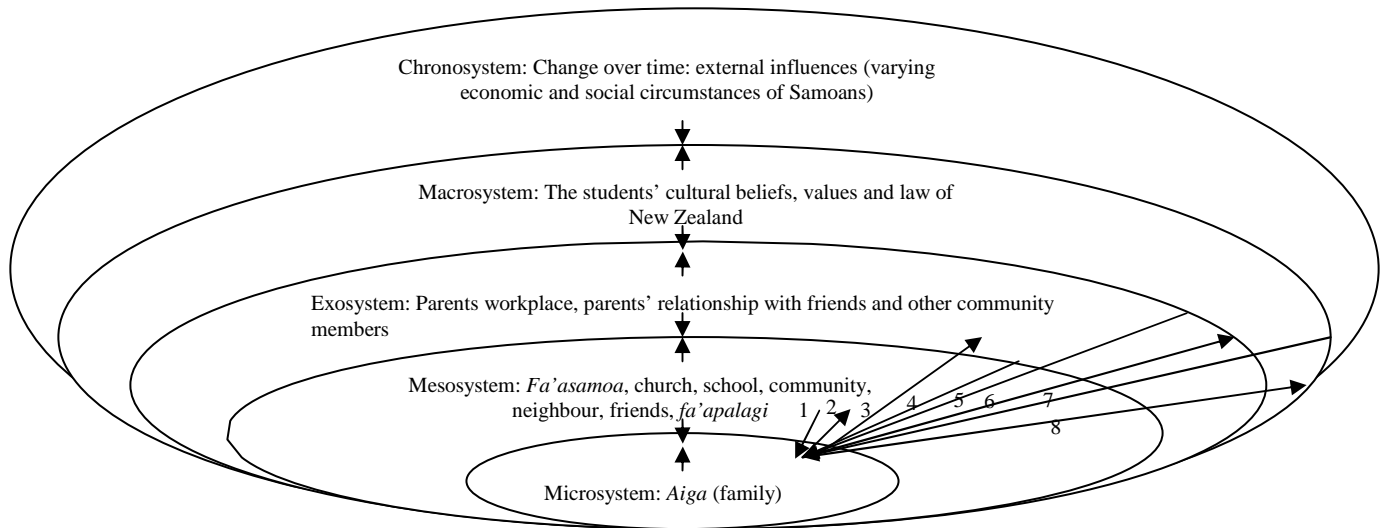
- passion to achieve
- capacity to deal with inconsistencies in their own status
- holistic orientation.

The factors associated with these themes revealed that the interactions between the respondents' families and the forces such as church, school, economic wellbeing, culture, politics, sport and recreation influenced their family ideologies, expectations, vision and aspiration and desires and impacted upon these students' schooling. These interactions were crucial in the understanding of the students' views and outlined areas for future educational development for Samoans in New Zealand. The second section outlines the influences the Samoan students perceived to be significant to their achievement. These are, learning and teaching approaches, students' characteristics, identity, teachers and socio-economic factors. The third section outlines important areas to be considered for future development of educational policies and approaches for Samoans. Factors such as fa'asamoa (language and culture), educational approaches/policies, the personalities of the students, school resources, self-esteem and curriculum were identified by the respondents as important for their achievement. As suggested by Bronfenbrenner (1990) the forces that influence human life interact with one another, and that interaction is important in determining a persons' characteristics and personality. This model can be used to describe the interactions between the Samoan students' families and other areas of life with particular reference to success. A range of factors was identified from the respondents' views and could be added to the existing theory of education – that is, they can add another dimension to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory. The fifth and final section of the model indicates that a teacher's understanding of the students leads to the establishment of appropriate approaches and practices for them.

The second objective for this research was to examine the theoretical implication of the findings and their contribution to international literature on minority students' success. In dealing with this objective two questions were asked: Firstly, what are theoretical implications of this research for current theories of education? Secondly, are there any considerations arising from this current research for future educational development? The international literature and this research project have emphasised family as a key aspect for many ethnic students' success in education. Few attempts have been made to delineate this in the research although it is increasingly acknowledged as the basis for educational developments (Baba, et al. 2004). The research has identified that family values are the key components in understanding the Samoan students' learning needs. These values are essential in the understanding of their behaviours, beliefs, desires, culture and favourable educational approaches. It is important to recognise the overarching influence of family values to assist in the understanding of these people and provide an understanding of approaches to assist development of educational approaches to enhance their understanding of learning concepts.

Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological system theory outlines the five systems of human development and he believes these are fundamental in understanding the individual's needs and desires (refer to chapter four). The philosophy underpinning his ecological system theory is that humans interact with the forces in environment and these forces impact upon human's behaviour, beliefs and mindset. He also believes that an individual sometimes influences his/her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory has been used by theorists and researchers to describe the developments of many societies such as the Chinese in the USA (Moffat, 1995) and Samoans in New Zealand (Pasikale & Apa, 1998) and some changes and modifications have been made to it to suit these cultures. For example in some cultures the microsystem forces are students, family, friends, school and neighbours – these forces interact and thus influence the students' behaviour, belief, attitude and other characteristics. In some societies, such as the Samoans in New Zealand, family is the only microsystem force to have an overwhelming influence on many students and to influence all the other levels of these people's development. In the model (figure 8.2), the ecological system

umbrella, Bronfenbrenner's principles have been outlined with slight modification. This model has, therefore, given prominence to family values as an over-arching influence although acknowledging that such system can vary and are open to further change depending on circumstances.



**Figure 8.2: Bronfenbrenner's model as applied to N.Z. Samoans**

This research was undertaken within the framework of understanding afforded by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1990). This theory identifies systems of influence and interactions that impact upon individuals. The five levels of development in his model are retained but some changes have been made to reflect the circumstances of Samoans in New Zealand. In relation to this approach the following influences and interactions were identified by the study, which were related to the three themes.

### **Microsystem**

The most pervasive microsystem that impacted upon the students is *aiga* (family). According to Bronfenbrenner, the microsystem forces have an immediate impact on individuals and yet are the simplest of all the levels because of their direct interaction (refer to chapter four for detailed discussion). The researcher noted that interaction within the students' microsystem development involved the following interactions *aiga* – school, *aiga* – neighbours, *aiga* – culture (*fa'asamoa* & *fa'apalagi*), *aiga* – teachers and *aiga* – politics, and these reflect the behaviour and beliefs of the students. According to Bronfenbrenner microsystem development is a

straightforward process – that is, individuals are influenced by the forces they interact with and they sometimes influence those forces depending on the circumstances of the individuals. However, this research has found that interaction within the macrosystem development for the Samoans is complex and requires thorough understanding. There are two significant issues relating to the microsystem development for the students in this research. Firstly, some students are dominated by family values and desires and that was significant in their microsystem development. According to the data, the microsystem development for some students is aligned within the boundaries of their aiga values which reflect the practice of the traditional fa'asamoa and their values of these aiga are formed accordingly. The nature of interaction between these students and their aiga involved the Samoan traditional approaches such as rote learning approach and assimilation. These approaches played significant roles in the educational development for some students (refer to chapters three and six). The researcher has noted that many students from these aiga have utilised the Samoan traditional approaches in their learning.

Secondly, some aiga accept modern ideas and were open to new approaches – interactions within these aiga involve all members (refer to chapter six). These aiga considered their children's views as important and they sometimes acted accordingly which supported Bronfenbrenner's (1990) argument that sometimes individuals influence their environment. Some recognised modern ideas and they practiced the student-centred approach. Although some aiga accept modern approaches/ideas the most prevalent force relating to these developments is aiga values – that is, despite having different approaches all the family members respect the values of their aiga and they utilised suitable approaches to achieve those values.

The data also revealed that the microsystem development relating to the students' aiga requires specific characteristics which are also crucial in achieving aiga values. Interactions between the students and their parents and interactions between the students and the other family members require characteristics such as fa'aaloalo, alofa, agamalu, being humble and being loyal. According to the students these characteristics demonstrate

meaningful interactions within aiga – that is, they show harmony and willingness of family members to abide by aiga protocols and values.

An important pointer arising from these findings is that the microsystem development for some people such as these Samoans involves complex issues and requires deep understanding of those issues. The microsystem development for the Samoans varied from one individual to the other and that depended on their circumstances. This is an important dimension that can be added to Bronfenbrenner's (1990) theory – it adds deeper meaning/value to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system development theory.

It can be argued that other ethnic groups also have complex issues relating to their immediate environment and these can be described via modification of Bronfenbrenner's theory. This means that researchers/educators' first impression (or understanding the microsystem development of students) of students is important in understanding students – it gives them a solid base from which to understand the other forces influencing students' learning needs and desires (Heider, 1958) such as those outside their microsystem development (mesosystem forces).

### **Mesosystem**

As detailed by Bronfenbrenner (1990) the interactions between the forces in the microsystem level also influence individuals. According to Bronfenbrenner (1990) the mesosystem forms the connection between the forces of the individual's microsystem (refer to chapter four). This research has found that the mesosystem development for the Samoans involves the following interactions; aiga – teachers, aiga – school, school – community, students – community, aiga – churches, churches – schools and aiga – neighbour and these influenced the students. Three principles related to these interactions were identified. Firstly, some Samoans practice the traditional fa'asamoa. Secondly, some practice both the fa'asamoa and the fa'apalagi. And thirdly, some practice only the fa'apalagi (refer to chapter six). All these mesosystem influences were stimulated by the values of the students' aiga (refer to figure 8.2 and arrows 1 & 2). An important pointer for educational development arising from this development system is that the underlying force underpinning interactions within mesosystem development for



the Samoans is aiga. The researcher has noted that the mesosystem development for the Samoans includes interactions between the various forces and these interactions are motivated by the desire to achieve the values of their aiga. These peoples' behaviours, perceptions, expectations, beliefs and desires are aligned within the values of boundaries of their aiga.

These findings indicate that interactions within the mesosystem level for Samoans vary depending on the circumstances of these people (refer to chapters three and six). These differences supported Piaget's (1950) argument. He argued that individuals are different in learning needs because they are exposed to various forces in the environment. He also pointed out that cultures have different principles, values, protocols and traditions which vary from time to time depending on circumstances of individuals. In this research the various circumstances and forces influencing the students were their parents, churches, family members, friends and school. It is believed that interactions between the students and these forces were different however. There was emphasis upon acting out aiga values and expectations and that reflected the students' beliefs and behaviours. Educational development in some communities such as the Asians in the USA (Moffat, 1995), the Aboriginals of Australia (Partington, 1998), the American Indians in the USA and the other ethnic groups is also similar to that of the Samoans. These educational developments indicate that ethnic groups such as Samoans have educational needs and desires that are aligned within their family values and that educators should understand these values to assist in the development of appropriate educational approaches for these students.

In light of the research literature and data it would seem inaccurate for educators to presuppose approaches for students based on the general understanding of culture. In New Zealand understanding individuals' views of their culture has been viewed by researchers an important consideration for educational development (Baba, et al. 2004; Cole 2002; New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2003). In this research the focal point was to gather information from the students regarding the influences that impacted upon their educational achievements. It was noted that interactions between the forces of the students' microsystem had great impact on the students' mesosystem.

An important consideration for future investigations arising from this development level for the Samoans is that there were variations in the interactions for the Samoans, and these were linked with the circumstances of Samoans in New Zealand. Changes continue to be a major part of life and humans adjust accordingly. In New Zealand, the culture and lifestyle evolve changes and many Samoans have adjusted to those changes which have been significant in the development of many young Samoans. The researcher believes that nature of interaction between the mesosystem forces for many Samoans and other ethnic people today could be different from that in the future because of change. Change will always be a factor of life and it is possible that humans will alter their traditions to adapt. Continuous research in this area will keep educators inform about the situation of the students.

### **Exosystem**

The exosystem is concerned with factors such as parents' workplace and parents' relationship with church, friends and other members of the community and there was evidence from the participants that such factors were significant in explaining student success. According to Bronfenbrenner (1990), interactions between the forces within the exosystem (parents, workplaces, workmates) influence students' mindsets and development. For the Samoans, limited finance and upward mobility expectations were particularly significant in their exosystem development. That is, in some aiga upward mobility expectations have led to some parents spending more time at work and less time with their children and that was significant in the education of their children. The data reveals that some students were disadvantaged by this, while some students were motivated to succeed because they understood why their parents spent more time at the work place than home (refer to chapter three). Some parents had been successful in education and they worked at highly paid jobs which motivated their children (refer to chapter six).

Some students were motivated because of their parents' interaction with other people such as friends or workmates. There is an expression in fa'asamoa, o le tama poto e fiafia ai le tama (a wise son makes his father proud) and there was evidence in the data supporting this. It is believed that

some parents discussed their children's high educational achievement with work mates, church and community members which motivated their children. According to the data, this has created a high expectation for the students and they studied hard to meet such expectation. These interactions were also linked to aiga values (refer to figure 8.2 – arrows 3 and 4).

The exosystem structure for the Samoans reveals another dimension to Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological theory. The most influential force in this development is aiga meaning that for some people such as these Samoans, the exosystem development is also linked with microsystem development. It was also noted by the researcher that for some students, their parents' interactions with friends and workmates influenced the cultural beliefs of their children which is the next structure (macrosystem). This suggests that there are connections between exosystem and macrosystem for some Samoan students.

### **Macrosystem**

The cultural beliefs of the students (macrosystem) were identified by the researcher as a particularly significant factor for educational success. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1990) theory the macrosystem development deals with subsystems such as cultural beliefs and values, law and society (refer to chapter four). There were five subsystems influencing the students' perception of the culture, fa'apalagi, churches, school, politics and law and these were influenced by the aiga values (refer to chapters three and six). The researcher noted that the interactions between these subsystems influenced many students. It appears that interactions between these subsystems were also influenced and dictated by aiga. The interactions within these subsystems for the Samoans were aligned within the boundaries of the values of aiga (this connection is outlined in figure 8.2 and by arrows 5 and 6).

An important issue arising from these developments is that diversity of the students' views on how success is achieved can be linked to various interactions within the different subsystems of macrosystem development for Samoans. Kestenbaum (1977) argued that individuals are sometimes diverse with regard to knowledge of culture, law and other social influences because

of their upbringings and he argued that the way an individual is nurtured influences his/her mindset and thus affects his/her perception of the forces surrounding him/her. It could be argued that the interactions within the macrosystem for many Samoans are linked to their upbringing – according to the data many students valued their family traditions/practices because they have been nurtured accordingly (refer to chapter six). This is supported by a Samoan expression that *e iloa le tama i ana tu ma aga* (a man is known by his traditions and behaviour). The researcher noted the interactions in the five subsystems for the Samoans in this research are somewhat different and that impacted upon the diversity of these people's views of *fa'asamoa* and the other forces surrounding them. Even though these people have diverse views of *fa'asamoa*, *fa'apalagi*, law, politics and the other forces of life they all intend to achieve success for their *aiga*. The data shows that the teachers were aware of such diversity and they planned and taught accordingly. An important pointer arising from the macrosystem development of the students is that the influence of their *aiga* is strong and has influenced the other levels of their development.

The macrosystem development has contributed to the understanding of the individuals' views which can add deep meaning to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. An important pointer for educational development arising from this is that the macrosystem development for the Samoans fluctuated from one individual to the other and that was dependent on their *aiga*. For example, some students' decided the best approaches for them because they were brought up to be independent and solve problems on their own. Some students indicated that they have encountered obstacles in their journey and they managed to weave their way through those obstacles (refer to chapter seven). All the students pointed out that their perceptions of their culture and life in New Zealand are steered by their families, which shows the rigid relationship within these families. It was clear that these students chose alternative approaches because they believed these were adequate to achieve their family values and desires (such connection is indicated in figure 8.2 by arrows 5 and 6). Another important pointer for educational development arising from the macrosystem development for the Samoans is that diversity in the students' perceptions of their cultures and other forces

surrounding them has also influenced their chronosystem development. This connection is shown by the small arrows between the macrosystem and chronosystem. This indicates that there are also interactions between the two systems for these people.

### **Chronosystem**

The fifth system, the chronosystem, identifies changes in the external systems over time and these are important in understanding the students. According to Bronfenbrenner the changing circumstances of individuals such as changes in economic, spiritual, political status and changes in society influence individuals. According to the data, some individuals have made adjustments to some traditions to adjust to the changes in New Zealand, for example, some have altered some traditions of fa'asamoa while some stayed with the culture and these have impacted on the behaviour and beliefs of many young Samoans. Another force in the chronosystem which was significant in the development of many Samoans was the changed education system of New Zealand (refer to chapters three and six). It is believed that the students' perceptions of their culture influenced the way they adjusted to the changes in New Zealand (refer to chapter six).

A need for change to meet demands was pointed out by many of the students as important. For example, many students indicated that their aiga, churches and even schools have made changes in some areas (cultural traditions, policies and principles) to suit the changes in education system and law of New Zealand and these have helped motivated them to study diligently (refer to chapter six). According to the data, various approaches by the students assisted them achieve the result. As indicated earlier the students sought the most appropriate approaches for them and many decided to follow the familiar approaches which were those recognised by their aiga. Apparently, these students' approaches indicate their rigid relationship with their aiga meaning that the chronosystem development for many Samoans such as these students is tied within the values of their aiga (refer to figure 8.2, arrows 6 and 8).

Another significant factor in the chronosystem for the students is that the chronosystem and macrosystem interacted influencing one another and

impacted upon the students' beliefs and perceptions of the culture. It is apparent that the changed circumstances of Samoans in New Zealand have impacted on their behaviours and beliefs and this was indicated earlier in this discussion. The research data indicate that some aiga were conservative and some were contemporary and these characteristics were reflected in the behaviour and beliefs of many young Samoans. The researcher has noted that the chronosystem development for the Samoans is also linked to aiga. Achieving the aiga values has been the dominant force and this has also influenced the chronosystem development systems for the students. This development implies that Bronfenbrenner's (1990) model can be used to outline complicated issues such as these relating to the Samoans.

The theory underlying this research shows how Bronfenbrenner's theory can be used to describe different ethnic groups. As shown in figure 8.2 changes (refer to arrows 1–8) were made due to the circumstance of Samoans and the nature of their culture. Piaget (1950) argued that not all students are the same and he pointed at students' cultures, families and other forces surrounding them as the possible causes of such difference. Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological framework was used to describe the Samoans because it was perceived by the researcher as the most adequate framework for describing the complex issues such as those relating to the three themes identified in this research. The researcher also believed that the theory can be used to outline the complex issues relating to other ethnic groups. Some changes to Bronfenbrenner's theory were made to accommodate the themes relating to the students' perceptions. This research is significant in that it shows how Bronfenbrenner's theory can be modified to include different cultures and circumstances and resolve complex issues such as those involving the Samoans.

The strength of Bronfenbrenner's ecological system development theory for this research is that it breaks down the barriers between different theoretical explanations such as the five development systems (see figure 8.2). The theory also provides an integrated model whereby the students' perceptions of success can be clearly identified (refer to figure 8.2). According to Fernandes (1988), there are complex issues relating to culture and they need to be described thoroughly to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. In this

research, complex issues related to fa'asamoa and the lives of the Samoans have been clearly presented by the respondents and these were outlined in figure 8.2 which was based on Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological framework. The model shows the dominant influence of the students' aiga. It also outlines the links between the different levels of development for the students and interaction within the levels. These interactions impacted upon the students' behaviour, beliefs and desires which vary from one individual to the other and reflected the three themes identified in figure 8.1. These developments revealed that not all Samoans in New Zealand have same approaches in relation to their developments which confirmed the three themes (refer to figure 8.1). Understanding these themes in relation to the developments outlined by Bronfenbrenner will assist educators, parents and community understanding of educational approaches for Samoan students in New Zealand. The message is clear, there are various approaches to be added to extend and expand existing theories. In reviewing the issues arising from the data and the literature, a number of recommendations have been made for educational development.

## **Recommendations**

Pasifika people in New Zealand represent an important group in our community. It is vital that these people have the opportunity to fully participate in education and to achieve their full potential. Creating success for Pasifika people in New Zealand education still poses immense challenges for all involved. This research has identified a range of policies and networks that will help Pacific Island students fully participate and succeed in education.

- Families and communities can assist by getting involved in school activities, learning and teaching. The students' families can assist by becoming teacher-aides, counsellors, road and field patrollers. Sometimes, they can be speakers on specific topics such as fa'asamoa, aiga and Samoan traditional food. The Samoan expertise in fa'asamoa and understanding of Samoan students can assist the understanding of the students learning needs. Sometimes, family members can assist by learning alongside and interact with the students. It would be more meaningful to these students if their parents understand their schoolwork

which means that training for the Samoan parents must be encouraged. This recommendation was indicated by the respondents (pp. 167–174, 177)

- Schools need to encourage communication links with the public to improve Samoan students' interpersonal and literacy skills. Some city councils in New Zealand have established communication centres, which have assisted many Pasifika students in those cities. Samoan students will become more confident in literacy and interaction skills if their schools include public communications centres as part of their learning – perhaps communication with members of the public can be arranged by the school and regional councils for the students.
- Training must be provided for parents to understand the curriculum and other areas relating to their children's education. Many Samoan parents do not understand the curriculum because of the notion that teachers are the experts and education is their field (refer to chapter three). The New Zealand Ministry of Education can provide training for the parents, perhaps in their churches or schools. One way to make this happen is via counselling sessions for parents – this will help them understand the significance of parent/child communication in education (pp. 163, 169, 172, 174, 177, 182, 184).
- Providing counselling sessions for parents will help them understand the importance of children pursuing their potential – that is, children achieve better results when they follow their potential (Piaget, 1950). For example, some students are good at music, art and sport/recreation and they are passionate to learn more and explore the areas they are interested in (pp. 142, 177).

Identifying students' learning needs is the key to educational development of Pasifika Island students in New Zealand. The New Zealand Ministry of Education has recommended a number of related networks. However, a large number of Pacific students still fail school examinations. This research has identified that Samoan students have diverse views of fa'asamoa. Specific approaches to help these students becoming successful in New Zealand schools include:



- Regular development courses for the teachers of Samoan students will assist their understanding of Samoan students' learning needs. Regular development courses for teachers are required because Samoans have diverse learning needs. For example, some preferred the Samoan traditional learning/teaching approaches while the others preferred the New Zealand approaches for example the student-centred approach (pp. 174, 177, 180).
- Development courses for teachers must include the learning of. It is believed that teachers' understanding of fa'asamoa leads to effective application of it in classroom learning. For example, some respondents stated that using Samoan terminologies, pictures, traditions, songs, poems and legendary stories assisted their understanding of some subject areas (pp. 140, 141, 143, 157, 174, 179, 180). The teacher development courses can include teachers gathering information from students via interacting or observing the students.
- Regular training development courses will assist teachers' understanding of the other relevant approaches to motivate the students. For example, there are specific teacher characteristics such as being funny, remorseful, patient, fair, loving and kind which appeal to many Samoans. These characteristics will encourage many Samoans' participation when teachers apply them in a most effective way in classroom learning (teaching approaches). These characteristics are encouraged in Samoan families, churches and communities (pp. 137, 140, 142).
- Teachers must be trained to understand the relevant and appropriate teaching and learning approaches for the students. For example, some students prefer Samoan approaches while some prefer modern approaches in school. Understanding the approaches for students is another strategy that leads to an understanding of Samoan students' potential.
- Partnership between the schools of Samoan students and their churches should be encouraged. A partnership between the schools and the churches will assist the students' confidence, understanding of educational content and skills, as well as the development of acceptable

learning behaviours. For example, churches can be used for homework centres and the school can contribute by providing the resources. School policies must recognise Samoans' church affiliation and teachings because Samoans' church policies and teachings are crucial to their views of fa'asamoa. Many Samoans are encouraged and motivated when their church beliefs are respected. A formal relationship between the schools and churches should also be encouraged regarding the development of mutually useful approaches for the students. A more formal acknowledgement of the importance of the church in the life of Samoans in school could be a positive move in achieving better learning outcomes. That is, some students' centre of interest is their church – the approaches/methods preferred by these students are those recognised by their churches. For example, some form of outdoor activities involving the students and church members will encourage the students (pp. 58, 163–166).

- The New Zealand schools should work cooperatively with the students' churches with regards to shared learning policies. Educational providers such as Pacific Resources Supplier or the New Zealand Institute of Sport can link with Samoan and other Pacific communities in New Zealand to assist their understanding of the educational needs of these people and one means of achieving this is to communicate with the churches (representatives to visit churches on a regular basis). As indicated in chapter three, church is where most Samoans are more likely to participate and contribute to discussion.
- Development courses for the students themselves will assist their educational success. New Zealand schools should be encouraged to use student advisors to encourage and motivate students. Many students viewed student advisors as another useful approach for them and one means of accomplishing this is for the successful Samoan students to be advisors to the slower learners. The advantage of this approach according to the respondents was that they were more comfortable communicating with the other students at their own level.

The New Zealand government has been helpful by providing fruit to primary schools. However, many Samoans and other Pacific parents have low incomes, they are struggling to provide for their family needs, and many students from these families have low self-esteem (pp. 182–186).

- More assistance particularly for the Samoans with low economic status – this will assist the educational development of many Samoan students. Reduced tuition fees for those of low economic status will help reduce their financial difficulties.
- The New Zealand government needs to provide additional assistance in terms of increasing benefit welfare, a tax cut on these peoples' earnings or perhaps a reduced school fees/donation and other school requirements for these people.

The school zoning policy of New Zealand has not been strictly monitored and many students are being enrolled at schools outside their zones.

- The Ministry of Education must apply strict policies encouraging students to attend their local schools. The research literature and interview data revealed that many parents have enrolled their students outside their zones and such moves increased the failure rate amongst the local schools. Some changes could be made to the existing school zoning policy to encourage all students to attend their local schools. The respondents' views and the literature related to this policy have indicated that it had negative impact on many Pacific Islanders in New Zealand (pp. 152, 154, 158) (refer to chapter three for detailed discussion).

## **Chapter Summary**

Many factors identified in this research related to family values, and the respondents stated that these were very important to them. This research revealed that many Samoan families in New Zealand have their own principles, and also observe fa'asamoa in their own way, which of course is reflected in the diversity of Samoan students' views of fa'asamoa (see chapters three, six and seven). The two main types of family principles identified were those based on the traditional fa'asamoa, and those based on the modern perspectives of fa'asamoa. Both principles had positive impacts

on the respondents and these were considered to be important considerations for the educational development of Samoans. These principles provided an understanding of the respondents and provided links to how the students perceived what was important for achieving success. A crucial point here is that the aiga in New Zealand is likely to assume more influence and potency in imparting cultural knowledge because of the varying circumstances involving these students in New Zealand. The key to understanding the students has been the students' appreciation of their family values and the impact of change on them (see chapter seven). Many respondents pointed out to the researcher that although life in New Zealand has provided challenges, these have motivated, encouraged and made them determined to succeed in their academic studies because they understood and appreciated the values of their families.

In considering the relevance of family values in the schooling of Samoans, this research indicated that this should also be recognised as an educational opportunity to facilitate sharing of ideas. Promoting opportunities for all family members to share and develop ideas could prove valuable in making effective change. It is important that the younger generation and the elders have an understanding of each other because if this is not done it can manifest itself in dysfunctional ways, such as having conflicting views which will impact negatively upon learning. Accepting one another in terms of sharing ideas leads to an appreciation of these ideas and policies (Su'a, Popo, 2001). As indicated by the respondents in chapters six and seven, their family values played significant roles in their development – family values motivated these students to study hard.

How some of these respondents managed to find their way through despite many obstacles is very important for future development for Samoans in New Zealand (see chapters six and seven). As indicated earlier, some students' educational journey was not easy – some difficulties related to fa'asamoa and fa'apalagi could have caused failure for these students but they managed to find their way through via the approaches they were more familiar with. The respondents were different with regard to their preferred approach because they were different in relation to upbringing, and teachers must have a better understanding of this. These developments are important

in understanding these students and provide new dimension for future educational reviews.

Many of the issues identified are outlined by the theory for this research but what is needed is a clear link between theory and practice. A number of links have been established to assist in the development of educational curriculum for Samoan students and other ethnic groups.

- No one theory explains Samoan students' success.
- Changes impact upon Samoan students and only these students understand the significance of these changes in their life. Teachers as well must understand these changes to assist the development of approaches for Samoans.
- Samoan students are diverse in their learning needs therefore educators and teachers must have a clear understanding of these varied needs for these can assist in the development of educational approaches and practices for Samoans.
- There are ideas that may sound inappropriate to many, but these can be of assistance to some of the students. Educators must understand the relevance of these ideas to assist their understanding of approaches and practices for the students. This indicates that educators cannot assume the learning needs or the approaches and practices for Samoan students.
- The life of Samoans involves their culture, family, religion and other areas of their social life. All these are important for educational development for them.

The theoretical framework of this research supports Bronfenbrenner's (1990) ecological system approach. He indicated that influences such as family, community, school, friends, culture/law, teachers and parents' work are determinants of young people's mindset and this research has assisted in the understanding of these influences and their roles in the life of Samoans.

Such an understanding can assist in the development of approaches and practices for Samoan students. Bronfenbrenner's theory implies, and this research confirms, that approaches that emphasise a systems approach to learning are likely to be more fruitful. Giving consideration to communication approaches, learning and teaching styles, empathising with the student, monitoring their needs within a culturally responsive classroom/school context, and so on are important and should be considered priority if educators in New Zealand are genuine in seeking achievement for Samoan students.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Research Ethics**

#### **Research Ethics for this Research**

This research gathered data from successful secondary students in New Zealand. Detailed written information, the ethic requirement and consent forms for the research were provided to the respondents, their schools and parents.

The aim for this research was to gather information from the individual students regarding successful achievement. Particular ethical issues were considered, including fa'asamoa, church, and aiga. This was because Samoans are sensitive about these issues. The interview questions were carefully managed and the schools, parents and students were also provided with copies of the questions. The researcher understands both the New Zealand and Samoan cultures, and that assisted in the identification of the areas investigated.

The following are copies of the ethic information provided for the respondents, schools and parents.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS: RESEARCH ETHICS**

This research is based upon the following principles:

- Participation is entirely voluntary
- All information that is provided will be confidential
- The researcher will ensure that participant's identity is confidential
- Participants are to be fully informed about the nature of the research and provided with feedback
- Participants can withdraw from the research at any time up until the commencement of the focus group interview.

## **RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION**

I am particularly interested in the education of Samoan students in New Zealand. This is about what students perceive to be more appropriate for their education and not what educators indicate. Despite several reforms in the education system, various reviews have advised the New Zealand Ministry of Education that the failing rate of Samoan and other Pacific Island students is considerably higher and increasing compared to that of papalagi and other ethnic students. Such a pattern indicates that too much emphasis was put upon teachers' orientated understanding of their students. There is considerable literature indicating that the students understand themselves better than teachers' assumption of the students. The voices of Samoan secondary school students give educators/educationists a better understanding about what students perceive to be appropriate to meet their learning needs. If students' voices (ideas) are acknowledged and recognised by their schools, then they will value education and hence achievement will be successful.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The research objective is to identify factors that contribute to the success of Samoan secondary school students in New Zealand. A list of the questions likely to be asked is appended.

## **OUTLINE OF WHAT IS INVOLVED**

Students who agree to participate in the research project will take part in a focus interview that will be approximately 45 minutes in length. This interview will be audio taped and transcribed by me. Interviews are to commence in August 2005 and will occur via focus group format. The questions that are

likely to be asked are attached to this sheet. Following this some students will be asked to participate in individual interviews.

### **FEEDBACK OF FINDING**

On completion of the data analysis, a summary of findings will be sent to each student and associated principals if requested. It is also anticipated that the findings will be used for publication and conference presentations.

### **PROTECTION OF PRIVACY**

Students' privacy is paramount and no student or school name will be identified in the reports, etc. All reports will be carefully scrutinised to ensure that no contextual detail could lead to the identification of the school/student. The transcriber will not reveal the students' or school's identification and all written material as well as the tapes will be kept in a password protected computer file/filing cabinet.

## APPENDIX B

### Focus Group Interview Information

## SAMOAN STUDENTS PERSPECTIVES RELATED TO SUCCESSFUL ACHIEVEMENT

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### Request for the Interviews for the Research Project

#### STUDENTS

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui*



### THE VOICES OF THE STUDENTS: ROAD TO EDUCATION SUCCESS OF SAMOAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Dear Student ....

I am a student at Victoria University undertaking a PhD research. It is my intention to gather data from senior high school Samoan students about their views on what makes for successful learning. Initially I wish to interview you and then possibly follow this up with individual interviews. You have been selected by your school because you are considered a successful learner. Successful in terms of making progress toward achieving goals and thus become role models to other students in the school. Successful students imply that there are high achievement levels in one or more of the following ways of knowing and understanding: academic, social, physical prowess, spiritual/reflective and musical.

I am seeking your approval to interview you in your school. Please find attached copies of relevant information (information sheet, consent forms and

focus groups interview questions). In the mean time, if you have any queries you can contact my supervisor or me.

## THE SCHOOLS

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui*



Dear Principal....

I am a student in the school of Education Studies at Victoria University undertaking PhD research. It is my intention to gather data from senior high school Samoan students about their views on what makes for successful learning. Initially, I wish to interview a group of six students and then possibly follow this up with 1–2 individual interviews. These students would be selected by the school and be considered successful learners. Successful in terms of making progress toward achieving their goals (i.e., academic, social, religious and health) and thus become role models to other students in the school. Successful students imply that there are high achievement levels in one or more of the following ways of knowing and understanding: academic, social, physical prowess, spiritual/reflective and musical.

I am seeking your approval to interview students in your school. Please find attached copies of relevant information (information sheet, consent forms and focus groups interview questions).

The research will be bound by ethical guidelines. The data collected will be confidential, stored securely, and used only for the purposes outlined.

I will phone you in one week's time to discuss this proposal with you. In the mean time, if you have any queries you can contact my supervisor or me.



## THE PARENTS

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui*



Dear Mr and Mrs .....

I am a student in the school of Education Studies at Victoria University undertaking a PhD research. It is my intention to gather data from senior high school Samoan students about their views on what makes for successful learning. Initially I wish to interview your son/daughter and then possibly follow this up with individual interviews. Your son/daughter has been selected by his/her school because he/she is considered a successful learner. Successful in making good progress in academic, social/cultural, health, sports and other aspects of school life. Successful students imply that there are high achievement levels in one or more of the following ways of knowing and understanding: academic, social, physical prowess, spiritual/reflective and musical.

I am seeking your approval to interview your son/daughter in his/her school. Please find attached copies of relevant information (information sheet, consent forms and focus groups interview questions).

## Consent Forms from the Research Project – Interviews

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui*



### THE VOICES OF THE STUDENTS: ROAD TO EDUCATION SUCCESS OF SAMOAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

#### CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

**Please read the following, tick each box if you agree and then sign if you agree to participate in the research.**

- I have read and understood the purpose of the research, the commitment my son/daughter will be making and the research conditions.
- I agree to my son/daughter being interviewed if he/she is willing.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Two years after the research is completed the tape and the transcription will be destroyed or, if all participants in the group agree, arrangement made for archiving.
- I understand that the information my son/daughter provide will be kept confidential and reported in a manner that cannot be directly attributed to him/her or his/her school.
- I understand that the data obtained may be used for conference papers and/or publication.
- I understand that data collected will only be used for the research project as described in the information sheet.

I understand that my son/daughter can withdraw from the research project and any stage prior to the beginning of the focus group interview.

I understand that the transcriber will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's school: \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Consent Form for Students

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui*



### THE VOICES OF THE STUDENTS: ROAD TO EDUCATION SUCCESS OF SAMOAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

#### CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS

Please read the following, tick each box if you agree and then sign if you agree to participate in the research.

- I have read and understood the purpose of the research, the commitment I will be making and the research conditions.
- I agree to be interviewed.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Two years after the research is completed the tape and the transcription will be destroyed or, if all participants in the group agree, arrangement made for archiving.
- I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential and reported in a manner that cannot be directly attributed to the school or me.
- I understand that the data obtained may be used for conference papers and/or publication.
- I understand that data collected will only be used for the research project as described in the information sheet.

- I understand that I can withdraw from the research project and any stage prior to the beginning of the focus group interview.
  
- I understand that the transcriber will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your school \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Interview Questions – Focus Group**

### **FOCUS GROUP**

#### **PROBABLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

##### **Key question**

What do you believe are the factors that have made you a successful learner?

##### **Sub questions**

1. What aspects of classroom life are important to you; why are they important and how do they contribute to high achievement levels?
2. What are the factors in the school that are important; why are they important and how do they help high achievement level?
3. What are the factors outside schools that are important; why they are important and how do they contribute to high achievement levels?
4. What are the features of family life (e.g., customs, practices, beliefs/religion, language) that have impacted upon achievement; why are they important and how do they contribute to high achievement levels?



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Follow-up Interview Information**

#### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS: RESEARCH ETHICS**

This research is based upon the following principles:

- Participation is entirely voluntary
- All information that is provided will be confidential
- The researcher will ensure that participant's identity is confidential
- Participants are to be fully informed about the nature of the research and provided with feedback
- Participants can withdraw from the research at any time up until the commencement of the focus group interview.

#### **RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION**

I am particularly interested in the education of Samoan students in New Zealand. This is about what students perceive to be more appropriate for their education and not what educators indicate. Despite several reforms in the education system, various reviews have advised the New Zealand Ministry of Education that the falling rate of Samoan and other Pacific Island students is considerably higher and increasing compared to that of papalagi and other ethnic students. Such a pattern indicates that too much emphasis was put upon teachers' orientated understanding of their students. There is considerable literature indicating that the students understand themselves better than teachers' assumption of the students. The voices of Samoan secondary school students give educators/educationist a better understanding about what students perceive to be appropriate to meet their learning needs. If students' voices (ideas) are acknowledged and recognised by their schools, then they will value education and hence achievement will be successful.



## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The research objective is to identify factors that contribute to the success of Samoan secondary school students in New Zealand. A list of questions of the questions that likely to be asked is appended.

## **OUTLINE OF WHAT IS INVOLVED**

Students who agree to participate in the research project will take part in a follow-up interview that will be approximately 45 minutes in length. This interview will be audio taped and transcribed by me. Interviews are to commence in August 2005 and will occur via follow-up interview format. The questions that are likely to be asked are attached to this sheet.

## **FEEDBACK OF FINDING**

On completion of the data analysis, a summary of findings will be sent to each student and associated principals if requested. It is also anticipated that the findings will be used for publication and conference presentations.

## **PROTECTION OF PRIVACY**

Students' privacy is paramount and no student or school name will be identified in the reports, etc. All reports will be carefully scrutinised to ensure that no contextual detail could lead to the identification of the school/student. The transcriber will not reveal the students' or school's identification and all written material as well as the tapes will be kept in a password protected computer file/filing cabinet.



**THE VOICES OF THE STUDENTS: ROAD TO EDUCATION SUCCESS  
OF SAMOAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Dear Student ....

My name is Tavita Lipine undertaking a PhD research in Education at Victoria University. It is my intention to gather further information from senior high school Samoan students with regards to their views on what makes for successful learning. Initially I have decided to interview you in relation to this. You have been selected for this interview because you are considered a thoughtful participant in the focus-group interview. It is considered that your thoughts and ideas will add value to the information from the focus-group interviews.

I am seeking your approval to interview you in your school. Please find attached copies of relevant information (information sheet, consent forms and individual follow-up interview questions). In the mean time if you have any queries you can contact my supervisor or me.

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui*



Dear Principal....

I am a student in the school of Education Studies at Victoria University undertaking PhD research. It is my intention to gather further data from senior high school Samoan students with regards to their views on what makes for successful learning. Initially, I wish to conduct a follow-up interview with student 'D' in relation to this. D was selected for this interview because he/she was considered a more thoughtful participant in the focus-group interviews. I believe his/her views will add value to the factors revealed by the students in the focus-group interviews.

I am seeking your approval to interview D in your school. Please find attached copies of relevant information (information sheet, consent forms and follow-up interview questions).

The research will be bound by ethical guidelines. The data collected will be confidential, stored securely, and used only for the purposes outlined.

I will phone you in one weeks' time to discuss this proposal with you. In the mean time, if you have any queries you can contact my supervisor or me.

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Dear Mr and Mrs .....

I am a student in the school of Education Studies at Victoria University undertaking a PhD research. It is my intention to gather further data from senior high school Samoan students with regards to their views on what makes for successful learning. Initially I wish to interview your son/daughter in a follow-up interview. Your son/daughter has been selected because he/she was considered a thoughtful participant in the focus interview. It was consider that her views will add value to the factors indicated in the focus-group interview.

I am seeking your approval to interview your son/daughter in his/her school. Please find attached copies of relevant information (information sheet, consent forms and focus groups interview questions).

## Interview Questions – Follow-up Individual Interview

1. a. A number of school areas mentioned in the group interviews assisted successful achievement for those students and possibly many Samoan students. Why were these important to you? How did it help you?

Cues:

- school and classroom setting
- teaching approaches or styles
- teachers behaviour and personality
- the other students
- other people in the school
- the subjects you studied
- location of school
- fa'asamoa

- b. Do you have any other ideas about what would have been useful at school or in class to help you become successful?
- c. Do you have any ideas about what would best help other Samoan students in school who are not succeeding very well.

2. a. Aiga is very important to many Samoan students, and they also believed their families assisted them in their schooling. Why was it important? How did it help you?

Cues:

- parents activities, education, aspirations and economic background
- the way things are done in the home
- motivation, goals, beliefs, religion
- siblings
- routines
- study areas
- books, magazines

- extended families
  - money
  - location of home
  - language
  - belongings in the home
  - family commitments
  - fa'asamoa
- b. Do you have any other ideas about what would have been useful in your family life to help you become successful?
- c. Do you have any ideas about how family life could be changed to help other students who are not succeeding very well.

3. a. What are some of the other influences that have helped you become a successful learner? Why was it important? How did it help you?

Cues:

- Has Samoan culture and ways of doing things helped you? Fa' asamoa
- Has the Samoan language helped you?
- In what way has religion/church helped you?
- Has the local community helped you? Facilities, etc?
- Has sports, recreational clubs, activities, etc helped you?
- Parents activities, education, aspirations and economic background

- b. Do you have any other ideas about what would have been useful in your
- c. community, culture, religion, etc, to help you become successful?
- d. Do you have any ideas about how community life, culture, religion, etc could be changed to help other students who are not succeeding very well.

4. A number of personal characteristics mentioned in the group interviews are important for successful achievement. How did these assist your learning? Why were they important to you?

Cues:

- Personality
- Motivation
- Commitment
- Planning
- Goal setting
- Honesty, etc.

5. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

## Consent Forms from the Research Project for the Interviews

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### THE VOICES OF THE STUDENTS: ROAD TO EDUCATION SUCCESS OF SAMOAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

#### CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

**Please read the following, tick each box if you agree and then sign if you agree to participate in the research.**

- I have read and understood the purpose of the research, the commitment my son/daughter will be making and the research conditions.
- I agree to my son/daughter being interviewed if he/she is willing.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Two years after the research is completed the tape and the transcription will be destroyed or, if all participants in the group agree, arrangement made for archiving.
- I understand that the information my son /daughter provide will be kept confidential and reported in a manner that cannot be directly attributed to him/ her or his/her school.
- I understand that the data obtained may be used for conference papers and/or publication.



I understand that data collected will only be used for the research project as described in the information sheet.

I understand that my son / daughter can withdraw from the research project and any stage prior to the beginning of the focus group interview.

I understand that the transcriber will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's school: \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# CONSENT FORM FOR THE STUDENTS

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON  
*Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui*



## THE VOICES OF THE STUDENTS: ROAD TO EDUCATION SUCCESS OF SAMOAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

### CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS

**Please read the following, tick each box if you agree and then sign if you agree to participate in the research.**

- I have read and understood the purpose of the research, the commitment I will be making and the research conditions.
- I agree to be interviewed.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Two years after the research is completed the tape and the transcription will be destroyed or, if all participants in the group agree, arrangement made for archiving.
- I understand that the information I provide will be kept confidential and reported in a manner that cannot be directly attributed to the school or me.
- I understand that the data obtained may be used for conference papers and/or publication.

- I understand that data collected will only be used for the research project as described in the information sheet.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the research project and any stage prior to the beginning of the focus group interview.
- I understand that the transcriber will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your school: \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_