Globalization and Education in Samoa: Reaffirming the Local in a Predominantly Western System

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Abstract

This paper provides a Samoan perspective on education, taking account of the nation's colonial heritage and the more recent impacts of globalization. Due to social, cultural and political changes, Samoa has a hybrid system of education, similar to that of other previously colonized nations. Colonial influence continues to linger. This influence has been reinvigorated by globalization, contributing to Samoa's current educational problems. These problems derive largely from the transformation of Samoan cultural and social values that has led from local to more western ways of living. The paper posits that Samoa needs a well-constructed post-colonial education system that embraces global change while preserving local values.

Introduction

Globalization is manifested in many forms. Some interpret globalization as the cause of westernization, modernization and rapid vicissitudes in the social, cultural, educational and economic situations of individuals in former colonized nations (Razak, 2011). Scholte (2000) and Schrottner (2010), on the other hand, interpret globalization as internationalization and universalization, which pave the way for developed nations to enter small island nations and developing countries. Tuia (2013) argues that globalization is a form of change, revolutionizing everything either bad or good, where cultural values of heterogeneous nations change to supplement western ideologies.

In Samoa, lifestyles based on traditional culture no longer exist;

they have been replaced by western lifestyles derived from western cultural values. Globalization has fragmented the Samoan nation; its social and cultural values are challenged by western values. This naturally creates conflicts which need to be dealt with.

This paper views globalization as a way forward for most countries, depending upon how it is perceived in relation to national development. Some view globalization as a set of tensions, such as tensions between the global and the local, the universal and the individual, or the traditional and the modern. These lead to the creation of misconceptions about national and international cultural values. Thus, for example, modernization is a concern to many indigenous people in Samoa. Other tensions lie in the expansion of knowledge, economic competition and the issue of equal opportunities. These tensions expand the gap between the rich and poor, and between rural and urban. There emerge conflicts in educational opportunities, between those who can afford higher education and those who can not. Schrottner (2010: 51) notes that globalization differentiates the 'social phenomena' of individuals and 'shapes new systems' that suit their living situations. This implies that individuals and nations change their social, cultural and educational characteristics based on their 'globalized interaction' (Schrottner, 2010: 51).

As noted earlier, globalization is a complex phenomenon, Razak (2011: 60) reminds us that it is actually happening and is an 'ongoing process'. However, as an island nation with limited resources and loans from international financial agencies and donor nations, Samoa continues to associate with developed nations in the hope that they can assist. Razak notes that 'globalization comes from the rich and affluent countries' (2011: 60); he is sceptical as to whether developing nations are benefiting from it. Some in Samoa also doubt the credibility of the listed benefits bestowed by the developed world, questioning whether they are blessings that bring advantage to the nation, or are just another means of recolonization?

To counter such global changes and to ensure that former colonized nations eventually will benefit, educational knowledge and skills need to be instilled. In this way global changes can be welcomed, the unknown become known, and indistinct ideas and new ways explained and clarified. Well-nurtured knowledge and skills will elevate comprehensive ideas and ways for individuals to accept, adjust and accommodate to change. Primary, secondary and university education must be well equipped to prepare for ongoing global transformation. So many problems in contemporary education in Samoa originate from the colonial treatment of Samoan culture, education and political affairs. In fact, colo-

nization originally initiated the transformation of many cultural values from Samoan to western, and many Samoans continue to be puzzled by its consequences, especially the behaviors and attitudes within society that contradict Samoan cultural values.

Colonization and Post-Colonization in Samoa

The German colonial regime concentrated more on building its empire, while its colonized nations, including Samoa, were struggling to meet the economic and political demands of the colonizer. The Germans did not pay much attention to educating Samoans; instead they were busy organizing people to work the lands by growing cocoa and coconuts in return for wealth. German language was introduced and reinforced in schools together with the Samoan language for everyday communication. After Germany, New Zealand came to power in 1914, following the outbreak of World War I. This was also the first time Samoans were introduced to major formal educational change. During the New Zealand colonial regime, Samoa went through some major social, cultural, educational and political reforms which impacted significantly on Samoan lifestyles. Samoan cultural values were mostly affected by these colonial changes, and all Samoans had to assimilate and accommodate to colonial rule and adapt to colonial demands in every aspect of their lives (Boon, Lafotanoa, Soo & Vaa, 2006). During this transformation process, Samoans were busy trying to do well in the colonizer's education system. Samoan parents also mimicked their European and mixed-race counterparts by accepting the importance of being well educated. In so doing, Samoan parents encouraged and motivated their children to do well as a means of getting a better future and bringing blessings to the whole family (Tuia, 2013).

The educational desires inherited from the past were still a major force in many Samoan families during the post-colonization period, with parents persisting in pressuring their children to continue their education to the next level, and spending a fortune on their children's education. This is the major colonial influence on Samoan people today, with many Samoans continuing to sustain the idea of good education as a fortune to individuals, families, churches and the nation. While the country was rushing to grab a piece of the colonizer's knowledge and lifestyle, the social and cultural values of Samoan children and adults began to melt into the colonizer's world.

During colonization and post-colonization, Samoan children in the 1970s and 1980s were unfamiliar with modern technologies, such as tele-

phones, television and computers. The arrival of these western resources contributed to the slow disappearance of the essence of Samoan cultural values in the home and school life of Samoan children. Some children started misbehaving in the classroom; some lost familiarity with Samoan culture and customary ways of living. In the post-colonization era, many Samoans adopted western lifestyles, such as sending children to private schools as well as hiring private tutors for after-school-hour tuition.

The obvious westernisation prompted calls for Samoans to re-examine their cultural values and ways of living. Irrespective of whether these calls were grounded in (western) theory - as, say, of Fanon (1967), Said (1978), Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (2003), all of whom refer to the need to seek a 'space' for the 'Other' to speak back on the rectification of its values based on the interests and needs of the country - the calls for re-examination became stronger with time.

Post-colonization can become a period for previously colonized individuals to reorganize their cultural, social, educational and political values and beliefs to coincide with the deeper needs of the nation and its citizens. Said (2005) referred to post-colonization as a time for former colonized nations to speak out through post-colonial discourse, thereby reinstating what is right and demanding justice for the colonized. This is achieved by readjusting and rectifying false cultural and social interpretations of the colonized by western colonizers. Hamadi (2014: 39) echoed Said's argument on post-colonization: 'the powerful colonizer has imposed a language and a culture, whereas those of the (colonized) peoples have been ignored or distorted'. Like the colonized the world over, Samoans have been socially, culturally and educationally punished, and easily manipulated, thereby allowing the colonizers the colonial jurisdiction over their human rights.

Olsson claims that 'post-colonial theory is always concerned with the positive and the negative effects of the mixing of peoples and cultures' (2010: 4). The colonizers' domination over vulnerable island nations, by invading their lands and stripping away their rights, destroyed their cultural values which were the foundation of their society. Their identity got fabricated into something that may have looked similar to their own but was now socially, culturally and politically different. Hamadi argued that 'the Western fabricated image of the Orient was a preface and a reinforcement of the Western imperial rule over the Orient' (2014: 41. The hybrid space (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1967), is vital in this context of post-colonial battle.

Tibile extends support for Bhabha's (1994) hybrid space as a reflection of the 'colonized people's ways to resist the power of the colo-

nizer' (2012: 2). In this way the hybrid space provides disadvantaged groups with the knowledge and skills that enable them to speak back to the colonizer. For Samoans, instead of full conversion back to traditional Samoan cultural and social ways of life, it is more appropriate that they push for this hybridizing space for survival if they wish to revive the essence of Samoan social and cultural values. As reminded by Gandhi, 'we want the English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature but not the tiger … the only way forward, accordingly, is to render the tiger undesirable' (1998: 21). For Samoa, it is a desire for freedom, and to be independent from former colonial rule.

Hybridity has been used by post-colonial authors regularly to describe and clarify the mixture of two or more cultures in a singular place. Subsequently, hybridity has become more of a post-colonial response to former colonial domination and a form of resistance to post-colonization. Hybridity is a term coined by post-colonial writers, such as Bhabha (1994), as a way to describe the mixing of two substances, to develop a new life that inherits both characteristics, but does not look similar to either of the previous two substances. Yazdiha, for instance, suggests that 'hybridity arose out of the culturally internalized interactions between "colonizers" and "the colonized" and the dichotomous formation of these identities' (2010: 31). As argued by Bhabha (1994) and Joseph (1999) (cited by Kraidy. 2005: 2), 'hybridity has been characterized as a subversion of political and cultural domination' by the colonizer. Hybridity thus 'refers mostly to culture but retains residual meanings related to the three interconnected realms of race, language, and ethnicity' (Kraidy, 2005: 1-2). Similarly, in the context of Samoan people, where the cultural system retains its integrity, its organization and practices change to suit contemporary ideas and beliefs. Yazdiha (2010: 31) further elaborates: 'theories of hybridity clarify the shifting and indefinite nature of culture and can serve as a tool' to re-establish the former colonized nations' social and cultural contributions to their development.

In post-colonial discourses, hybrid space allows colonized individuals to mimic their western counterparts' language of speaking and their social and cultural ideas. Unfortunately, post-colonial discourses claim that this mimicry or impersonation of the other will never be fully effective; rather there will always be an 'ambivalence' between the former and the latter. In fact, any 'mimicry' of the 'Other' (Westerner), will always be inconsistent (ambivalence), due to differences in social mores, culture, education, language, skills and knowledge. Becker (2009: 25) put forward a claim by Bhabha (1994) that 'colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite'. In former colonized nations, indigenous and disadvantaged individuals attempt to access the hybrid education system by familiarising themselves with the language, ideas, thinking and writing of the Other, but still not many succeed in the introduced education system. If some are able to climb to the colonial level by acquiring the Other's knowledges and skills, they will never be free of such 'ambivalence' due to their differences. Rutherford (1990: 211) also supports the concept of hybridity as an important entity that 'bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it, just like a translation, so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses'. He posits that hybridity provides the colonized with the opportunity to better themselves by acquiring the white man's knowledge and skills, as well as providing meanings to their everyday social and cultural lifeways, and to their education.

The mixing of Samoan cultural values, ideas, customs, people and language with incoming cultures stabilizes Samoan culture as a hybrid culture. It is this hybrid culture that now operates, coordinates and organizes Samoa's post-colonial education system. Retrospectively, Samoan cultural values are no longer pure but now contain outside influences that also reflect how people deal with their cultural activities (Tuia, 2013). The merging of ethnic minority groups, western, and Samoan cultural values, ideas, customs, people and language, has created a hybrid Samoan way of life, now lived and practised by Samoans and other individuals in their everyday social and cultural existences. Post-colonial terms such as 'Other', 'hybridity' and 'third space', help to clarify and reposition colonized nations' cultural, social and educational values in their rightful places in a post-colonial society, thus enabling their survival in a heterogeneous world. Third space thus represents the 'Other', that is the colonized, a space to fight, speak and write back. The main focus of hybridity is support for the interests, needs and desires of former colonized nations. Such post-colonial social, cultural and educational practices rely heavily on an appropriate integration or mixing of all cultural and social ingredients to ensure a successful survival of all cultures in a former colonized society.

Effects of Globalization on Education in Samoa

Education is the backbone of any nation. It is a haven that defines and nurtures knowledge and skills into specific areas before transmitting them to individuals and the society. 'The vision of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture for the period 2006–2015 is the development of a

holistic education system that recognizes and realizes the spiritual, cultural, intellectual and physical potential of all participants, enabling them to make fulfilling life choices' (United Nations, 2011: 1). Participants with specific knowledge and skills will one day assist with the educational, political, social, cultural and economic development of the nation. Forshay (1991: 1) explains that the purpose of education is to serve the 'social needs, to contribute to the economy, to create an effective work force, to prepare students for a job or career to promote a particular social or political system'. Others describe education as a way of teaching one to think intensively and to think critically (Martin Luther King, 1948). It is vital that education be seen as a living organism that provides energy to allow all participants to flourish physically and psychologically. In essence, the future of any nation depends on its education system to produce a skilled, intelligent and capable workforce to ensure that all entities within the country are productive.

This is the actual purpose of universal education; i.e., to strengthen and encourage sustainable development and advancement of human welfare in every nation around the globe (Okoli, 2012: 659). Similarly, education in Samoa should be a driving force towards improving each individual's socialization (Tuia, 2013). As Okoli (2012: 659) observes, the goal of education is mainly to lift 'nations from the league of the low to those of high level technology nations'. However, most formerly colonized nations, like Samoa, cannot survive educationally on their own without the assistance of donor nations and world agencies, thereby enabling them to reach a higher level of education. Moreover, a strong, globalized education system is essential for former colonized nations to strengthen their political and economic ties with donor nations and world agencies.

World agencies and donor nations have contributed greatly to Samoa's educational development. Steiner-Khamsi (2012: 1) explains that the World Bank contribution to education in developing and underdeveloped nations is 'steeped in a political process' that helps to 'garner support' for 'particular activities'. World agencies' and donor nations' presence in education reforms in Samoa have impacted greatly on the people and the whole nation. On the surface, the aim of these donor organizations and nations is to assist vulnerable and fragile small island nations due to their limited physical and human resources (Samoa National Human Development Report, 2006). However, the deeper educational and political agendas and intentions of these donors, and their ongoing association with Samoa's educational reforms, often remained concealed.

Ostensibly, most donor nations and agencies are committed to pro-

viding assistance that ensures small countries like Samoa end up with an education system that satisfies the interests and needs of the people. Changes in the management and delivery of education in former colonized nations usually take place when there is a rapid flow of new ideas and approaches globally. Problems that often arise from educational reforms usually relate to limitations of time and expertise for small island and underdeveloped nations to examine, absorb and deliberate the new educational ideas introduced by donors. Instead of examining new educational ideas, recipients often accept and even welcome changes without understanding their implications, and without taking account of the likely responses of teachers, families and students.

For Samoans to succeed globally, social, cultural, economic, and political change is vital. This can only be achieved through a well-developed education system, where educational reforms steer towards the needs and interests of people (Tuia & Iyer, 2015). Al-Harthi suggests that better educational reforms are 'the means that will help countries to deal positively with the forces of globalization' (2002: 1). It is Chinnamai's understanding that 'through globalisation of education, which requires knowledge transfer from the western countries into developing countries, it is intended to improve the skills and capabilities of the people receiving it' (2005: 1). In fact, this has always been the stated objective of educational reforms led by world agencies and donor nations; i.e., to improve education in former colonized nations and to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills to face the world.

In Samoa, the education system has always been problematic, especially in those areas of policy and curriculum that are antithetical to the social and cultural values of the country (Tuia & Iyer, 2015). Most Samoans assume that the cultural values that govern and guide Samoa's education system are purely Samoan (Tuia, 2013). Instead, however, these are universal values, as documented by the Ministry of Education, Sports & Culture (2006). In almost every educational reform in the past, the major areas of change have been curriculum and policy. Far too often donors help to dismantle existing policy and practice, reconstructing them to accommodate educational ingredients that they believe are best for the well-being of Samoans, while local educators have very little say in the whole development process. As echoed by Tuia (2013), most of these education policies and curricula originate from donor nations like New Zealand and Australia, which some in Samoa have referred to as 'second hand' policies and practice. This indicates that not all changes introduced by donors are relevant to the environment and culture of Samoan people. However,

this has not stopped parents and grandparents from encouraging their children to do well in the white man's education system. Historically, there has always been a desire amongst indigenous and formerly colonized peoples for their 'children to do well in education both locally and globally because of the dual environment they live in' (Quigley 2009: 78).

The effects of globalization on education in Samoa have greatly affected all areas of human life as is also the case in most formerly colonized nations. '[G]lobalization is a process, which has affected many areas of human life, one of those being education' (Chinnamai 2005: 1).

One process of globalization is to search for the most capable local academics who are able to think, speak and write like their counterparts; i.e., their white 'superiors' in western societies. These local, indigenous academics gradually get accepted and welcomed into the western world, due to their mastering of western ideas, beliefs and knowledge. However, the more they learn and adapt to new knowledge and ideas, the faster becomes the pace of globalization and change.

Globally, curricula are constantly being upgraded and standards of education pushed up. This keeps the formerly colonized nations still lagging behind, unable to get ahead and continue to occupy the lower positions in world educational rankings. The 'educational gap' between former colonized nations and the developed world, as well as between the poor and the rich, and the educated and uneducated at best remains the same.

Rapid technological advances, most of which are unavoidable, have the same effect. Globalization brings in 'rapid developments in technology and communications' to the education sector (Chinnamai, 2005: 1) making it a challenge for developing nations like Samoa to keep up, and to provide effective education.

Emerging changes in Samoa's education system are a struggle and a frustration for many people, especially in trying to comprehend them. Furthermore, successful implementation is dependent upon well-trained and competent teachers (Ministry of Education, Sport & Culture, 2007). Samoa's future teachers should have appropriate skills and knowledge to adapt to change in all aspects of their teaching, thereby, ensuring learning outcomes that are relevant both to the individual and the nation. It is also important to provide more time for teachers to become familiar with changes proposed prior to their implementation. In this respect, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture has initiated a new scheme in response to global education changes that involves in-service programs to upgrade teachers' qualifications, the aim being to improve the standard of teaching and learning for teachers and students.

Changes within Samoa's education system are a reflection of the

changes taking place in the broader society and culture. In the current era of post-colonialism, Samoa is slowly becoming a heterogeneous community with a large group of people migrating from different parts of the world. Samoa today is no longer a place that carries traditional customs and rituals as it did before, but a place that has developed a hybrid system whereby Samoan culture, people and language are now situated in a hybrid space.

Samoan culture prior to European colonization was founded on strong values, beliefs and ideas. Samoan people spoke the same language, shared the same values, and lived without interference from the outside world (Tuia, 2013; Vaa, 2006). Traditional Samoan education was structured around their environment, where learning and teaching happened within the context of everyday living, whether in the home, the ocean, the farm, or at social gatherings, village meetings or during cultural activities (Ma'ia'i, 1957; Tuia, 1999; 2013). Children learned from observation and participation throughout their childhood. Youth attended village gatherings of untitled young men where they observed the role of the *tamaitai* (young women of the village) and *taulealea* (untitled young men), namely to serve the *fono* a *matai* (meeting of chiefs), so that when their turn came they could take over (Ma'ia'i, 1957).

In everyday life the people followed the protocols of *faa-Samoa* (the Samoan way). Their values of reciprocity (*fetausiai*), sacred relationships (*va tapuia*), respect (*faaaloalo*), and mutual respect (*va fealoai*) were displayed in their everyday cultural and social activities (Tuia, 2013: 9). The practice of respect in Samoa's cultural activities is usually known as their service (*tautua*). This cultural practice has slowly faded away as Samoans begin to assimilate in the global social, cultural, educational, economic and political world and the changes that ensue.

During cultural activities, such as funerals, families must offer respect to distinguished guests with a *sua* (containing such things as food, fine mats and tapa). However a coconut is now replaced by a can of Coca Cola, while a chicken is replaced by a can of imported corned beef (Vaa, 2006). Such changes, now adopted by all Samoans, are referred to as *tumau faavae ae sui faiga,* meaning that while the cultural foundation remains the same, the practices have changed (Vaa, 2006; Tuia, 2013).

Many Samoans assume that Samoan cultural values guide the education system, and that their purity and significance remain vital in the post-colonial era (Afamasaga, 2006; Tuia, 2013). This is not necessarily the case. Due to the speed of globalization, people are unable to adapt quickly and therefore are vulnerable to change. The outcome is that the

essence of their cultural values has been lost, bringing problems for Samoan children in school. There is little recognition of the hybrid values now situated in Samoan culture and society. Hence it is vital for Samoa to have a strong education system to deal with this.

Concluding Remarks: The Way Forward

In post-colonial Samoa, globalization is unstoppable. It is having a significant impact on all aspects of Samoan life. While these impacts generally are positive, there needs to be greater recognition of hybridity and its impact on changing norms and values. A well-developed education system in post-colonial Samoa should offer opportunities for individuals to explore their horizons from global as well as local perspectives. It also should assist them to make meaning of the social, cultural and economic changes taking place in their nation, thus ensuring that future citizens of Samoa are capable, adaptable and contributing members of the society.

It is suggested that policy makers and researchers recognise that in the current environment, Samoan parents have almost surrendered their rights of their children's education to the schools and the Ministry of Education. It may be the case, however, that the policy makers, teachers, and Ministry assume that the parents and the wider community have remained and would remain responsible for the 'Samoan' part of the education - that is, Samoan values, beliefs, protocols, expectations, responsibilities, traditions, etc. The outcome would be incomplete education of Samoans.

Detailed research in this area is needed. At root, the expectations of Samoans need to be established. This can only come through discourse within Samoa and with Samoans globally. Discourse - dialogue - is not a process which can commence and end in a one week workshop of village leaders and Education Ministry officials. Discourse of the nature that can have lasting impact on education of Samoans needs to be a comprehensive one, involving as many participants as possible, ranging from parents to community organisations and leaders of various hierarchies, to policy makers, employers, and experts. When consensus begins to emerge on expectations from education, the curriculum and content of schools, from year 1 of schooling to the last year of secondary education, needs to be examined and so revised. This requires a lot of patience, as well as a political will to make Samoan education relevant and a force to sustain the Samoan society and nation.

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