

Chapter 7: Samoa

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Population (1993): 163,000

Population Growth Rate (1960-93): 1.2% per annum

Land Area: 2,842 square kilometres

GNP per Capita (1993): US\$980

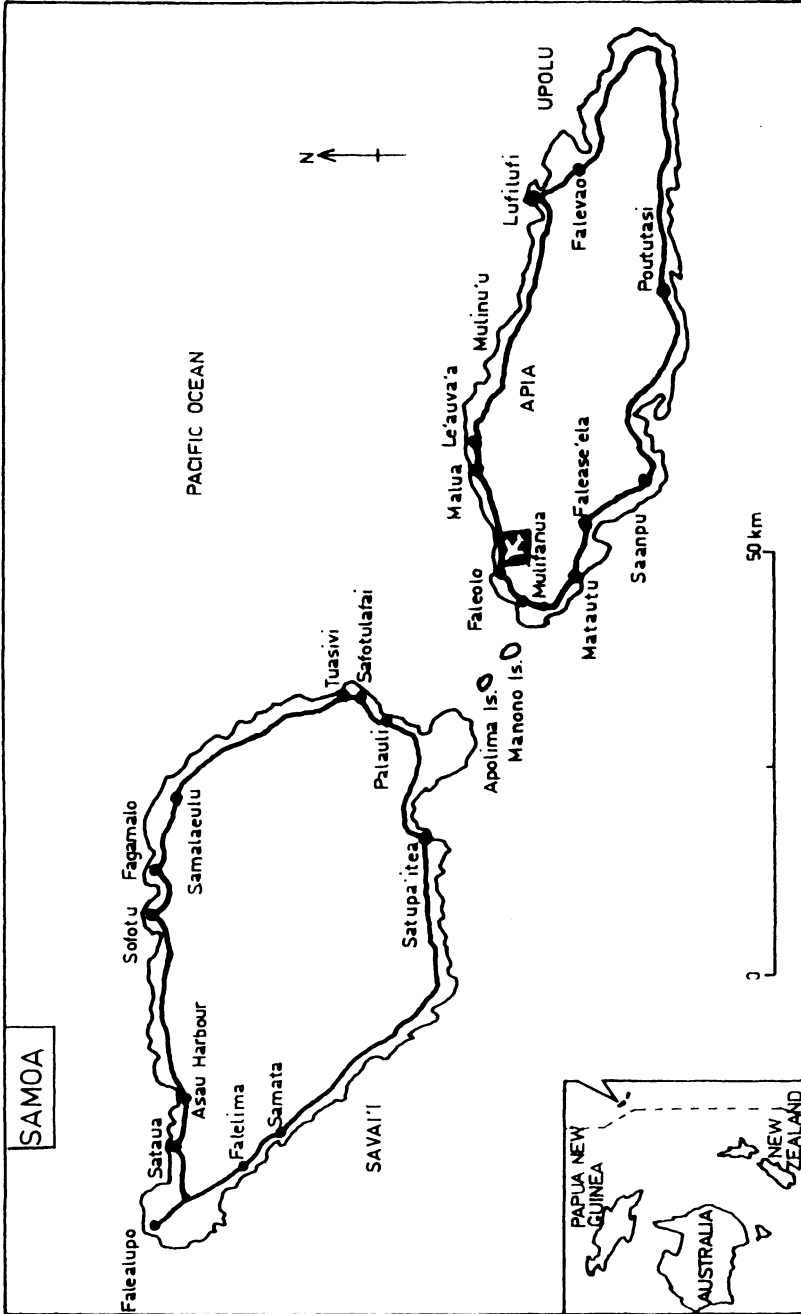
Year of Independence: 1962

UNDP Human Development Index (1994): 0.684

Historically and culturally, the islands of Samoa should be viewed in conjunction with their neighbours to the east known today as American Samoa. American sovereignty over the eastern islands was established in 1899. In the same year, the western group of islands became a German colony; but in 1914, at the commencement of World War I, it was annexed by New Zealand. At the end of the war, German control was formally terminated, and the islands were placed by the League of Nations under the trusteeship of New Zealand. Since 1962, Samoa has been a sovereign state. For the first three and a half decades of independence, the country was officially called Western Samoa. It was the first South Pacific island nation to become independent, to be a member of the United Nations, and to be considered a Third World non-aligned state.

Samoa comprises two large islands and several small ones. About half the labour force is engaged in agriculture and fishing. Within the other half, government and public enterprises account for the bulk of employment. The manufacturing sector is very small. A substantial annual income is derived from the remittances of Samoans who have emigrated to other countries. New Zealand used to be the most popular destination, but restrictions on immigration by the New Zealand authorities caused many Samoans instead to migrate to the USA, usually via American Samoa. Remittances commonly account for about one third of Gross National Product (Appleyard & Stahl 1995).

While from some standpoints Samoa might seem to be a country on the periphery, from other standpoints it is a centre. Samoa is the first port of call by ship from the New Zealand dependency of Tokelau, which has no airport, and most Tokelauans belong to the Congregational Christian Church



of Samoa. Tokelau has its own educational assessment system, part of which is mentioned in the chapter on the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) in this book, and is not dependent on Samoa in that regard. However, while the government of Samoa has to some extent taken New Zealand and other countries as models for its examination system, the governments of Kiribati and Tuvalu have recently begun in some areas to rely on Samoa. This provides an interesting perspective on interdependence in education systems.

Samoa is a member of the University of the South Pacific (USP), and hosts the university's Alafua Campus and Faculty of Agriculture. In addition, it has its own university, called the National University of Samoa (NUS). The NUS was founded in 1984 with the particular goal of fostering local culture. Samoa also sends many students to universities outside the immediate region, and particularly to New Zealand and Australia. Under bilateral and multilateral scholarship programmes in 1991, 265 Samoans were studying abroad. Fiji was host to 21.9 per cent, but New Zealand hosted 41.1 per cent and Australia 27.9 per cent (World Bank 1993a, p.67).

Development of the Education and Examination Systems

The origins of formal education in Samoa lie in the activities of various missionary bodies, particularly the Wesleyans and the members of the London Missionary Society. During the period from 1914, the New Zealand administration began to supplement mission schools with government institutions, and the system gradually expanded and reached higher levels. Secondary education dates from the early 1940s. As at the primary level, the first secondary schools were operated by the churches. However, the government founded Samoa College in 1953, and subsequently opened other institutions.

The expansion to higher levels naturally required attention to curriculum and examinations. At the primary level the New Zealand Proficiency examination was introduced for a few top students in one school which had a Standard 6 class; and in due course the secondary schools reached the point at which students could sit the New Zealand School Certificate (NZSC) and New Zealand University Entrance (NZUE) examinations. Up to the 1950s, most principals and teachers in secondary schools were from New Zealand, and their work was inspected and graded by New Zealand school inspectors on New Zealand standards. Hence the average Samoan parent came to accept, albeit tacitly, that to be educated meant passing a New Zealand examination after having gone through a peculiarly New Zealand educational process (Fuata'i 1993, p.19). During the initial decades following Independence the system remained dominated by standards set in New Zealand.

Only recently has this begun to change, and still the change is incomplete.

In 1996 the country had 157 primary schools (Years 1-8), 25 junior secondary schools, 20 senior secondary schools, and two secondary vocational schools (Table 7.1). At the primary level, most schools were owned by the government, but at the secondary level the churches played a major role. At the secondary level, classification of schools was complicated by considerable variation in the actual number of years covered by individual institutions (Table 7.2).

Table 7.1: Numbers of Schools, by Level and Agency, Samoa, 1996

	Government	Churches	Private	Total
Primary	140	15†	2*	157
Junior Secondary	22	3	-	25
Senior Secondary	3	16†	1*	20
Secondary Vocational	1	1	-	2

* One school has both primary and secondary divisions.

† Double counting may vary numbers.

Source: Department of Education, Government of Samoa, Apia.

Table 7.2: Class-Levels Covered by Secondary Schools, Samoa, 1996

	Government	Churches
Years 9-11	14	1
Years 9-12	8	8
Years 9-13	3	8
Year 13 only	-	2

Source: Department of Education, Government of Samoa, Apia.

The Year 8 National examination is used to select students from the primary level for the senior secondary schools. Most of the remaining students find places in the junior secondary schools, but a few leave the school system altogether. The Year 11 National examination is primarily for certification of completion of three years of secondary education.

The Samoa School Certificate (SSC) examination, formerly called the

Western Samoa School Certificate (WSSC) examination, was developed to take the place of the NZSC examination in 1989. The SSC examination selects Year 12 candidates for Year 13. Students who complete Year 13 may take the Pacific Senior School Certificate (PSSC) examination, which is set by the SPBEA and was designed to replace the New Zealand University Entrance examination.

Lest it appear from this list that all students have to sit all examinations, it should be explained that the Year 11 National examinations are taken by students who are not in the SSC streams, and the students in the SSC streams do not take the Year 11 National examinations. The approximate numbers of students sitting each examination are indicated in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Numbers of Candidates sitting External Examinations, Samoa, 1996

<i>Examination</i>	<i>Year (Grade) in which taken</i>	<i>Subjects offered</i>	<i>Number of candidates</i>
National	8	Samoan, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science	4,300
National	11	Samoan, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Commercial Studies, Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Agriculture	3,200
WSSC	12	Samoan, English, Mathematics, Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Accounting, Economics, History, Geography, Typing, Human Biology	2,100
PSSC	13	Samoan, English, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Economics, Accounting, Agriculture	800

Localisation, Ongoing International Links, and New Alignments

Although development of the WSSC was a logical step in the process of tailoring the curriculum to Samoan life and needs, urgency was added to the task by the announcement in 1982 that the South Pacific Option papers in the NZSC would be withdrawn in 1985. In the event, two extensions were negotiated so that the withdrawal was delayed until 1988; but the announce-

ment caused considerable activity in Samoa as well as in other South Pacific countries. The WSSC was developed with the assistance of the SPBEA, which itself had help from sources including the New Zealand government, to take the place of the NZSC.

Although the WSSC was launched in 1989, some papers were still purchased from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) rather than being developed locally. This arrangement permitted the Samoan authorities to phase in the localisation initiative, and to gain increasing expertise over time. The year 1996 was the last in which examination papers were bought from the NZQA. By that time, a sufficient pool of Samoan examiners had been formed; and in any case, by 1996 changes within the New Zealand education system had reached the point at which appropriate papers were no longer readily available for purchase.

Similar developments were taking place in Tuvalu and Kiribati. Like Samoa, these countries used to make use of New Zealand examinations; but as in Samoa, the changes in New Zealand forced the governments of those countries to seek alternative arrangements. Samoa and Kiribati now share School Certificate papers in Geography and History, which are set by the SPBEA for both countries. In addition, since 1993 Tuvalu and Kiribati have purchased WSSC examination papers in Accounting, Economics and Mathematics. These arrangements assist in regional sharing of ideas, and the direct purchase of papers helps generate some revenue for the Samoan government. Examiners and curriculum developers in Samoa do not feel constrained by the fact that the examinations are also used in Tuvalu and Kiribati, though they have to remember to tell the authorities in those countries when SSC changes are planned. Perhaps regrettably, there is no sharing of examinations, expertise or experience with American Samoa. Schools there follow American systems of assessment, and have rather different traditions.

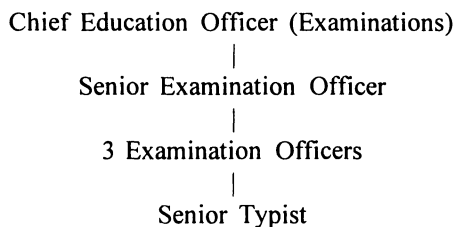
The development of the PSSC followed announcement that the New Zealand University Entrance Examination would no longer be available from 1986 (Livingstone 1995, p.83). Although the PSSC is a regional examination, the SPBEA has made efforts to tie the assessment to the national needs of member countries. One reflection of this is the inclusion of the Samoan language as a subject. One third of the assessment of Samoan is school-based. The PSSC has proven to be a good tool for balancing local aspirations with the need for international recognition. At least in the early history of the PSSC, however, staff at the National University of Samoa have perceived the qualification to have a lower standard than the NZUE, and to have blamed that fact on subsequent poor performance at the university (World Bank 1993a, p.53). Such perceptions must be considered, and

will require long-term monitoring because they affect the international as well as domestic credibility of the qualification.

Staff

The Examination Unit in the government's Department of Education was established in the 1920s by the New Zealand administration. Records of its early composition are difficult to trace; but it probably had only one officer to begin with, and from the 1970s had only two.

Figure 7.1: Structure of Examination Unit, Samoa, 1996



The demands of the SSC, in particular, have greatly increased the workload of the unit and have required extra staffing. Since 1989, the unit has had five professional staff plus one typist (Figure 7.1). The Chief Education Officer is the overall supervisor of the Examination Unit, and is accountable to the Assistant Director (Curriculum & Examinations). The Chief Education Officer is personally responsible for coordinating the SSC examination, and for liaison in the administration of the PSSC examination. The Senior Education Officer coordinates administration of the two National examinations (Years 8 and 11) with two Examination Officers. The third Examination Officer is responsible for the development and administration of the literacy tests in Years 4 and 6. The Senior Typist types all scripts, and with each Chief Examiner, lays out the examination papers until camera-ready stage.

Although the number of officers is small, the availability of personnel is also limited. This creates difficulties when seeking people with appropriate specialisms to fill vacancies. The Examination Unit has to work very much as a team, so that members can cover for each other at times that individuals are absent. In this respect, patterns in Samoa fit those in many other small states (Bray 1991b; Farrugia & Attard 1989).

As part of the SPBEA's assistance in the development of assessment

units in each member country, training attachments for some Samoan staff have been hosted and funded by SPBEA. These attachments have focused on both administrative and technical aspects of the operation of examinations. Other attachments have been organised by the Australian Council for Educational Research.

Most of the chief examiners and moderators for the National examinations are subject advisors in the Curriculum Unit or are staff of the teachers' college. Chief examiners and moderators for the SSC examination are recruited from among lecturers at the National University of Samoa and senior secondary teachers. Since the in-country pool is so small, some residents of Fiji and New Zealand have also been employed as moderators. However, this creates difficulties in coordination and also increases costs. The Examination Unit therefore aspires in the future to avoid this type of arrangement.

Teachers are also heavily involved. Indeed, in any one year, up to one third of the teachers may be employed as markers of examinations. This creates a close linkage between the examination process and classroom teaching, and also in effect provides some in-service training for teachers. Marking panels are designed to have eight teachers each. The Year 8 National examination has five panels, the Year 11 National examination has eight panels, and the Year 12 SSC has 12 panels.

Costs

In financial terms, the operation of the SSC and the PSSC is unquestionably much more costly than the old system of NZSC and NZUE. This is reflected in the size of the Examination Unit as well as in other expenditures.

At higher levels of the system, greater amounts are paid to examiners even though the number of papers is smaller. Thus, the unit cost for marking each SSC script is 7.00 Tala (US\$3.20), compared with 2.00 Tala for each Year 11 script and 1.40 Tala for each Year 8 script. Respective payments to moderators at each level are 300, 75 and 55 Tala. In 1995, the cost of running the WSSC examination was estimated at 108,500 Tala (US\$49,320), compared with 91,000 Tala for the Year 11 examination and 65,400 Tala for the Year 8 examination.

On the other side of the balance sheet is income from fees. Candidates for the SSC are charged 11.00 Tala as an overall fee, plus 16.00 Tala for each subject. Income from these fees more than covers the costs. For the Year 11 and 8 examinations, by contrast, the fees are only 3.00 and 2.50 Tala, which is not enough to cover costs.

For security reasons, the SSC examination papers are printed in Fiji. The SPBEA assists with the logistics of this. Although the arrangement

increases costs, it is considered a necessary policy. Total payments to the SPBEA were 65,800 Tala in 1995 and 92,200 Tala in 1996. As well as payments for specific services, this included the general subscription paid to SPBEA by all governments of member countries. PSSC candidates made additional payments to the SPBEA, at the rate of 30 Tala for registration plus 19 Tala per subject.

In 1995, the government issued a Statement of Economic Strategy which spelled out its commitment to promoting the private sector as the engine of economic growth. The statement indicated an intention to cut public expenditures, to charge higher fees for government services, and to privatise some elements of government operation. Since the SSC is a full fee-paying examination, the policy will not have an impact at this level. However, the policy may lead to changes in the fee structure for Year 8 and Year 11 examinations.

Conclusions

Although the education system in Samoa has a long history, for most of the present century it has been heavily dominated by patterns in New Zealand. Even after achievement of Independence in 1962, the curriculum in secondary schools remained dominated by the New Zealand School Certificate and New Zealand University Entrance examinations.

During the 1980s, this pattern began to change chiefly because of changes in New Zealand rather than in Samoa. The abolition of the South Pacific Options in the NZSC forced the authorities in Samoa to develop an alternative. The result was the WSSC at the school certificate (Year 12) level, and the PSSC at the Year 13 level. The government of New Zealand gave considerable assistance in this process, both directly to Samoa and through the regional South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment. The transitional period was demanding, but by 1996 the whole process had been localised.

The development of these local schemes has naturally been a costly exercise. It required enlargement of the examinations unit within the Department of Education, and it required specialist training for the staff of that unit. Again, the Samoan government has been fortunate to receive some external assistance from various donors; but the system has still encountered challenges arising from the small pool from which personnel could be recruited, and from the burden on the recurrent budget. Once again, the creation of the SPBEA has been a major element in the construction of a viable system.

At the same time, the fact that the governments of Kiribati and Tuvalu purchase papers in Accounting, Economics and Mathematics from the SSC

for their own use is an instructive form of regional sharing in which, to these countries, Samoa seems to have replaced New Zealand as a source of expertise. If it appears like a new form of dependency, at least the dependency is from another Pacific Island country with a related culture. The arrangement seems to be another dimension of the pragmatic form of regional cooperation which has developed to meet needs.

Finally, it is arguable that the Samoan education system is over-examined. In a system where senior secondary and tertiary places are limited, it is necessary to be selective at the upper reaches of the system. However, the introduction of Year 12 classes into a significant number of junior secondary schools paves the way towards the long term goal of abolishing the Year 11 National examination and concentrating on the Year 12 SSC examination. This would certainly reduce one of the burdens on the Examination Unit — a task which is especially desirable in a small state.