CHAPTER 5

Education, Gender and Fa'aSamoa: 'the Samoan Way of Doing Things'

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Setting the Scene: Samoa Country Profile

The Independent State of Samoa is in the Pacific Ocean, northeast of Australia and New Zealand, between latitudes 13 degrees and 15 degrees south and longitudes 168 degrees and 173 degrees west. Its population of 179,186, with 51.9 per cent males, represents a 1.4 per cent natural increase between the censuses of 2001 and 2006. Like many developing countries, Samoa has a very young population: according to the 2001 Census, 50.6 per cent of the total population were 19 years old and below, while 35.9 per cent were of school ages 5–19 years.

The economy of Samoa relies on a narrow resource base that is limited to agriculture, tourism, small-scale manufacturing and fisheries. GDP per capita doubled over the ten years 1995–2005 to US$2,000 with sectoral competition standing at 14, 23 and 63 for agriculture, industry and services (Samoa National Human Development Report, 2006). Samoa's macro-economic performance is extremely vulnerable to external factors such as commodity prices, crop diseases, the demands of tourism and natural disasters, especially cyclones. The 2001 Census showed that foreign aid, government overseas borrowings and foreign remittances by Samoans overseas were the main resources that fuelled the local economy.

Ninety-one per cent of the population identify themselves as Samoans – who are Christians with a distinct culture and language, which are an important part of the core school curriculum at both primary and secondary levels. Access to schools in Samoa is virtually universal, with a primary school in each of the 160 villages and a secondary school in every school district (a collection of about 16 to 17 villages). Big districts often have two secondary schools. Thirteen secondary schools are located in urban areas.

Traditionally, schooling and education have been held in high regard in Samoa. In recent years, however, people's perceptions have changed slightly and it appears that

this high regard for education is starting to erode (GoS–Asian Development Bank [ADB] Education Sector Review, 2004).

Socio-cultural context

Fa'aSamoa: *'the Samoan way of doing things'*

All areas of Samoan life, including village, district and national government political systems are based on *fa'aSamoa*: 'the Samoan way of doing things'. *Fa'aSamoa* emphasises the importance of the extended family (*aiga*) and the village (*nu'u*) and the place of love (*alofa*), respect (*fa'aaloaloalo*) and obedience (Tuia, 1999).

Samoan social structure rests on kinship values, with the village (*nu'u*) and the family (*aiga*) at the centre. It is believed that the welfare of the individual will flow out of the wellbeing of the village and family (Faibairn-Dunlop, 1999; Meleisea, 1987a). Each family within a village is represented by a holder of a chiefly title (*matai*) at the village council or general assembly (*fono a matai*). This council, consisting of all the titled people of the village (*matai*) and led by the high chief, governs the village and has responsibility and say over family members and land. The *fono a matai* is the forum by which matters are debated and decisions made: all *matai* have an equal say in its proceedings and decisions (Meleisea, 1987b).

Within *fa'aSamoa*, expectations and roles of individuals and groups within families and villages are determined by factors including locality, holder of title (*matai*), age and gender. The important relationships within the family and village that govern the protocols, roles, activities and behaviour include the special relationship between brother and sister (*feagaiga*) and that between different groups of the village (*va*); untitled men of the village, married and unmarried (*both aumaga*); unmarried 'daughters' of the village (*âualuma*); and both men (*fai avâ*) and women (*nofo tane*) who marry into the village.

Men and women of the village have higher status than those who marry into it. Notwithstanding origin, however, both men and women are able to ascend to the position of *matai* within their own families and take up positions of respect and responsibility within the village hierarchy.

Status is relative and linked to space, location and context. A daughter of her village has a very high status, higher than that of her brothers. When she marries and lives in her husband's village, however, her status automatically becomes much lower than that of her husband and her sisters-in-law. Locality is a leading factor in determining roles and responsibilities of individuals and groups. When a spouse is attending a gathering/ceremony at their partners' village/family, they have a specific role to perform that would be different if the gathering was occurring at their own family or village setting. Tasks are determined by other factors such as age and gender: both men and woman have different roles and relationships in different environments, not solely determined by gender. For example, regardless of gender, a wife

or husband may be required to carry out menial tasks and take a passive role in decision-making in their spouse's family/village affairs. The roles are reversed within their own family/village affairs.

Age is another important factor in *fa'aSamoa*. The age of an individual has a great deal of influence in roles and relationships within families and society: if measured against the gender issue, it is probably more significant. A younger person knows that he or she will not be served by an older person: it is protocol for the youngest person present to perform serving duties and it would be shameful if such roles were not fulfilled.

Children are born into Samoan society as sons and daughters of a family/village in which their rights and status are those of a distinct group. Boys and girls are socialised into their activities as '*tamaiti*' (children) according to their age with minimal gender differentiation. Gender becomes important as children grow into adolescence and adulthood, however, and expectations and tasks become differentiated. Gender becomes important when youths enter adulthood and acquire the status of 'sons of the village' (*aumaga*) or 'daughters of the village' (*aualuma*): **status and roles** immediately change.

New roles are linked to the gendered division of labour within the village setting. Tasks seen as being physically more demanding, including plantation work, building houses and some forms of cooking, are considered to be young male domains, whereas the creation of artefacts (*fai oloa*) for traditional exchanges (for example, weaving and *siapo-* [cloth-] making) are perceived to be the domain of young women. Where men and women carry out similar activities, there may also be also gendered differentiation within the activities. For example, both men and women may fish, but women fish in lagoons and men in the open sea.

Samoa commitment to traditional customs and new approaches is exemplified in a change in the type of objects associated with customary gift-giving ceremonies. The giving of tapa cloth (*siapo*) has been replaced with the giving of cotton material; coconut oil replaced with a can of coke; a whole roasted pig replaced with boxes of canned fish and barrels of beef; taro is replaced with boxes of biscuits. In some instances, the giving of money replaces the giving of fine woven mats (*ie toga*) (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991).

The church and the school

The arrival in Samoa of the missionaries in the 1830s saw the introduction of new hierarchies in village and family life (Meleisea, 1987b). The church minister was given the importance and respect previously afforded to the high chief. This is of particular significance as the position of church minister was and remains reserved for men: women are not permitted to be appointed as ministers or pastors.

With the acceptance of Christianity by the Samoan population, the position of the church minister has been given high status in all areas of family and village life. The wife of the church minister is given status and respect within the family and village, but not on the same level as that of her husband.

The arrival of the missionaries also saw the introduction of western style education. Pastor schools (*aoga faifeau*) were established very quickly throughout Samoa and reading and writing was introduced to the Samoan people. Missionaries developed the Samoan alphabet and together with Samoans, translated the bible into the Samoan language (Petana-Ioka, 1995).

The church has profoundly influenced Samoan life, society and culture to such an extent that it has become completely integrated; this is not the same for school. The school's place within village and family life is considered to be the place where European (*palagi*) ways are taught: traditionally, the school is not considered the place to teach children about Samoa or its culture. Today's educators have to struggle to incorporate Samoan and things Samoan into the curriculum. Even with the introduction of Samoan issues into the curriculum, the perception is still held by many that the school is a place of foreign knowledge and ideas. In this regard, the school and education have not been integrated into the culture as the church has. By extension, the status of the teacher in the village is inferior to that of the church pastor.

The location of many of schools may illustrate the fact that they do not have the same influence or standing as the churches. Many school buildings are constructed on land that is not suitable for anything else (e.g. houses or plantations), or not wanted by anyone, e.g. school buildings being built on old cemeteries or schools positioned at the back of the village close to the sea. Nor is it expected that the school will be the place to challenge cultural protocols in regards to roles and relationships.

The area of enquiry used for this study was the school. However, as outlined above, the church has a much larger influence on Samoan life and culture. In fact, the church has changed gender relationships within the *fa'aSamoa* where the school system has had little influence.

Education

Gender and educational policies and strategies

In 2006, the Government of Samoa (GoS) and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) launched its second Strategic Policy and Plan for the ten years from 2006–2015. Like the first set of policies from 1995–2005, the policy framework is articulated by a set of principles and key concepts, which include equity, quality, relevancy, efficiency and sustainability. The concept of equity in particular calls for the system to 'treat all individuals fairly and justly in the provision of services and opportunities' (GoS–MESC, 2006). It further states that:

'... policies, strategies and practices will be identified and articulated appropriately to avoid treatment that may disadvantage any social group. Those which address existing inequalities in access, treatment and outcome, will be promoted.' (GoS–MESC Strategic Policies and Plan 2006–2015, 2006)

The policies recognise that 'education is a basic human right and no child should be left out of the system'. Samoa is also committed to the Education For All (EFA) initiative, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP), the Pacific Plan and other regional initiatives that promote education for all people. These are the basic policies into which gender polices must be integrated.

Co-educational or single-sex schools

The missionaries set up the first schools in Samoa: typically single-sex schools and mostly for boys. When the German administration (1900) and the New Zealand administration (1914) gradually took over more control of the education system, more co-educational primary schools were established. It was a similar history for the set up of secondary schools. Single-sex girls' schools were set up to cultivate 'young ladies' after the fashion of similar schools in the missionaries' home country, which in the 19th century was usually England. At the attainment of political independence in 1962, Samoa had 11 single-sex schools and 24 co-educational ones, as outlined in Table 5.1 below.

The single-sex schools included six boys' and five girls' schools: nine of these were church schools. The Catholic mission had only single-sex secondary schools while the London Missionary Society (LMS) had two single-sex schools and two co-educational ones. The Methodist mission had one girls' school and one co-educational school, while the Mormons and Seventh Day schools had only co-educational schools. The government had two single-sex schools for boys and several co-educational schools.

Table 5.1. Secondary schools by governance, 1962

Governance of school	*Boys-only school*	*Girls-only school*	*Co-educational*
Catholic	3	3	0
LMS (London Missionary Society)	1	1	2
Methodist	0	1	1
Mormon	0	0	1
Seventh Day Adventist	0	0	2
Government	2	0	18
Total	**6**	**5**	**24**

Source: (Western Samoa) Department of Education Annual Report (1962)

The picture is very different today. There are no all-boys secondary schools remaining in the country, while there are only two all-girls schools both of which are mission schools, one Catholic and one Congregational. Indications are that one is still running well while the other (the study school) has an uncertain future according to all the signs.

School participation rates

National school participation rates in Samoa are relatively high, especially at primary level – as the tables below show. While these figures are not disaggregated by gender, they are of particular interest because they illustrate the high participation rates at the primary school age level.

From Table 5.2, it is immediately apparent that participation rates at primary level are much better than those at secondary level. The trends were quite similar in the nine years from 1998–2006, as shown in Figure 5.1 below. It should be noted that some students who would be at secondary level (12–14 years old) are included in the 5–14 age cohort, generally identified as the primary cohort.

Table 5.2. National school participation rates

Year	*1998*	*1999*	*2000*	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*
Ages 5–14	91%	89%	91%	92%	96%	95%	97%	96%	95%
Ages 15–19	44%	46%	42%	44%	43%	48%	45%	45%	45%

Source: MESC Statistical Digest (2006): part 2 p. 5

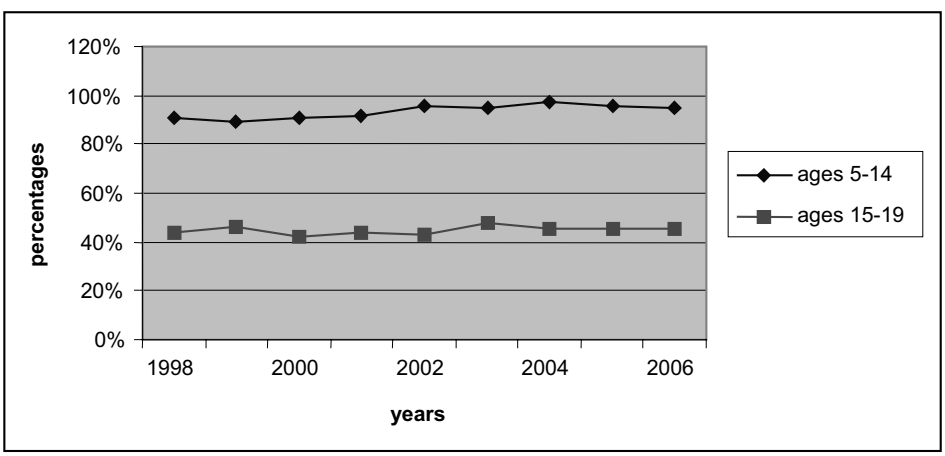

Figure 5.1. National school participation rates
Source: Samoa MESC Statistical Digest (2006): part 2 p. 5

Of significance is the fact that participation in secondary schools is so low, particularly as there are schools in all districts and in theory access to secondary schools for all children. According to a government study conducted in 2004, the reasons for this might include the reduced value given to education, particularly in the rural areas, a sense of the irrelevance of education to real life and an inability to pay for the actual and/or opportunity costs of schooling (GoS–ADB, 2004). Table 5.3 lists the number of secondary and combined primary and secondary schools in Samoa.

Samoa has 25 government secondary (or combined primary and secondary) schools, 17 mission schools and two private schools. About 60 per cent of secondary school enrolments are in government schools.

Data in Table 5.4 below shows that in 2006, boys outnumbered girls at the primary level: there were 1,539 more boys than girls enrolled. Girls then outnumber boys at the secondary level, with 789 more girls than boys enrolled.

Table 5.5 shows that, in the years between 2000 and 2006, the average enrolment by boys in from classes 9 to 12 was about 47 per cent. In all but one instance, boys' percentage of total enrolment has decreased with each year of schooling.

Table 5.3. Secondary schools in Samoa, 2006

	Secondary	*Primary and secondary*
Government	24	1
Missions	12	5
Private	1	1
Total	**37**	**7**

Source: MESC Statistical Digest (2006)

Table 5.4. School enrolments by level, gender and status, 2006

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
Primary	20,654	19,115	39,769
Secondary	7,165	7,954	15,119
Total	**27,819**	**27,069**	**54,888**

Source: Samoa MESC Statistical Digest (2006)

Table 5.5. Percentage male enrolments, all secondary schools 2000–2006

Year/class	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*
2000	49.9	48.8	45.9	5.5
2001	49.5	48.5	46.5	47
2002	50.9	48.9	46.9	3.5
2003	49.2	48.5	46.4	43.6
2004	50.1	47.6	46.7	43.7
2005	51.3	49.5	46.3	45.9
2006	49.8	49	46.3	42.1
Average	**50.1**	**48.7**	**46.4**	**44.4**

Source: MESC Statistical Digest (2006)

Boys' average percentage of class 9 enrolment was 50.1 per cent, reducing to 48.7 per cent at grade 10, 46.4 per cent at grade 11, and 44.4 per cent at grade 12. This is a significant annual drop, with consequences for the number of boys achieving final examination passes.

School curriculum and gendered achievement

The Samoan national curriculum requires all students to take the same subjects from year 9: English, Samoa, maths, social studies, and science. Other subjects such as food and textile technology (FTT), business studies, computer studies and visual arts are considered option subjects whereby they may be timetabled together and the students choose one. Health and physical education and music are not considered as subjects that students choose, but are treated as whole-school activities for two hours per week. All the subjects have official curriculum documents with visual arts, computer studies, health and physical education and music introduced in 2005 (even though the actual subjects have been present in secondary schools for many years).

A 2005 study by the Commonwealth Secretariat (Jha and Kelleher, 2006) points to the rising trend of girls outperforming boys at secondary level, starting since the mid-1990s. The results for all three subjects, English, Samoan and numeracy (ibid.: 107) showed that more boys than girls were at risk at the end of years 4 and 6. Similarly, for the Year 8 National Examination for the years 2001, 2002 and 2004, boys' mean scores were below 50 per cent, while girls were around 54 per cent. In the years from 2004 to 2006, girls took 51 per cent, 65 per cent and 66 per cent of the top places in the Year 8 National Examination respectively. This examination is used for secondary school selection; Table 5.6 shows the gender balance of selection for the top three Samoan secondary schools: Samoa, Avele and Vaipouli.

Table 5.6. Year 8 selection for government colleges by gender, 2004–2006

	2004			2005			2006		
	Samoa	*Avele*	*Vaipouli*	*Samoa*	*Avele*	*Vaipouli*	*Samoa*	*Avele*	*Vaipouli*
Boys	62	66	47	47	33	30	39	41	33
Girls	78	45	58	85	60	62	86	65	66

Source: MESC Assessment Division (2007)

The National School Certificate Examination (NSCE) is taken at the end of secondary schooling. Table 5.7 lists the national gender split for students who sat this examination in 2004, 2005 and in 2006.

The gender differences are quite substantial: girls outnumbered boys by 377 in 2004, 516 in 2005 and 353 in 2006.

The Research in Samoa

Approach

The study was carried out during May and June 2007. A team of four was assembled, with the team leader managing the ethics and administration of the research and three team members carrying out the data collection within four schools. The research process used a collaborative approach, with each researcher carrying out their data collection within their allocated school and writing up a case study report. The final report comprised a collection of the work done by the researchers individually and together in a collaborative manner. This chapter was finalised by the principal researcher in line with prescribed processes and procedures.

The central questions of the study were (i) to what extent do students, teachers, the school management and processes, and the education system and management challenge or reinforce dominant gendered notions, stereotypes, identities and relationships, and (ii) if they do or do not, how do we make sense of it all?

Table 5.7. Gender split for school certificate examinations

	Females	*Males*	*Total*
2004	1,442	1,065	2,507
2005	1,550	1,034	2,584
2006	1,325	972	2,297

Source: MESC Assessment Division (2007)

Data was collected from students, teachers, principal and administration staff, lesson proceedings, observations of extra-curricular activities, student–teacher interactions during recess times and classroom interactions. The data collection was carried out using interviews, group discussions, observation of staff meetings and detailed observations of lessons.

Lesson observations included focus on the physical nature of the class: the position of teacher's desk, arrangement of students' desks, and location of blackboards, windows and doors. It also focused on interaction, language and activities of the lesson: specifically teacher time and attention to the details of lessons and student needs; use of instructional language and quality of questions; and student-to-student interaction.

The procedure carried out in each school involved following a class during the school day as they went through their lessons, as it was hoped to collect data from a range of different subject lessons such as language, arts, maths/science and practical lessons (outside the normal classroom). Each researcher developed a relationship with the school principal(s) and teachers as a result of their time at the school, and was able to collect a wide variety of data both formally through interviews and lesson observations, and informally, though exposure to school procedures and management practices.

Analysis of the lesson observation data used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The lesson observation schedules (Tools 1, 2, and 3) recorded the number of incidences within a set time frame. Interactions, language and activities were noted down for the different types of lessons in different classes. This data allowed the different classes to be compared and contrasted with each other, such as between the language and maths lessons, or lessons conducted by female and male teachers.

Capability, space and location

Theoretical frameworks

The two dimensions of enquiry used in this study are the 'capability framework' and notions of the 'space and location framework'. The capability framework, illustrated in Figure 5.2 below, emphasises entitlement, opportunities and capabilities. The assumption is that the possibility of gender equality will be enhanced if all elements exist for all children.

With respect to the first domain, that of 'entitlements', the entitlements of Samoan students and teachers in schools are very clear: they are stated in a variety of international, government and ministry policies and guidelines. The opportunities and capabilities of male and female students and teachers were assessed through the research. Students' experiences were analysed to assess if they had (i) the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential and (ii) the capability to make use of opportunities (the concept of capability includes the ability and power to make use of opportunities).

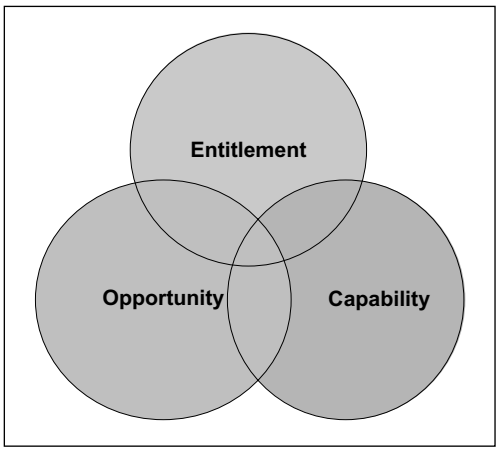

Figure 5.2. Capability framework

The second framework was that of space and location, as illustrated in Figure 5.3 below. Families and the home play an important role in creating social norms and capabilities. Society also plays a role in developing and maintaining or challenging gender roles and expectations. Two important institutions have the influence and capacity to influence both society (the macro level) and families (the micro level): these two institutions are the church and the school. The school is the focus of this study, but the school is not isolated from other societal institutions.

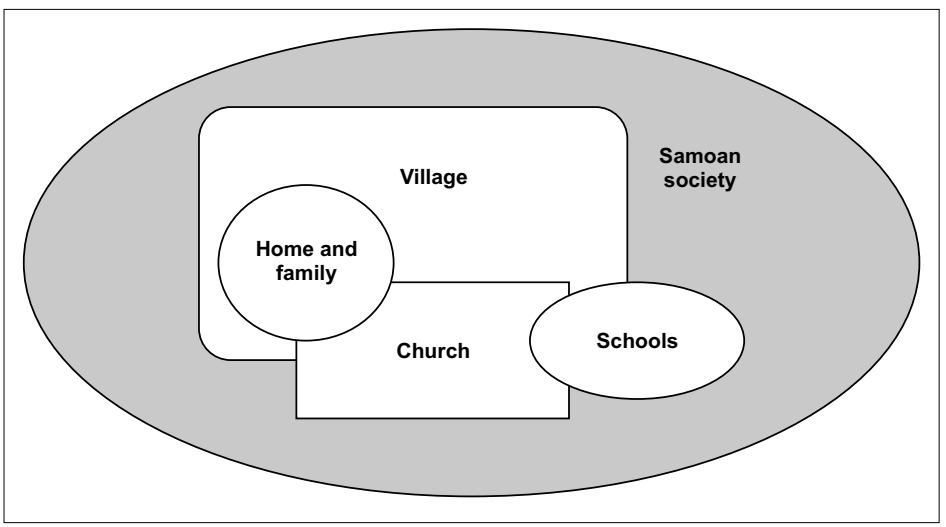

Figure 5.3. Space and location framework

Values and beliefs that are deep seated in religious orientations and in cultural perceptions of worthwhile learning impact on what goes on in the school systems. These needed to be considered in order to make gender sense of what goes on in schools. The spatial dimensions of schools and classrooms, the different locations of schools and relationship between the school and the church were significant focus areas for the study.

Foundations for the exploration

There is equal entitlement in Samoa society for both girls and boys to obtain formal education. There is nothing in Samoan culture that prevents either boys' or girls' entitlement to achieving status and leadership authority in village and family settings.

In terms of access to education and schooling, Samoa is well placed: every village has a primary school and every district (cluster of villages) has a secondary school, while some districts have two secondary schools – especially if the district is geographically large. Factors impacting on access or opportunity, however, include: the affordability of schooling (fees, contributions in kind, community contributions to school maintenance); distance from schools (transport costs, transport availability); immigration policies (depletion of family numbers/members); and other related issues. These areas need to be closely examined in an effort to make secondary schooling accessible to all.

The capability element is reflected in attitudes of teachers, students and parents and the importance they put on education. It also includes other factors, including parental capacity to pay school fees and lack of human resources, such as the critical shortage of teachers in the Samoan school system.

Locality and space are important and influential factors in what happens in a school and how it is managed and run. In comparison with schools, the church has a much more evident influence on Samoan society. As detailed above, the church has been completely integrated into Samoa's culture and customs, whereas the school is still considered a foreign or alien institution.

The schools and classes

The selection of schools was based on the stated requirements to included rural and urban schools, single-sex and co-educational schools. It was further decided to select year 9 and year 10 classes, as these were within the required age range of 15–16 years. (Where possible year 9 was chosen; if there were not four year 9 classes, year 10 classes were used). Table 5.8 lists details of the school studied.

The four schools in the study included two government schools, and two mission schools. The government schools were both rural and located at opposite ends of the

Table 5.8. Details of participant schools

School location	*Gender of students*	*Governed by*
Rural	Co-educational	Government of Samoa
Rural	Co-educational	Government of Samoa
Urban	Co-educational	Methodist Church
Urban	Single-sex, female	Congregational Christian Church of Samoa

island of Upolu, while the mission schools were an urban all-girls school and a semi-urban co-educational school.

The different profiles of the schools (government- or church-run, rural or urban, co-educational or single-sex) influenced the amount and type of resources available, responsibilities of students and subjects offered.

Ethics

Strict attention was placed on approaching and entering schools in the proper manner and following the correct procedure. Letters were first sent to the governing bodies of the schools selected. They were the Samoan Government Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture for the government schools and the Church School Boards for the Congregational and Methodist Mission School systems. Once permission had been provided by these bodies, a letter was sent to the specific schools informing them of the research. The researchers then co-ordinated with the schools through a series of initial meetings to set up the actual steps and procedure for the data collection.

Attention was also given to obtaining the correct informed consent from all participants. After the reasons for the research were explained in full to the participants, they were asked to sign a consent form if they then agreed to take part. Participants were given full opportunity to refuse to take part in the research study if they felt uncomfortable.

Constraints

Timing during the fieldwork was the main concern for all researchers. In addition to the late start, a further challenge was posed when one school had to be replaced by another, when it became obvious that it would not be possible to collect the required data from the first. Furthermore, several unavoidable incidences occurred that reduced the number of days available where lessons could be observed and group discussions convened. These occurrences were a school holiday break for two weeks, a large number of public holidays, an extra public holiday due to the state funeral of the Head of State, a church denomination annual international meeting, mid-year

whole-school examinations, whole-school athletics days in preparation for the interschool competitions and whole-school culture days, with performances and singing competitions.

School-wide examinations also affected the type of lessons that were observed: they were either for revision or practicing exam questions. Three schools had school-wide athletics days within the data collection period. This was a good opportunity to observe school processes, but preparation for the event took away from classroom lesson time and content. At one school, the researcher included observations of a culture day programme, where the students had competitions in singing, dancing and cooking. The preparations for this special day affected many lessons prior to the event, with practices and rehearsals taking place instead of lessons. Even though these factors were seen as a constraint in one sense, they also provided an opportunity to observe the processes and procedures of school organisation.

The observation schedule, which involved counting teacher time and attention for 10-minute blocks, was also a limitation. There was actually very little interaction in the lessons observed, and a 10-minute block was too short to obtain meaningful data. In addition, the place within the lesson of the 10-minute block affected the results. If, for example, the 10-minute block was at the beginning of the lesson, which contained teacher instruction and explanation, there was a strong possibility of having no interaction to record.

The effect on the teachers and students of having the researcher present in the classroom was another constraint, although one common to all research undertakings. There was a high probability that the teacher and/or students may have altered their normal practice due to the researcher's presence. As the researcher spent more time at the school and attended more lessons, teachers and students became more accustomed to having an observer in the room.

Another constraint was the absence of interaction with parents and families: the study did not include interviews with parents, to have some insight into their expectations and aspirations for their children. During data analysis, there was a great deal of discussion about family life and students' experiences at home. Students described their home lives and teachers had a lot to say about their own perceptions of students' home lives and how family life impacted on their school performance, but this rich data was not triangulated with that from parents and families.

Using a team of researchers rather than one researcher has both advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages was that the researchers were able to spend a good amount of time at their research school and develop relationships with the staff: this probably improved the quality of the data. Using the collaborative approach allowed group discussion of the data, issues were discussed where each team member expressed their point of view, leading to a thorough analysis of the data. While each school case study as written by the individual researcher had its own

language and style, at the same time this variety added to the diversity of perspectives in interpreting the data collected.

Analysis and Discussion

Education system processes and practices

Government and mission schools

School systems exist in a context governed by economic, social and cultural factors. Two of the schools have important religious contexts: one is a co-educational Methodist college, while the other is a Congregational girls college. Both are governed by education boards, which are made up almost totally of male members who are part of the structure of administration of their church. The school boards are accountable to the church conferences, which meet annually: the Conference (*Koneferenisi*) for the Methodists and the General Meeting (*Fono Tele*) for the Congregationalists. Current church teaching about female and male roles follows the conservative perceptions of male and female as written in the Bible. There is still a tendency to regard females and things female to be of lesser importance than males and 'male' domains.

Church school administrators, therefore, do not have a perception of gender as an issue in the schools. The only female single-sex school run by the Methodists has been closed.

In contrast, the girls' school run by the Catholic Church is thriving. This may in part be due to the constant and vigorous support provided by the 'old girls' of the schools. The Old Girls' Association has been instrumental in changing the ethos of the school: current students have high aspirations to be leaders and to be effective members of their communities.

The government school system is, however, different. Government school control and administration is highly centralised in the Ministry of Education: it assigns teachers to schools, provides educational policy and practice, as well as systems of supervision and discipline. In Samoa, the schools' physical facilities are provided and owned by the community. Governance of the school is provided mainly by the local school committee, in which government agents – such as the school principal and the school review officer – are also represented. Local school committees are characteristically all-male, so that school governance tends to be dominated by male viewpoints and ways of doing things. In spite of this, boys are still underachieving: clearly there is no straightforward correlation between school governance in terms of male dominance and boys' achievement in schools.

Up to the early 1990s, 72 per cent of all primary teachers were women, but the corresponding figure for principals was only 48 per cent. In some schools, the only

man on the staff would be the principal. By 2006, women constituted 73 per cent of primary principals and 39 per cent of principals in secondary schools.

Reflections

Church schools in Samoa are run by boards that are accountable to the church's highest council, while government schools are accountable to the Ministry of Education. Accountability structures are therefore different. However, the schools' core curriculum as provided by the government (the MESC) is adopted and used by all mission secondary schools. Recruitment to schools is either selection by exams or accepted as a matter of course.

School management processes and practice

Streaming practices

Schools use streaming practices to determine class composition. Table 5.9 illustrates the gender profile in the various streams of classes 9 and 10 in the three co-educational schools that were studied. The trend is clear: there are more girls than boys in school, girls dominate the top streams and are the minority in all but one lower stream. This is a stark illustration of the gender imbalance in the sample schools and the country more generally.

The research illustrated that girls outperform boys in the core subjects, even within those traditionally viewed as 'male': maths and science.

Table 5.9. Gender profile of streamed classes, co-educational schools

	School 1		*School 2*		*School 3*	
Year 9	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
Stream 1	10	22	16	18	10	21
Stream 2	9	19	18	26	19	17
Stream 3					20	16
Stream 4					24	10
Year 10	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**
Stream 1	15	25	15	21	14	27
Stream 2	26	13	12	19	20	16
Stream 3					28	16

Gender attitudes

In all three co-educational schools, the principals were male and the deputies were female. One principal said he believed female teachers were more reliable and effective and tended to delegate more to female colleagues. Women were given more responsibility and more significant tasks in the running of the school. This was made even more apparent if there is an added qualification of age. Older female teachers took on the more prestigious tasks, such as being mistress of ceremony during the culture day or being the treasurer to receive the donations from the community during special events for the school. The younger female teachers tended to be given the more menial tasks of supervising students' cleaning up after an event.

One male principal had equal numbers of female and male teachers, with a high proportion of younger staff. There were two senior female teachers, who shared equal responsibility with two older male colleagues. Together they carried out all the significant tasks in the school, while the younger staff took on the more menial tasks.

Another principal had a much higher proportion of male staff than female. Most of these male teachers were ordained ministers, assigned as teachers for a contract period. Tasks were assigned in order of seniority and positions of responsibility; however, there were still clearly demarcated lines along male tasks e.g. managing rugby teams, organising boys for manual tasks, and female tasks such as coaching netball and inspection of girls' uniforms etc.

The only female principal in the study was in the single-sex (all-girls) school. She was an ex-student and 'product' of the school. She looks upon herself as a father and mother to her teachers and students. The one male teacher is an ordained pastor, and is accorded the usual respect accorded to religious ministers: apart from teaching, he did not carry out any additional management tasks.

Principals generally stated that girls and boys were treated equally in their schools, but with regards to tasks to be carried out there were gender-specific tasks to reflect what the students did at home. For example, girls performed lighter tasks such as serving the staff during mealtimes. Principals generally had the same perceptions as the teachers: that girls were achieving much more and were much better behaved than boys. In one recent case, some boys' bad behaviour and truancy had resulted in their expulsion. Generally misbehaviour or breaking the rules resulted in detention in all schools. Detention usually included weeding in the sun after school: this punishment is given to both boys and girls.

Teacher non-classroom tasks

Outside the classroom, younger female teachers supervised the girls while younger male teachers supervised the boys. Older teachers stayed in the staff room. In the two mission schools, teachers who were ordained ministers did not carry out any duties outside the classroom.

These observations carry an important message about the reciprocal relationships alluded to above. Relationships between people in Samoa are forged by the observation of what is termed the observations of *va* (a code of behaviour between people who are related, are strangers or are visitors to a community); *va tapuia* (relationships that are governed by strict [sacred] rules of behaviour because of some kinship affiliation e.g. brother and sister, father and son, mother and daughter); or *va fealoaloai* (relationships that are governed by respectable codes of behaviour e.g. *matai* and *matai*, villager and pastor, cabinet minister and prime minister etc). In the description given above, the supervision of girls by female teachers is *va tapuia*, while that between older and younger teachers is *va fealoaloai* and that of the deferment to the pastor is that of *va*.

Gender is thus an aspect of the forging of relationships in Samoan society in the same way that age and status are also important related concepts.

Reflections

Schools are open to all students who wish to attend school irrespective of where they live. Principals delegated tasks to senior teachers who were often female. Principals treated all students the same irrespective of gender, but punishments may be different for boys and girls.

Male principals profess a heavy reliance on their senior female staff, who were efficient and managed resources well. An equal number of female and male prefects were appointed every year, but it was impossible to obtain an equal gender ratio for the staff as women now dominate the teaching workforce.

Textbooks and other learning materials

The development of the current secondary curriculum in Samoa took great care to make all materials as gender neutral as possible. A gender specialist was employed during the writing stage to ensure that language was gender neutral and that there was a balance of focus on boys and girls in all reading, study and other resource materials. The implementation of the curriculum does not, however, reflect this.

Teachers

Gendered expectations

In the girls-only school, there was an expectation that schooling should develop girls holistically to (i) enable them to become fully literate and numerate, and (ii) develop their capacities in their roles as mothers and nurturers of family and community. According to these teachers, the girls in their school were underachievers in the academic sense and were in the school for a specific purpose: to be developed as good mothers and community members. Being a good mother included learning the vocational skills of cooking, sewing, weaving, embroidery, *siapo-* (mulberry bark

cloth-) making and other crafts. The girls are also taught typing and computing for those who might look for employment as office and clerical workers. There was clearly a belief that girls who were not academically able should be encouraged to be good mothers and home managers.

In the co-educational schools, teachers are aware of boys' underachievement. Their perceptions, however, were that the causes are rooted in the family and community. Teachers do not believe that they have a role to play in this problem. Their perceptions are that boys in rural areas are expected to help their fathers and family to carry out 'heavy' chores and other tasks after school such as fishing, plantation work, cooking and feeding the pigs. All these take up their time and prevent the boys from having time to rest or do their homework. Girls, on the other hand, tidy the house, iron, and rest and do their homework. Girls are therefore expected to achieve more because, according to the teachers, they have the opportunity to study and do their work for school. Teachers want their students to achieve well, irrespective of gender. They also see the relationship between having time to rest and being able to study and do homework as pivotal in school achievement. However, they do not see that they have a duty to change the role expectations of parents and bring about some behavioural change that might enable boys to have time to rest and do their homework while at home. They consider this to be the duty and prerogative of the parents.

When talking about their experiences in the classroom, teachers in two schools stated that girls do much better than the boys, they read better, they answer more questions, concentrate better, are quicker to understand and are generally more intelligent than boys. Some teachers stated that boys have shorter concentration spans, that they sit in the back, do not respond to questions, do not study hard, play around and talk a lot and are the last ones to hand in assignments.

Teachers in general could see that there were differences in the achievement of boys and girls, but they were not aware or convinced that they could do anything about it. Furthermore, they were not aware that their everyday practices might contribute to the boys' underachievement.

Language

Teachers' language use was differentiated by gender and age. In general, older female teachers tended to scold students. This practice is culturally understood to be 'counselling', but scolding does include the use of harsh language. Younger female teachers do not use that type of language and, it is perceived, would not have the '*mana*' (or spiritual gift of wisdom) to use it. This could result in a perception by students that younger teachers are more relaxed. Older teachers, especially women, are expected to scold students as a means of discipline, while younger female teachers would respect their older female colleagues for providing such counselling to the students.

Reflections

Teachers expect girls to achieve better results than the boys, because they do not have to perform the heavy work that boys do, which takes up a lot time in the home. Girls are expected to have much more time to do schoolwork than boys. Teachers in co-educational schools perceive that they treat girls and boys the same, but girls still behaved differently from boys and they still achieved better results.

Teachers in the single-sex school did not consider gender an issue, as the schools mission was to prepare the girls for their future role as good mothers and members of their community.

Students

Aspirations

In rural schools, both boys and girls wanted to do well. They felt it would provide the pathways to a future with a good job, a better life, a family car and a good house. Both boys and girls based their choices on jobs that would provide financial security and sustainability of livelihood. Boys wanted to be police officers or become members of the *Manu Samoa* (the national rugby team). Boys regarded being a police officer as a good job for a man, respected in village communities. Girls wanted to be teachers, nurses, and bank officers, office workers or become the wife of a church minister.

Boys said that they respected girls in the classroom and in schools, because some were members of their village or church. Girls also respected the boys, but if they were cheeky then they called them names. In other words, the basis of respect of the opposite gender was different for boys who regarded village/community affiliation as important, while girls regarded good behaviour by the boys as more important. These perceptions seem to reinforce the socialisation processes within rural communities that place different expectations on boys and on girls. The observance of the 'brother–sister' covenant (*feagaiga*) of traditional society is stronger in rural schools (than in urban ones).

In the urban schools, particularly in the all-girls school, girls' expectations included being a good mother, living a good life and having the means to support their families. However, living in an urban area, particularly the youth culture that is apparent in the media, has had some influence and some of the girls now want to stay in town and be employed or maybe migrate overseas. In the semi-urban school, girls wanted to be lawyers, nurses, teachers, bank tellers and to be in the police force, while boys focused on the 'macho' jobs or what was considered masculine such as being a police officer, rugby player or computer operator. Some boys also wanted to work in a bank or office.

Interactions

Many boys felt that teachers favoured the girls, and that this was the reason why they did not participate as much as the girls. Some boys perceived teachers to be tougher on them, while some had self-perceptions that they were louder than the girls and maybe showed off at times. Girls seemed to favour male teachers, as they did not use harsh words with them. Female teachers are seen by girls as using harsher language, even though they do not use corporal punishment.

Student perceptions of each other, especially along gendered notions, are tempered by considerations of *va* – the codes of appropriate behaviour that forge the relationship as perceived by the students. Hence girls looked upon boys as their 'brothers' and vice versa. Boys are expected by the girls to behave well around them and girls expect the boys to protect them. Boys expect the girls to treat them with respect. These expectations govern many of the interactions between students. Thus, in a co-educational science class it is often difficult for a teacher to discuss matters that pertain to sexual education: boys and girls in the same village may be in the same class, and it would be shameful if they were to be exposed to such taboo issues together.

Students in general are quite respectful of one another in the language they use. However, if boys misbehave, girls may use '*upu taufaifai*' or 'call them names'. Boys would consider a girl as '*le mafaufau*' (that she 'does not have a brain') if the girl used swear words around them.

Subject choice

The choice of students' most-liked subjects was not a significantly gendered factor: students did the same subjects from years 9 to 11 in most schools. For the optional choices of FTT, computer studies and business studies, it was found that **where** FTT was offered the girls choose FTT and both boys and girls choose business studies and computer studies. (The shortage of teachers in these areas has been a contributing factor to whether or not the subject is offered).

Reflections

All students want to do well in school. However, perceptions of future work are often mediated through gender roles and expectations of parents. These perceptions were seldom accompanied by any concept of gender equality or gender parity. This needs to become part of the curriculum if such a concept is considered to be worthwhile in the context of Samoa.

In general, it appears that students' expectations, aspirations and perceptions of what they want to be in the future and of the opposite sex are conceptualised along gendered notions of male/female roles, and what is considered to be the male or female domains, as they understand these from their homes and their communities. The

notions of gender equality and gender parity need to be moderated through a curriculum and learning experiences that should rationalise a Samoan 'culture of change'.

Processes inside the classroom

This section discusses the activities observed inside the classroom, to identify if these processes reinforced or questioned dominant gendered notions, stereotypes, identities and relationships, how this happened, and what might be done to redress the situation.

Seating arrangements

The main teaching style adopted by all teachers was that of transmission, and in most classes, all children sit facing the teacher. Blackboards tended to be at the front of the room, the teacher's dominant work area: there were boards at the back, but they were used infrequently or for display purposes. In such environments, it is possible that the closer a learner sits to the teacher, the greater chance of being involved in meaningful interaction. Teachers stated that they let the students sit wherever they wanted to sit. They did not try to influence the seating arrangements in any way or use it as a tool to distribute their teaching and attention equitably around the classroom.

Generally girls sat together and boys sat together. Girls sat mostly at the front of the room while the boys sat at the back. A variation to this pattern was when girls all sit at one side of the room and the boys sit at the other. The sexes sit quite separately. Even when activities require group work on the floor, girls still tend to congregate together and likewise the boys. One of the advantages for the girls in sitting at or around the front of the classroom is that they are then able to dominate and claim the teacher's attention. This meant that boys (sitting at the back) were often left out of lessons. This was especially evident in classrooms that were crowded and the teacher had limited room to move around.

Some of the sample schools did not have chairs or tables, so the activities all took place on the floor. However, girls still sat towards the front of the classroom while the boys sat on the periphery or towards the back. Again, even where there were no chairs or desks, girls managed to get the teachers' full attention.

One possible explanation of the seating phenomenon might be that proximity to the teacher may be considered more suitable for girls as the 'weaker sex', while sitting at a distance from the teacher would be more masculine, as boys would then be far away from the watchful eye of the teacher. Another might be that boys do not need to be supervised, while girls need that 'motherly' protection of being close to the teacher. A third might be that boys do not think that they need the closeness of the teacher, as they were more *malolosi* (strong and independent). A final one is that the pattern could be a manifestation of the culture in the homes where boys as brothers are

protective of their sisters, and would therefore defer to them in the classroom and allow them to sit closer to the teachers.

Whatever the explanation, girls sit in the front and by doing so could reap the benefits of teaching/ learning by being closer to the teacher and being able to see and learn from all the activities that go on as part of the teacher's own activities during a lesson. Teachers did not seem aware of the implications of seating arrangements on learning or if they were, appeared satisfied with the outcome of better achievement by the girls. If teachers were more conscious and deliberate in the way they arranged class seating, and balanced seating arrangements so that students are distributed equally (in terms of boys and girls) around the classroom, there might be different outcomes.

Teacher–student interactions

In language classrooms, girls were more active than boys, answering questions and carrying out demonstrations when asked. Girls also tended to volunteer more, for example, to read. Boys tended to be more reserved and quite reluctant to talk. When they did talk, boys struggled to find the words, especially in English. The girls were more fluent and more active in English. However, the differences in the Samoan classes were not as marked: the boys became more active and more relaxed in these classes and participated quite as actively as the girls.

Most observed science lessons were theoretical, based on teacher explanation: few practical classes were conducted. Again when questions were asked, the girls answered more readily. The science classes observed all had similar teacher–student interactions, wherein the teacher predominantly talked, explaining, showing and demonstrating, while the students looked on and listened. The reasons may have been that the teachers were overly teacher-directed in their approaches, while there was also a scarcity of resources to enable practical classes.

More active learning was observed in food textile and technology classes, where teachers and students were engaged in practical and hands-on work. The rapport between teacher and students was warm and there was a lot of interaction. Teachers used students' names more and generally there was much interaction between the teachers and students. It was also noticeable that there were resources available in these classes, and these were used by the teachers in all four schools. There were no boys in the FTT classes in three of the four schools.

Visual arts was an optional class offered in two of the four schools. All students in these classes were girls. Teacher–student interaction was characterised by on-task behaviour by all students and there was much enthusiasm to complete projects, which were then displayed. Tasks were accompanied by singing as the girls worked on *tapa* printing and tie-dyeing of fabric.

In the seating arrangements for whole-school singing, the girls were often seated in the front, while the boys were seated around the girls and tended to be towards the

back of the classroom. It was noted that this was often the practice and the teachers did not direct the students on where to sit. It seems to be generally understood and is a practice.

School sports were often timetabled for one afternoon either on a Thursday or Friday. This was not the case for the all-girls school in the study, where no sports were organised. An issue of gender here is that the boys play rugby, while the girls play volley or netball. In one school, it was noted that in the principal's office, a number of trophies were lined up for rugby while there were not similar trophies for girls' sports.

Reflections

The observations illustrate that what goes on in the classroom with regards to teacher–student interactions or student–student interactions are mediated through the kinds of gendered notions held by teachers and students.

Seating arrangements were done by the students and showed that girls sat together, as did boys. This may be due to the fact that as young teenagers, affiliation among the sexes was stronger than between the sexes. Girls, however, sat at the front of the classroom while boys sat at the back. This implies that the girls are immediately in an important position of advantage, as the teacher tends to focus more on the group closest to the front of the class than at the back. This arrangement was also seen in other activities, such as whole school singing where the girls sat at the front of the choir while boys sat at the back. Teachers did not use seating arrangements as a tool to disburse teaching equitably around the classroom, and in this way may be contributing to supporting achievement by girls at the expense of boys. Seating arrangements, therefore, generally reinforce the more favoured status of girls.

Girls were more active and participated in more teacher–student interactions than boys in languages, science and in other subject areas such as food and textiles technology. Teacher–student interactions in the visual arts, where all students were girls, were more equal. In sports, girls played 'girls' sports' and boys played 'boys' sports'. Teachers tended to address all questions to the front of the class, which benefited the girls. Older teachers tended to use students' names more than younger teachers. In teacher–student interactions, girls were generally more active than boys in all subject areas. This was seen by teachers as just the way things are. They did not interrogate whether this was due to some 'self-fulfilling prophecy' effect. Teachers may be contributing to the lower achievement levels of the boys in the ways they handle classroom interaction.

Processes outside the classroom

This section discusses the processes and activities observed outside the classroom, both organised and informal, for both students and teachers. It also includes a discussion on the 'culture day' observed at one of the schools.

'Heavy' and 'light' work

In Samoan schools, students often carried out cleaning duties in the grounds, around the classrooms and in the toilets. Such activity can be given as an assignment or punishment for breaking school rules, such as lateness to school, not doing homework or for boys having long hair.

Boys were observed to be doing the 'heavy work', while the girls did the 'light work'. Heavy work meant cutting grass with a machete, lifting heavy objects and weeding in the banana plantation at the back of the school. Light work meant girls weeding the flower gardens at the front of the school, cleaning windows, sweeping the corridors, and picking up leaves and other rubbish. Toilet cleaning, however, was carried out by the girls of the girls' toilets and boys of the boys' toilets. Light and heavy work were also differentiated in tasks such as serving meals for the teachers, where it was noted that the girl prefects did this work while boy prefects marked the field for athletics day.

The gendered notion of boys doing heavy and more 'macho' work while girls should perform lighter tasks is common in many cultures. It is clear from these observations that schools reinforce gender-role specialisations in what goes on outside the classroom.

Culture day

A culture day is an annual event in most schools: it brings together all the teaching and learning that goes on in the school in the Samoan language and cultural studies. This special event was observed in one school, where traditional tasks of cooking by the boys and the girls were demonstrated as part of the learning outcomes in the Samoan language and culture. It was noted that cooking using the Samoan 'above ground' oven (*umu*) was prepared and carried out by boys, while meal preparation that uses boiling, frying or does not require cooking (for example, raw fish or *oka*) is carried out by girls. Craftwork also involves gender-specific roles. Boys weave rough baskets for collecting food, while girls weave the more refined baskets for women. Both men and women fish, but men go out on canoes and fish in the deep sea while women paddle in the lagoon for shellfish and sea slugs. The boys demonstrated the makings of the tools for deep-sea fishing, while the girls showed what they used in lagoon fishing.

For Samoan dancing, the students were divided into four groups and each group performed a final item where a girl (*taupou*) dances centre-stage while the boys providing the 'sidekicks' (*aiuli*) danced at the periphery. This is the Samoan 'last dance' (*taualuga*), which is more than just dancing. It reinforces the status of the people in a village community and it reminds people about their status in society. So the *taupou* is often the daughter of a chief, while the *aiuli* would be the sons of *tulafale* (orators). Hence proper etiquette is that the *aiuli* while 'whooping it up' with loud clapping

and shouts should never be close to the *taupou*, who is always tantalisingly out of reach of the *aiuli*.

These types of teaching and learning epitomise cultural gendered notions and when taught in school, they reinforce societal notions of gender-specific roles and the reciprocal relationships that exist between male and female, especially that of a brother and sister in Samoan society. Students tend to regard all forms of traditional Samoan knowledge as inferior to '*palagi*' (Western, middle-class) knowledge, so culture days are often treated as a very brief digression from the main pursuit of Western knowledge.

Culture days are part and parcel of Samoan education. It is a means of reminding and reinforcing cultural norms and behaviour, and in this way they do reinforce cultural gendered notions of appropriate behaviour and observations of relationships.

Reflections

Boys carried out heavy work and the teachers expected them to do this while the girls did lighter work. Teachers explained this in terms of physical strength (boys are stronger than girls), expected role (boys should protect girls) and complementarity of roles (that tasks are done much faster and more efficiently if there is division of labour).

Boys worked at the back of the school while girls worked at the front. Teachers explained this in terms of the expected role of boys as protectors of girls. Boys work away from supervision by teachers, as there is an expectation that boys can look after themselves while girls need to be protected.

All culture day activities were demonstrated as work and tasks that were gender-specific to males and females. However, gender specificity is seen more as complementarity of roles rather than males and females doing the same tasks. Role complementarity does not preclude equity. Teachers' outside-classroom tasks were performed according to cultural gender-specific roles. However, these are also mediated by the concept of *va* – expected codes of behaviour that govern reciprocal relationships.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Conclusions

The study found that the Samoan education system and schools do not challenge gendered roles as set by the *fa'aSamoa*: they tend to reinforce them, especially where they are concerned with 'appropriate' behaviour. The education system, in general, reinforces dominant gendered notions, stereotypes, identities and relationships. These notions are steeped in the values, beliefs, norms and expectations of Samoan culture,

which have been moderated somewhat by the cultures of the Bible and Christian beliefs and values.

The study found that schools have the potential to facilitate the development of knowledge and skills and lay foundations for empowerment and transformation, but that the intentions and purposes of the co-educational schools and the single-sex school were different.

In the single-sex school, gender equality is considered to be a non-issue as there are only girls in the school. The principal and teachers interviewed are also unapologetic that they teach girls to be 'girls'. The purpose of the school, therefore, is to enhance the roles of females as generally perceived by Samoan society, which are to be good mothers and nurturers of family members and the community. The role of females as breadwinners is a secondary consideration in this school. Staff members hold strongly gendered, stereotypical beliefs about the roles of girls and women. The small total enrolment of students may reflect changing perceptions in the community and among parents in terms of their expectations of the education their daughters should get.

In the three co-educational schools, there is a general consensus that all students should have their individual potential developed through schooling processes. The general perception is that the opportunities, the provisions, the processes and management of school all contribute equally to the development of boys and girls.

However, the study found that boys may be placed in an unequal position relative to girls in the often unconscious processes of managing students in and outside the classroom, in classroom interactions and in the expectations of the teachers. All teachers expect that girls will do well and that boys will underachieve. Hence, there are strong elements of a self-fulfilling prophecy in the organisational decisions and activities carried out, especially by the teachers.

The study affirmed that girls and indeed females in Samoan traditional society have a high status within their own families, and in the rural areas in particular this translates into affirmative action that places girls in advantageous positions within the school. Schools in rural areas tend to reinforce the cultural norms of gender. The picture is not as clear for urban schools: there is some evidence that the cultural norms of gender are being challenged in these schools.

The study found that the experience of girls in the single-sex school was not the same as that of girls in the co-educational ones. In the single-sex school in the study, stereotypical roles of girls/females are strongly emphasised, which delimits opportunities for these girls when they leave school. The fact that stereotypical gender roles are actually encouraged in this school by the principal and teachers provides a real challenge. The study also found that the future of this school is uncertain, with falling rolls as parents opt to send their children to co-educational schools. It is possible that the ethos of this school has become outdated and less acceptable to parents.

There are school activities that encourage gendered notions held by the community, for example, the notion that boys should protect girls and defer to them in appropriate contexts. These notions affect people's behaviour towards one another. Yet they are being challenged as young people become more and more exposed to the outside world. If behaviour changes are observed whereby boys exhibit disrespectful behaviour towards girls, the school will challenge that behaviour by teaching the gender role of boys acting as protectors of girls.

Boys' underachievement is an issue in secondary schools and must be addressed by Samoa in order to adhere to its policies of equity, quality, relevance and efficiency. This study suggests that schools do reinforce the cultural gendered notions, identities and relationships of Samoan culture, with the resulting outcome of boys underachieving. The challenge is finding the best ways to enable gender equity and achieving equitable outcomes for both boys and girls. There is clearly a need for further research in this area.

Policy Implications

Participation in secondary education by all students in Samoa must be improved from its current level of about 48 per cent. This has implications for setting goals and action plans for improving gross and net enrolment at primary level. The latter is important, as this indicates the level of potential enrolments at secondary level.

Boys' participation and achievement in secondary schools must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Some of related issues that must be examined include the further development and sustainability of technical and vocational subjects in secondary schools. These issues have implications for both girls and boys.

There is a need to reform school pedagogy, management processes and teacher attitudes and approaches in order to address some of the gender issues of secondary schooling in Samoa. Some mission education systems might also need to address hard questions about educational equity. This is particularly so where single-sex girls schools still exist, propagating the traditional roles of women as mothers and family caregivers and nothing else, thus limiting opportunities for girls.