

## **Topic**

To investigate how different schools, communities and cultures provide programmes to engage and accelerate learning for Samoan Bilingual students.

## **Sabbatical Report**

**Term 2 2017**

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## **Acknowledgements**

I feel humbled that I was granted the opportunity to have time in order to investigate how schools provide programmes in their schools in order to accelerate learning and achievement for children that want Samoan bilingual education.

I would like to acknowledge the Henderson South School Board of Trustees for fully supporting my application.

I would also like to thank the Ministry of Education for this opportunity to investigate bilingual education in schools both in Samoa and New Zealand.

Thank you to Miss Jo Rangi and Mr. Keith Scroggins who took on the role as Acting Principal capably during my absence.

I would also like to acknowledge the staff for supporting them also. Thank you to all the Principal's at the schools that I visited both here in Auckland and in Samoa. You opened the doors to your schools and your hospitality made me feel welcome. I appreciated the conversations that we had in order to gain a picture of what your schools do to provide quality programmes for our Samoan students that opt for bilingual education.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of my sabbatical was to have time to visit bilingual schools/schools in Western Samoa and Auckland New Zealand. I wanted to investigate and gain a better understanding of the cultural background and schooling experiences of Samoan migrant children attending school in New Zealand by visiting these schools in Samoa; observe strategies and successful programmes operating in Auckland schools that accelerate Pacific (predominantly bilingual Samoan) students learning.

## Background and Rationale

Visiting schools in another country and organizing visits to talk about how their education system educates their students in order to raise achievement can be problematic. Drawing a comparison and using my school as an example we place a strong emphasis on manaakitanga (being welcoming, respecting culture, treating people fairly and with respect, knowing about local tikanga and attempting to use the reo to pronounce names correctly and to attempt to use appropriate greetings when the occasion presents itself). I was fully aware that I should emulate this upon making contact with schools in Samoa basing my sense of urgency around this cultural premise. If I wanted to get a positive response from a Samoan Principal in order to spend time in their schools, I would need to show patience and humility when asking to visit their schools. I wanted to establish friendly first impressions upon a telephone contact and would form a relationship that would ideally allow any barrier to disappear.

Henderson South School consists of three Samoan bilingual classrooms. A Year 1-2, Year 3-4 and a Year 5-6 class. These classes were established over time however the first class a Year 1-2 was started in 2011. There was a very positive response from our community and the other two were included over the next three years.

In order to establish these classes a criteria needed to be used.

1. A strong desire from the community to have a Samoan class/es at Henderson South School.
2. There was a supportive Principal that would drive this need.
3. Qualified teachers that spoke the Samoan language fluently.
4. The Board of Trustees endorsed the establishment of the unit.
5. Parents would support these classes and walk alongside the learning and develop their own language skills to support their own children in a bilingual context

Teachers need to be native or fluent speakers, readers and writers of both languages (Baker,2006). Teachers need to have professional content knowledge and qualifications in bilingualism, Bilingual/Immersion Education theory, research and pedagogy and other professional content knowledge(PCK) (Baker,2000;2006; Cummins,1981; Cloud, Genesee&Hamayan,2000).

Our school belongs to a community of bilingual schools ASBEC (Auckland Samoan Bilingual Educational Cluster). From this cluster we have a;

- Shared vision
- Aims
- Professional development focus

Our strength is our belief that bilingual education is a method of teaching that aims to assist the learners to become bilingual and biliterate. It involves learning opportunities in two languages usually through first language empowerment (2017 ASBEC) [www.bilingualednz.co.nz](http://www.bilingualednz.co.nz) or <https://sites.google.com/site/asbecnz>

Our three bilingual teachers have had a long teaching association with our school and have demonstrated a strong desire to provide bilingual education for our students from our local and surrounding community.

Gaining a sense of the Samoan culture and where the origins of many of my families came from was important to me in gaining a stronger understanding of the food, customs, religious beliefs and historical background to this wonderful country. All of this information would give me a stronger understanding and insight into the Samoan culture and for me as a Principal of a school that has a high percentage of Samoan students an empathetic viewpoint.

### Methodology

I was blessed already knowing a Principal at a prominent school in Apia-Robert Louis Stevenson. This school is a private school and charges a twofold fee structure. One charge for local Samoan students and another charge for New Zealand or other foreign students.

It is a well-established school with a mixed NZ qualified and local qualified staff. There are high expectations from parents in order for the school to provide quality teaching and learning. The Principal Fiapia Devoe is experienced and provides excellent educational guidance for her staff.

The school draws upon a community of parents that own local businesses or have professional occupations. There roll is approximately 350 with mixed nationalities but the majority is of Samoan heritage. After an extensive conversation with the Principal it was obvious that the school operates their school programme around the New Zealand Curriculum. Professional Learning Development consists of on-going work on improving Literacy and Numeracy levels using the curriculum and

Literacy Learning Progressions. All classes are taught in English and there are no bilingual classes at this school. I was surprised that like many of the more private schools that the language is not encouraged and the level of Samoan amongst the students is negligible. There is an expectation from their parents that the school give a strong coverage of their lessons in English in order to prepare them for occupations that are English speaking or to strive to be accepted in a New Zealand University to gain a New Zealand university degree. Many of these students will graduate from this school and move onto their senior campus which cater for their High School students.

The school has the means to travel and to visit other places outside of Samoa. These opportunities are part of their curriculum and it is a normal expectation to provide EOTC for their senior students. They have travelled to New Zealand frequently with their Year 7 and 8s and to Pago Pago in American Samoa.

Robert Louis Stevenson School has a proud history linked to the renowned author. It provides quality education programmes based around the New Zealand curriculum. The school enrolls students from parents that largely own businesses or have a professional occupation. They are more than able to afford the school fees that the school charges which enhance the school's curriculum. The school has a mature and stable staff lead by a very capable and experienced Principal. She has introduced Literacy programmes based on the NZ Curriculum and has sought resources and PD to support this.

The school is attached to a Senior High School with the same name. All Year 8 students that leave this school move on to Robert Louis Stevenson High School in order to continue their higher education.

The school has an intervention programme and teacher that works with students that require extra Literacy support. These children are identified and timetabled in for lessons until their level of ability improves. All staff are fully bilingual however lessons are delivered mainly in English and English is the preferred language. Many of the children attending this school are not fluent in Samoan most will default to English to learn. The school is well resourced. All children wear a uniform and perform well academically.

I also visited Vaigaga Primary School which is located on the outskirts of Apia. This school has a roll of approximately 400 students and goes from Year 1 to Year 8.

The class sizes are large with some reaching as many as 60 children. When a teacher is absent there is no provision for a reliever to take that class. It is quite common for the teacher next door to adopt that class for the day/s. The Principal is normally in a class and finds it difficult to manage the administration of the school because of teacher absence. If teachers want to attend PD meetings this puts added pressure on the rest of the school.

The school bases most of its curriculum on a mixture of the NZ curriculum and the Samoan way. I observed that most classes were taught whole class without differentiating for ability levels. Many of the teachers struggled with the operation of effective classroom programmes because there is a lack of resources. A lot of the tasks children have to complete are written on the blackboard and all children are expected to answer the same questions. Group work was not evident in order to cater for ability levels.

Classes are taught in English mainly by bilingual teachers as there is a strong desire to teach children the palagi way. Many children that attend this school can speak their heritage language but it is not encouraged as a tool to use in the learning process.

The buildings are in need of repair as many of the classrooms had windows with broken louvres and the paint on the exterior of the building is in need of another coat. The children have fields to play on and the grassed area is well defined. The fields are not marked for children to play organized games.

Funding for a state school is based on roll numbers and this is a set amount paid to all schools regardless of being private or state. This puts an enormous strain on state schools in order to maintain a school and fund any learning programmes. There is little or no extra funding for classrooms for equipment and the upgrading of furniture.

The children have a strong desire to learn and are well behaved. They are proud of their uniform and school and are very respectful of each other and their teachers. The community does support the school but is limited in what it can provide.

They are currently trying to furnish a classroom and turn it into a library. This will prove to be a great asset to this school as it will be a great resource for all the students to use.

Any form of technology is not present in any of the classrooms and there is no infrastructure to support this. Most of what is recorded by the children is done so

by pencil and paper. Children use exercise books and the work in these is neat and tidy it is the main source of recoding work and tracking progress over time.

I visited Samoa Primary School and found that this school taught their students in a bilingual setting. Lessons were in both Samoan and English. However, the curriculum was based on the New Zealand system. Their teachers have visited NZ to expose them to our education system and were hosted here for a two-week period.

The school has three Principals all sharing this position of responsibility. It works well for them. They are all NZA qualified teachers with tertiary qualifications. Professional Development is taken during the day time with extended morning tea so that all staff can participate. It is difficult to release staff to attend courses as the relief system in Samoa does not operate as well as it does in NZ and the cost factor is beyond most Samoan school budgets to allow for this to happen on a regular basis.

The school charges fees and this helps to promote resource purchases and the maintenance of the school programmes. The school roll is increasing and had a current total of 600 pupils approximately when I visited. The school is very proactive in providing resources and PD for their teachers in order to ensure quality teaching is offered.

Vaiala Beach School was another school I visited which is located in an idyllic position overlooking Apia in Vailima.

This is a very well-resourced school servicing a community that is more than able to afford the fees that are charged. It is staffed mainly with NZ teachers that are contracted on a yearly basis. The school does not have any difficulty getting teachers from NZ that are skilled in their teaching practice. Programmes taught at this school are based on the NZ curriculum.

It is a privately run school and is owned by Lorraine Williams a well-known person in Samoa. She has worked tirelessly to create a school that provides quality programmes mainly in English to all of the students that attend. The school does not have a board and is solely governed by the owner.

The school has a fantastic reputation and delivers high quality education programmes for its students.

TALOFA LAVA AND WELCOME TO VAIALA BEACH SCHOOL.  
YOU HAVE CHOSEN A SMALL SCHOOL WITH A ROLL OF  
APPROXIMATELY 260 STUDENTS.  
WITH YOU AS PARENTS WE SHARE THE ROLE OF EDUCATING YOUR  
CHILDREN.  
WE HAVE A CARING ATTITUDE TOWARDS YOUR CHILDREN AND OUR  
SCHOOL TO CATER FOR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.  
YOU ARE WELCOME TO BE PART OF OUR FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT.

## HISTORY

Vaiala Beach School, an independently owned company was established with one pupil, at Aggie Greys Flats at Vaiala in 1984. It steadily grew over the years until it occupied two flats, which was a far cry from the original beginning of a tin shack on the water's edge. Cyclone Ofa, in 1990, created havoc and demolished the school and pre-empted the hasty move to Apia Park. It was during this period that land was purchased at Vailima for the eventual establishment of permanent premises. January 1994 saw the fruition of these plans with the opening of the new premises at Vailima.

My time in Samoa gave me a great insight into their culture and their education system. I was very grateful to all the Principal's and their schools that I visited as this gave me a great understanding of where many of my parents in my school originated from. It gave me a taste of their culture and how they live in their villages in order to achieve their daily tasks.

A recent report outlines some ministerial suggestions to improve the quality of education in Samoa.

*'Teacher marketing needs to be aggressive in-order to attract more teachers and maintain their level of commitment to the profession*

*Encourage teachers to be innovative and creative in delivering lessons*

*MESC to explore ways to up-skill teachers especially in science and mathematics.*

*Rethinking learning also means rethinking teaching. Teachers must continue to evolve from transmitters of knowledge to enablers for learning. The central role of teachers in the learning process cannot be overstated, and the increasing importance placed on technology in education must not overshadow the critical role of teachers*

*Teachers will be trained on how to develop their own curriculum materials through a research-based approach, and share their materials with other teachers*

*and schools. Gaining parental and community support for improved learning and accountability. Securing adequate funding for sustaining training resource materials and equipment. Establishing high expectations in terms of expected learning outcomes, quality benchmarks and professional standards.*

*Improving capacity for effective teaching and quality leadership; Undertaking research, developing policies, strengthening systems, and providing resources and processes to support continuous improvement.’ – Education for all National Review, 2015.*

Upon returning to NZ I decided to visit and speak to Principal’s that have bilingual classes in their schools and the programmes that they provide for their students. I based a lot of my findings around schools that I have an association with through ASBEC (Auckland Schools Bilingual Education Cluster). These schools all operate with bilingual classes in them with a strong focus on encouraging the dual language Samoan and English

#### Participating Schools

Mangere East, Anthony Noble-Campbell (Principal)

Henderson South, Trevor Diamond (Principal)

Finlayson Park School, Shirley Maihi (Principal)

Te Maturanga School, Jane Wallis (Principal)

Clendon Park School, Sue Dawson (Principal)

Sir Edmund Hillary Collegiate, John Shearer (Principal)

Lincoln Heights School, Debbie Waikato (Principal)

Richmond Road School, Jonathan Ramsay (Principal)

Rose Bank School, Heather Bell

All schools that are current members of ASBEC have a proud history of supporting Samoan bilingual education programmes in their schools. They are fully committed to providing classes that teach Samoan to their students. The levels of instruction are similar in all schools.

80% - 20 % at the Junior level

50%-50% at the Middle level

20% - 80% at the Senior level



Teachers in all schools have had ministry funded professional development in order to improve their pedagogy.

All bilingual teachers are expected to attend PD in order to be exposed to in depth teaching methods that will have an impact on their teaching knowledge. The ASBEC Principals are well aware that there is a need to incorporate quality professional development delivered by facilitators that have in depth knowledge in this area.

ASBEC have developed an assessment tool called Anofale which tests the students understanding in Samoan with questions based around Literacy skills. It is normally administered in conjunction with the STAR (Supplementary Test in Achievement in Reading). The results from these tests have demonstrated that children achieve well if their heritage language is strong either in English for STAR or in both tests for students that are capable in both languages.

There is still more to be learned about the balance that is needed in the bilingual context between the use of English and of Samoan. Further to that there needs to be more investigation about students' language background and capabilities, and what impact these have on achievement outcomes. These and the issues of the lack of clarity about the purpose of bilingual teaching in Samoan and the contribution it makes to Samoan students' overall achievement remain concerns to be investigated further.

#### Implications for Henderson South School

Visiting schools in Samoa has provided me with a cultural understanding of where my students parents originated from and allowed me to experience first-hand the education systems that they would have been exposed to.

After talking to many Principals and teachers both here and in Samoa it has given me the moral purpose to set clear goals for our bilingual unit and focus on closing the gaps between the highest and lowest achieving students in order to raise achievement levels.

To be able to build strong and purposeful relationships with teachers, students and community built on trust, respect and openness.

That I have a commitment to on-going learning and a commitment to supporting and guiding students at my school.

That our BOT is fully involved to provide opportunities in order for our students and staff to gain stronger pedagogical knowledge.

That BOT members draw upon a variety of services beyond our school to build expertise beyond the school in a bilingual setting in order to strengthen the organisational capacity and effectiveness.

That we support our bilingual classes and make them a priority for bilingual programmes that will enhance their learning in our school. That we strive to source professional development for our teachers in order for them to be equipped to provide quality learning programmes at Henderson South School.

## References

ASBEC (Auckland Samoan Bilingual Education Cluster) Principals

Finlayson Park School, Shirley Maihi, Clendon Park School, Sue Dawson, Lincoln Heights School, Debbie Waikato, Te Mauratanga School, Jane Wallis, Ross Common School, Sonia Johnson

Principal's and schools in Samoa

Robert Louis Stevenson – Fiapia Devoe

Samoa Primary School – Pa'u Yakapo Jacob, Anne Leuga, Sue Sua

Vaiala Beach School – Lorraine Williams

Vaigaga School- Apia

Amu School – Apia

## Readings

### **Examining Samoan language development in Samoan bilingual students' understanding of texts in English.**

Meaola Amituanai-Toloa<sup>1, 2</sup>, Stuart McNaughton<sup>2</sup>, Mei Kuin Lai<sup>2</sup> (1. School of Arts, Languages and Literacies, Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland, Auckland 92019, New Zealand; 2. Woolf Fisher Research Centre, The University of Auckland, Auckland 92019, New Zealand.

Education for All 2015 National Review Samoa

