

## **Global influences on curriculum in Samoa: the case of Business Studies**

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### **Abstract**

Globalisation has become a strong force in all aspects of our lives. While it is now embedded in the economics, politics and culture of developed countries, developing countries such as the small island nations of the Pacific are no less immune. This article examines the development and implementation of the Business Studies curriculum in Samoa, through the lens of globalisation. A small-scale study investigates how teachers implemented the new Business Studies curriculum – what helped and what hindered. A qualitative case study approach was used to collect data from two secondary schools. The findings show that the confidence and competence of teachers, originating from their initial academic disciplines, impact on the ways in which they use curriculum materials and teach the subject. The article concludes with recommendations, such as the need for more professional development and in-school support to improve curriculum delivery in order to bring Business Studies education to a level that supports economic growth in Samoa and enables the nation take its place in the globalised world of the future.

### **Introduction**

Samoa is a small independent island nation in the Pacific with a population of approximately 180,000 people. Formerly Western Samoa, it gained independence from New Zealand in 1962. It is a Christian country with a stable democratic government and strong ties to its traditional culture. Economically, it depends on agriculture and tourism, however, a large proportion of its income comes from foreign sources, such as remittances and aid (Ministry of Finance, 2008; US Department of State, 2009; World Bank, 2005). Samoa makes an interesting case study of the impact of global forces over time on one small country. Writers on globalisation talk of three main types of influence: economic, political and cultural (Waters, 2001). Each of these types has impacted in different ways on the development of Samoa, its education system, its school curriculum and, as will be discussed in this article, the teaching and learning of Business Studies.

While globalisation seems a modern phenomenon, there are varying views on how long globalisation has been around. One theory is that it has been around since the dawn of time but has had a sudden and recent acceleration. Another theory is that globalisation is linked to industrialisation, modernisation and the rise of capitalism, while a third theory is that it commands more attention in a world of post-industrialisation, post-modernisation and the disorganisation of capitalism. The common thread in all these

theories is that, regardless of globalisation's longevity or recency, it has influenced economics, politics and culture world-wide (Waters, 2001).

The writers of this article take the view that globalisation has been around throughout history but that it has increased in speed and intensity in the last century. This article first sets the development of the schooling curriculum in Samoa in the context of economic, political and cultural globalisation before focusing more directly on the development and implementation of the business studies curriculum. The results of a small scale study will illuminate some of the influences – both positive and negative – in more depth. The article will close with recommendations for improving the delivery of Business Studies education so that Samoa can take its place in the globalised world of the future.

### **Globalisation**

*Globalization has become the hallmark of the twenty-first century as it articulated a new form of social organization—an increasingly borderless world where flows of capital and new technologies are propelling goods, information, people, and ideologies around the globe in volumes, and at speeds, never previously imagined.*

(Lockwood, 2004, p.1)

While globalisation is a process of social change, the change is not in one direction. It has both expanded and contracted our world through a set of complex, dynamic, interrelated forces. Globalisation has brought about positives and negatives, and it both enables and constrains (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2009). It appears to have a momentum that is unstoppable, which Dale (2008, p. 25) explains as appearing as, “a single, irresistible force to which we must all conform.”

Globalisation has had a marked impact on schooling world-wide as education policies systems become more alike (Dale, 2008; Stromquist, 2005). Spring (2006, p.xi) explains:

*In the 21<sup>st</sup> century national school systems have similar grades and promotion plans, instructional methods, curriculum organisation, and linkages between secondary and higher education. There are local variations but the most striking feature is the sameness of educational systems.*

Samoa has not been immune to the influences of globalisation in its economic, political or cultural spheres (Lockwood, 2004). The next section of the article will briefly discuss how global trends in these spheres have impacted on developments in Samoa.

### **Political globalisation**

Archaeologists and anthropologists put the first migrants from Southeast Asia as reaching the Samoan islands over 2,000 years ago. The Samoan islands then became a stepping off place for the settlement of much of the rest of Polynesia (Lockwood, 2004;

Macpherson, 2000; Feinberg & Macpherson, 2002; Strathern et al, 2002). First contact with Europeans came in the 1700s but it was the arrival of missionaries and traders in the 1830s and 40s that was to have the most impact on Samoan culture (Afamasaga, 2007). Globalisation came to impact on Samoa and other Pacific islands politically, economically and culturally through exploration and colonisation. As Lockwood, (2004, p.11) states, “Most island groups had already experienced a century or more of invasive and culturally destructive contact from European explorers, sailors, whalers, and missionaries before they were officially colonised in the mid-1800s...” In 1899, the Samoan islands were divided into two parts. The western islands, originally of interest to Spain, came under German control and became Western Samoa. In 1904, the eastern islands became territories of the United States and today, as American Samoa, are still controlled by the US. In 1914, the League of Nations put Western Samoa under New Zealand administration, which continued until Samoan independence in 1962 – the first Pacific Island nation to gain independence from colonial powers (Afamasaga, 2007; Lockwood, 2004).

Politically, there are many legacies. The 1960 constitution, which was formally adopted with independence, is based on the British Westminster parliamentary system, modified to allow for *fa’a Samoa* (the Samoan way). The unicameral Legislative Assembly or *Fono* (parliament) contains 49 members serving 5-year terms. Universal suffrage was extended in 1990, but only *matai* (chiefs) may stand for election to the Samoan seats. The prime minister is chosen by a majority in the *Fono* and is appointed by the head of state to form a government (Ministry of Finance, 2008; World Bank, 2005). The judicial system is also based on English common law and local customs with the Supreme Court as the court of highest jurisdiction. A feature of Samoa’s judicial system is the Lands and Titles Court, which settles customary land and *matai* title grievances (Meleisea, 1987; Ministry of Finance, 2008). As Lockwood (2004, p.7) asserts, rather than total “Western homogenization”, there has been “selective adoption and rejection, customization and ‘cultural creolization’” and this is apparent in the way Samoan society has produced a hybridized political and legal system.

### ***Economic globalisation***

Samoa’s main sources of income are agricultural exports (mainly coconut-based products), development aid and private family remittances from overseas, with tourism and the service industry making a greater contribution in recent years. These are all important contributors to Samoa’s trade deficit, which was exacerbated by various natural and economic disasters in the 1990s – Cyclone Ofa (1990), Cyclone Val (1991), taro leaf blight (1994) and the near collapse of Polynesian airlines (1994). In 1991, approximately 68% of capital expenditure was funded by external aid from New Zealand, Australia, Japan and the United States (US Department of State, 2009). In recent times the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and the European Union have also provided technical and financial aid with further assistance from the United Nations family of organisations (Asian Development Bank, 2008; World Bank, 2005).

The Samoan government responded to the disasters of the 1990s with economic reforms and a major public works programme. Over this time, Samoa also saw

substantial improvement in human development – increased life expectancy, a rising adult literacy rate, increased schooling enrolments and growth in average incomes (Ministry of Finance, 2008). Since then, economic reforms have continued, aiming to increase private sector development, improve infrastructure and utilities, and increase efficiencies in public administration (Asian Development Bank, 2008; Ministry of Finance, 2008; World Bank, 2005). These reforms are monitored carefully by the donor countries and international banks, which put Samoa under pressure to follow their advice and continue with market-led style reforms, that is, to lessen the role of government, liberalise trade, corporatise state-owned enterprises and so on. When talking of Samoa's reforms, the impact of globalization, through the trend toward neo-liberal ideology, can be seen in this statement by the Asian Development Bank (2008, p.1):

*In many of these areas [economy, trade, health, education and development], progress has been made in transforming economic policy away from the promotion of inward-looking, state-dominated, import-substituting activities, toward freeing up trade, reducing the role of the state, and reforming institutions.*

The September 2009 earthquake and tsunami will mean that Samoa will be dependent on further foreign assistance to get the country and economy back to where it was and moving forward again. Because of Samoa's vulnerability, the significance of developing business skills and diversifying the economy takes on more importance than ever.

### ***Cultural globalisation***

Cultural globalisation has also had a major impact on Samoa. While over 90 per cent of the population is of Samoan ethnicity, there is a cultural mix including descendants of Chinese workers brought to Samoa a hundred years ago, Europeans, Euronians and a Polynesian/Asians, as well as a variety of new migrants. The main religion is Christianity (98.6 per cent of the population) with the church being a significant part of family, village and national life. Samoan and English are official languages and both are used in schools. While there is a high birth rate, there is also a net loss overseas, so the population growth rate is only 1.4 per cent, with 60 per cent of the population under the age of 15 (Ministry of Finance, 2008). This has a significant impact on education and health services.

Samoa is considered a developing country (having moved from the 'under-developed' category) and is now placed in the middle range of the Human Development Index range (75<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries). Samoa has made considerable progress towards the Millennium Development Goals – reducing poverty, child mortality and gender disparity in education. However, there is still work to be done as the Samoa Ministry of Finance (2008, p.2) explains:

*While there has been a general rise in the level of human development, there have been concerns over inequality of income distribution, hardship amongst vulnerable groups, a lack of formal employment*

*and income generating opportunities (especially for school leavers), limitations in access to quality education, the prevalence of non-communicable diseases, and emerging social problems.*

### **Globalisation and education in Samoa**

One of the features of globalisation, is that while global trends are at work cross-nationally, there is also a counter reaction within countries and cultural groups to protect languages and cultures under threat. As Afamasaga (2007, p.7) says:

*The history of the Pacific is one of colonisation. As small Pacific nations have gained independence and political strength, they have also sought to reclaim their unique cultures, languages and knowledge systems. Education is seen as a key vehicle for cultural survival and sustainability.*

The first formal schools were the mission schools of the 1840s. The curriculum was based around the Bible through which reading, writing and morality was taught with the underlying agenda of ‘civilising’ Pacific people into Christian ways (Afamasaga, 2007). The approach was holistic and this suited the Samoan way of learning. Christianity was accepted quickly and relatively peacefully and became integrated into the lives of the Pacific people with its own local flavour. As schooling developed in its colonial setting, the curriculum came to reflect that of New Zealand and later other aid donor countries. Yet as these countries moved forward with more progressive schooling practices and curricula over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Samoan education has remained largely unchanged. Afamasaga (2007, p.10) states that as a result:

*. . . the schools that we have today have become alienating institutions for most children in Pacific schools. The schools are palagi [European] buildings with typically four-walled classrooms in which students arrive early, sit for six hours in orderly rows at desks (or on the floor on mats) listening to teachers espousing knowledge, then leave again to the freedom of their villages, to . . . learn to do what they should be doing as citizens of their villages. The doing and the learning in the village plays no part in school at all. It is neither in the curriculum nor in the activities of the school . . . Thus the school remains an alien institution which is often associated with palagi knowledge.*

In 1992, the World Bank reviewed Samoa’s education system. The review highlighted the need for access to early childhood education, improved primary school facilities and curriculum materials, more relevant evaluation and assessment of learning, and a re-organised secondary schooling system. This resulted in the formation of a planning committee which outlined a series of goals to shape policy directions based around equity, quality, relevancy and efficiency (Education Policy and Planning Committee, 1995).

Of relevance to this study, were the clear intentions to (a) make a more comprehensive education available to a wider range of students by unifying the dual-stream secondary

system; (b) strengthen the cultural component of schooling in order to, “sustain and strengthen Samoan culture and heritage in a rapidly changing and multi-cultural world” (Education Policy and Planning Committee, 1995, p.12); and (c) provide a sound basis upon which “occupation-specific training” could be built and which included “an awareness of employment opportunities” ( p.13).

### **The Business Studies curriculum**

In order to achieve the aim of preparing students for working life following their schooling, a stronger focus was needed on optional subjects such agricultural science, home economics, industrial arts and business studies. The curriculum for Business Studies was prepared by a team of Samoan educators with the help of New Zealand consultants. It is a combination of economics and accounting topics in Years 9 to 11 and it splits into two specialist subjects in Years 12 & 13. Gounder (1992) explains in order to effect curriculum change in the Pacific, teachers are given a detailed curriculum plan to be followed, which outlines expected levels of attainment for precisely specified objectives and teachers are expected to be faithful curriculum implementers of the intentions of curriculum developers. In 2000, a very detailed Business Studies curriculum statement for Years 9-13 was prepared (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2000). The curriculum was supported with student workbooks. Other education initiatives later followed which aimed to increase interest in developing economic thinking, such as the Entrepreneurship and Financial Education project in 2007, changes to the Business Studies curriculum to streamline the economics and accounting components in 2008, and the integration of an enterprise studies strand and a financial studies strand for Years 9 – 11 in 2008 (UNDP Pacific Centre, 2009).

### **Research into the implementation of the Business Studies curriculum**

The purpose of this small-scale study was to find out how Business Studies teachers were implementing the Business Studies curriculum in Samoan secondary schools, how they were using Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) curriculum materials and whether these materials were adding value to their teaching. The researcher’s interest in curriculum implementation meant that the research questions would include finding out what teachers knew about the Business Studies curriculum, what curriculum materials were available, how useful these were and how well teachers felt the materials helped them implement the Business Studies curriculum.

### ***Methodology***

In order to understand the insights and perspectives of teachers engaged in teaching Business Studies, a qualitative research approach was used. Qualitative research aims to uncover the lived reality of the participants (Mutch, 2005). Qualitative researchers are encouraged to focus on the stories of the participants. Stoller (1989, cited in Glesne, 2006) suggests that researchers must learn to sit and listen to these stories to see what is revealed inside each story.

### ***Research design***

Observations and interviews were used as the main data gathering tools within the qualitative approach. Participant observations are a useful strategy for direct, face-to-face social interaction with “real people” in a natural setting (Neuman, 2000, p. 345; Mutch, 2005). Kvale (1996, cited in Mutch, 2005) suggests that qualitative interviews can be a construction site of knowledge when there is an interchange of views between two people conversing about a theme of mutual interest. These research methods supported the researcher’s wish to gather data from the research participants in a manner that was supportive yet informative.

Each participant received an information sheet and consent form when they were selected by their heads of department. It is important to have signed and informed consent form to indicate that participants understand the research purpose and are willing to be involved (Mutch, 2005). Two data gathering visits were undertaken – one included the interviews and the other was to undertake observations of teachers during classroom teaching of Business Studies. Consistent with advice from Burns (1997), field notes were recorded and written up more fully immediately afterwards.

### ***Interviews with participants***

Interviews were semi-structured, as suggested by Mutch (2005), who supports having a set of key questions that provide guidance but can be flexible and followed in a more open-ended manner. Open-ended interview is regarded the best strategy for getting close to teachers’ thinking. All interviews took place in the school setting.

As part of the interview, demographic questions were asked to gather information about the teacher’s background and position in their school, before moving on to their knowledge and use of curriculum statement, their use of the curriculum materials, the use of other supplementary resources and the types of learning activities they include in lessons.

### ***Classroom observations***

Each teacher was observed teaching for a period of 45-50 minutes. The researcher’s presence in the classrooms was considered not too disruptive to the teachers as they are used to MESC personnel visiting their classrooms on a regular basis. During the observations, the researcher observed the levels of interaction occurring in the classroom, the teaching and learning activities undertaken and the skills being taught and developed in Business Studies. Note was also taken of resources and other supplementary materials used for teaching Business Studies. This data was supplemented by the interviews with the teachers.

### ***Sample Selection Process***

Two schools, one government school and one mission school, were selected for this study. They were purposive samples, in which the choice is made of settings and/or participants that best meet the research aims (Burns, 1997; Mutch, 2005). Patton (2002 cited in Glesne, 2006, p.46) states that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling

leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in depth.” The schools were chosen because they participate in in-service training provided by MESC and are well supplied with the curriculum books for all subjects, including Business Studies. After explaining the research to the principals and heads of department, participants were identified as teachers who were teaching Business Studies in Years 9-11 and teaching either accounting or economics in Years 12 and 13. All teachers were of Samoan ethnicity and both male and female teachers were involved in the study. Table 1 indicates the six teachers with their qualifications and years of experience.

**Table 1: Teachers involved in the research**

<b>Teacher identifiers</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Years of service</b>
Teacher A	B. Commerce	3 years
Teacher B	Diploma in Theology	9 years
Teacher C	B. Commerce	2 years
Teacher D	B. Commerce	4 years
Teacher E	Dip. Education	8 years
Teacher F	Dip. Education	10 years

### ***The Research Settings***

The two schools were quite different in their approaches to education. One is a mission school, situated in the urban area administered by the Congregational Christian Church. It has 28 teachers and about 500 students who come from all over Samoa. The second school is a government college fifteen minutes’ drive from Apia which selects high achieving students from Year 8 to go into Year 9 and continue to Year 13. There are 45 staff and 900 students. It has a hostel to board students from rural villages and other islands.

### ***Results: Observations***

The research results are drawn from the participants’ interview responses and the observation of the Business Studies teachers in their classrooms. This section discusses the classroom observations and teaching methods of the participants. Classroom observations were carried out as part of this study to gauge the types of interaction between teachers and students, the teaching and learning activities undertaken and the skills being developed during the teaching sessions in the six classrooms.

#### **Discussion of Classroom Observations**

Teaching styles were similar in all the classrooms observed as each teacher directed whole class discussions by asking questions and having students answer. All the teachers used the students’ books in their lessons. However, a difference was noted in teaching methods relating to teachers’ experience. While most teachers were using the traditional method of teaching using chalk and blackboard, others extended their teaching methods using speaking and listening activities in oral presentations

and had students work in pairs or groups. Three features of the observations are now discussed in more depth: teaching experience; methods of delivery and use of curriculum books and resources.

### **Teaching Experience**

In line with the proverb, “Practice makes perfect”, the teachers with more years of practice had a higher degree of confidence in teaching Business Studies. Saunders (2000, cited in Quan-Baffour & Achemfuor, 2008) states that effective teachers at a mature stage of development tend to know their subject matter well, use pedagogies appropriate for the content and reflect on their teaching and children’s responses. They also create and sustain an effective learning environment and show that they care about their students. These experienced teachers have higher levels of pedagogical content knowledge. Quan-Baffour & Achemfuor (2008) define pedagogical content knowledge as the ability to blend technique and content including understanding how specific topics are related to one another and how they are most effectively organised and presented in the classroom to maximise learning.

### **Methods of Delivery**

Of the teachers observed, three extended their approaches to let students work in pairs and in groups in order to learn from one another. One teacher asked the students to go out to the village shops and collect source documents. This ‘discovery learning’ or ‘education outside the classroom’ helps develop skills such as collecting primary information, investigating, problem-solving and interviewing. Students find that people in the community can also help them learn. In this case, the documents were used to create a resource (wall chart) as a source of information in the classroom.

Overall, however, the traditional method is the one seen in most classrooms. Teachers ask questions, students answer during class discussions before copying notes and completing written exercises. The pedagogies needed to make Business Studies a more relevant and useful subject were not very evident.

### **Use of Curriculum Materials and Resources**

National documents (curriculum overview, curriculum statement and students’ books) were developed for the implementation of the Business Studies curriculum. There were no teachers’ manuals so teachers use the students’ books to prepare their classroom lessons. Three of the observed teachers had not seen the Business Studies curriculum statement so they did not know how to use it. All they had were the students’ books to provide the outline of what to teach. One other issue observed was the lack of resources used in most classrooms due to the nature of the subject. Although Business Studies is classified as vocational (practical), its concepts are more theoretical requiring teachers to understand and teach definitions and meanings well. Therefore, teachers concentrate more on explaining definitions than using resources to expand the relevance and interest of the subject.

**Results: Interviews**

This section discusses the data gained from the interview responses and how they addressed some of the research questions.

The first question asked what curriculum materials teachers had in their schools. Teachers mentioned the curriculum statement, the students' books and the school's annual plan. Teachers A, C and D said they were not familiar with curriculum statement, e.g., "[It was] *not included in NUS commerce courses and I haven't been to any in-service training.*" Teachers were often the only source of information for the students. They depended on the notes and activities provided in the students' books and they did not often look for other supplementary sources for their own background knowledge.

It was recommended that both pre-service teacher education at the National University of Samoa and in-service school-based programmes, through departmental meetings and professional development, should include an introduction to all the curriculum books and materials available.

The second question asked how useful the available materials were for delivering the Business Studies curriculum. While some teachers found them a useful basis for knowing what to teach, for planning their lessons and for designing annual plans from which they prepared term and daily plans, others used them with less thought. For example, they got students to copy notes straight from the books or they made no attempt to extend the students beyond the exercises provided in the students' book. In one class, students were told to: "*Copy all notes on the given pages then do activities that follow*" and when the bell rang, the teacher reminded them to "*make sure you finish copying those notes before our next class*".

Question 3 asked teachers what other support materials were available. Some teachers had no materials other than the curriculum books and had no idea where to get them, or could not afford them, whereas others used ESA publications from New Zealand or older Form 3 & 4 accounting or economics texts. Teacher B was motivated to look beyond the curriculum materials provided: "*I have no educational qualifications but teaching for nine years has motivated me to look for other texts especially when I take Year 11 classes.*"

The next question asked the teachers to consider how well they thought they implemented the curriculum. A strong theme was teaching to their preferred discipline. Teacher B said "*I love teaching accounting as I have been doing accounting work in the bank.*" Teacher E was more comfortable teaching economics than accounting. She said, "*Economics was my best subject when I went to college, I like writing essays and hate numbers.*" When implementing the curriculum, some teachers just followed the prescription and the set exercises. Others tried to supplement the exercises in the students' books with other activities and exercises. They felt this was more in the spirit of the curriculum's intentions. Again, the importance of pre-service and in-service professional development can be seen to increase teachers' awareness of the curriculum's intentions and the ways to teach to these.

Related to this, teachers were asked about attending professional development workshops. The responses ranged from none (Teacher A) or one (Teachers C and D) to every workshop the Ministry had offered for their subject. Teacher B commented: "*I've learned a lot from these trainings, I attend every time the Ministry runs these.*"

It is important for teachers not get complacent. There is a place for professional development for all teachers even though they have relevant qualifications. Professional development updates teachers' knowledge and skills and teachers gain both personally and professionally. Professional development does not just need to be provided by outside facilitators. Smith, Mockler and Normanhusht (2003) suggest professional groups in schools (focused on school-wide improvement, staff development and classroom development) could contribute to whole school development.

## **Discussion**

While this latest Business Studies curriculum has been available in schools for over ten years and has been refined over time, it has not received the support that is needed to make it a valuable and relevant subject for students leaving school to find a job. This small scale study provides some insights into this concern. Some of the issues are with the subject itself, others are with teacher knowledge and curriculum delivery, and others are with the provision of in-school support and teacher professional development.

### ***Nature of the curriculum***

Business Studies is an optional vocational subject which aims to prepare students for life when they leave school as useful contributors to society and to Samoa's economy. One issue raised in the study is that there are two disciplines (accounting and economics) combined in business studies content. Firstly, teachers often favour one discipline over the other depending on their own backgrounds. As one teacher commented: *"My major is economics and I am forced to teach accounting as well"*. Secondly, the content comes in separate texts – Book 1 for economics and Book 2 for accounting. Thirdly, the content is quite conceptual and is difficult to teach. This means that without extra support materials, lessons tend to be quite formal and transmissive in nature, for example, in accounting the only exercises used are those in the students' books. Fourthly, because the subject is optional, how much time and how many periods are available to teach business studies depends on the school-based programme and what is seen as a priority.

### ***Teachers' Content Knowledge***

All participants were either more comfortable in economics than accounting or vice versa. Teachers found the subject hard to teach because part of the content was not related to their own background experiences. They also expressed that there were specific topics they had never studied at college and therefore lacked the confidence to teach effectively. In order to gain confidence in teaching the other discipline and in approaching Business Studies in a more integrated manner, teachers need professional development opportunities. Whether they undertake study on their own, participate in collaborative learning in schools or attend MECS professional development, the situation will not improve without personal motivation and external support. McArdle and Coutts (2003) suggest that reflective practice is an approach to continued professional development which teachers come to understand their own deeply held beliefs and the way these impact on their professional practice. King (2002) suggests that teachers

can both engage in careful individual inquiry about their own practice and inquiry as a collaborative activity among themselves to contribute to a professional community and enable their schools to become learning organisations.

### ***Knowledge of curriculum materials***

The study found that more experienced teachers understood the intention of the curriculum, the relationship between the curriculum statement and students' books and had the confidence to draw from a wider range of curriculum materials. Beginning teachers and teachers new to the subject need to be provided with an induction into the subject and to be encouraged to consider the ways to use the curriculum materials and how to supplement them with ideas from other sources. Experienced teachers also need updating in new curriculum content and pedagogies.

### ***Teachers' pedagogies***

Teaching is not just about content, how teachers teach is as important as what they teach. It takes time to move from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred one. As has already been noted, teachers need strong content knowledge in order to be confident enough to try new teaching approaches. If Business Studies is to achieve its potential students need to gain experience in the essential skills of questioning, interpreting sources and problem-solving. The study showed that both individual and collaborative inquiries are rare. There are many strategies teachers can use to introduce both content and skills into the classroom, such as seminars, debates, field trips, surveys and interviews but without professional learning opportunities for teachers, they will remain with the status quo.

### ***Teacher preparation and development***

If teachers studying at the National University of Samoa (NUS) are being prepared to teach Business Studies, then some course and career guidance would help them select appropriate subjects to prepare them for teaching both economics and accounting. The teachers in this study had not had this opportunity and on arriving in schools, they often conceded that they had not attended any workshop provided by MESC, nor had there been any school improvement programme available in their schools. One teacher commented '*Our staff has meetings every Monday but it's only on other matters*'. This was confirmed by the subject advisor who said that most Business Studies teachers needed training on the curriculum in relation to content, teaching pedagogies and learning activities.

The need for in-service training in content knowledge and teaching methodology for effective classroom teaching should be a priority. Quan-Baffour and Achemfuor (2008) consider that in-service training is a strategy, not only to address gaps in content knowledge and provide skills in teaching, but also to improve teachers' confidence and general competence.

### ***In-school support***

MESC has now developed training programmes aiming at preparing principals and teachers, with appropriate knowledge and skills to be able to offer the curriculum as part of continuous school development and improvement. Thus, in order to reduce the problem of teachers not getting professional development, the responsibility is passed to principals to set up their own school-based programmes of teacher professional development. King (2002) in his research describes a range of strategies that can be used to support teachers, such as visits to other schools, meetings with teachers from other schools, professional development activities like workshops with outside authorities, and activities within the school such as curriculum team meetings.

Principals and teachers should be encouraged and motivated to understand the importance of school-based programmes and put them into action. They also need to identify strengths and weaknesses in their school programmes so that external help can be sought from the ministry and others to address any concerns raised during this school-based staff development.

### ***The curriculum development process***

Teachers felt removed from the curriculum development process as they were not involved in the writing of the curriculum document. Although some teachers participate in curriculum development, they tend not to be involved in making decisions as most decisions flow from the top. McGee (1997) believes that teachers are, in fact, the key curriculum decision makers. They make a number of decisions with respect to the implementation of any given curriculum and to reach these decisions, they need to consider the learning abilities of their students, the curriculum documents, resources available and their own strengths. If teachers can come to see themselves as curriculum decision makers they will feel more empowered to participate in professional development and to implement the curriculum in ways that are more relevant to students.

### **Conclusion**

Business Studies has the potential to make a strong contribution to the social and economic development of Samoa. The effects of globalisation on Samoa, including the impact of its colonial past on its politics, culture and economy, combined with its vulnerability to natural hazards, mean that a multi-faceted approach is needed to ensure Samoa's on-going stability and sustainability. Some of the problems faced by Samoa currently are its reliance on foreign aid and investment, lack of diversity in income-generating activities, growing social and economic disparity, and youth disengagement and unemployment. The Business Studies curriculum, combining accounting and economics and more recently, entrepreneurship and financial education, offers part of the solution.

What this study has shown, however, is that teachers need to be prepared and upskilled more thoroughly with on-going professional development that covers curriculum content, familiarisation with curriculum materials, student-centred pedagogies and

opportunities for collaborative teacher networks and in-school support. Teachers, teacher educators, schools and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture need to value the opportunities that Business Studies provides for young people to contribute to Samoa's development and to work together to achieve the goals of Samoa's development strategy: "Ensuring sustainable economic and social progress" and "Improved quality of life for all" (Ministry of Finance, 2008, p.v).

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