CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN SAMOA: A SURVEY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides the results of a questionnaire opinion survey of the extent to which human and cultural influences impact on international project management in Samoa. It focuses on the particular factors within the categories of culture, human resource management, leadership and communication skills. Furthermore it highlights the practical experience that form the source of personal beliefs; the perceived relative importance for each of the factors in contributing to performance; and the aspects of communication skills and strategies that are employed or evident within projects. It also investigates the communication strategies employed by project managers in Samoa and their effectiveness in communicating within a cross-cultural context.

Virtually all those taking part in the survey agree that communication is vital. All the popular communication strategies are in frequent use; the impact of communication barriers is generally low and all barriers are being overcome quite well. In general, Samoans seem to be more favourable to meetings and planning for improved communication, with Australians using a more responsive approach and the Other Expatriates being less flexible. In terms of their experiences, the Samoans claimed to have suffered from a lack of awareness of their culture, with less flexible, clear and ongoing communication but more planning for communication. The Other Expatriates, on the other hand, recorded awareness of national culture and clear, flexible, communications among their highest achievements (Australians had clear and flexible communications high on their list too). The Samoans also scored many of the barriers to communication higher than the other groups. The need was also identified for non-indigenous managers to achieve an adequate level of cultural competence.

Keywords: International project management, culture, communication.

INTRODUCTION

Tremendous changes are occurring in the Pacific Rim nations today, but they are much less than the changes that went on in most of the eastern Pacific last century, when the whole indigenous religion was overthrown, the indigenous economic systems were destroyed, the indigenous technology superseded and new systems of government were imposed (Crocombe 1987). Pacific cultures today though, are still very much alive, each a unique adaptation within the common framework of world culture (Hooper 2000).

As Pacific colonies gained independence in the 60's, new governments were formed that realized the need for major infrastructure development. This fuelled the demand for experienced builders and designers, the bulk of whom came from Western developed countries. International project managers, consequently, have to deal increasingly with individuals from other cultures. Therefore, international project managers need to also develop skills to interact with individuals whose behaviour is influenced by other cultural priorities. This involves the rapid understanding and demonstration of

appropriate role behaviour in the host culture – said to be the source of considerable stress and resulting in role conflict and identity diffusion, both of which have been linked to culture shock (Pedersen, 1991). As Loosemore and Al Muslmani (1999) point out, one of the major challenges in this, across all industries, is that of inter-cultural communication.

Apart from Loosemore and Al Muslmani's work in the Persian Gulf region, little has been done to date to document the inter-cultural communication issues in construction project management. The potential issues, however, are well known from the general literature. These suggest that:

- Communication is vital (Hall, 1959, 1976 ; Zaharna, 1989; Morgan, 1991; Slavin *et al.*, 1991; Terpstra, 1991; Craig and Douglas, 1996:75; Dieckmann, 1996; Loosemore, 1999; Harvey *et al.*, 2000; Redmond, 2000).
- Project managers must have excellent communication skills (Hodgetts and Luthans, 1993)
- Culturally sensitive and appropriate communication is necessary (Harris and Moran, 1991)
- Two way communication must be encouraged (eg., Rogers and Kincaid 1981)
- Understanding and appreciating the different cultures involved in a project is vital (Harris and Moran, 1991; Pederson, 1991)
- High levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are needed (Leung and Wu, 1990)
- Effective communication strategies are needed to minimise potential disputes and misunderstandings (eg., Slavin *et al.,* 1991); Harvey *et al.,* 2000;
- Project proponents and stakeholders need to communicate throughout the project (eg., Schuler *et al.,* 1993)
- Communication helps achieve organisational and national objectives (eg., Hooper, 2000)
- Clear communication is needed to help clarify the roles of project stakeholders (Craig and Douglas, 1996:75)
- Understanding the language(s) and practices of local culture enhances communication (eg., Terpstra, 1991; Redmond, 2000)
- Communication is necessary for endorsement by the stakeholders (eg., Schuler *et al.,* 1993)
- Effective communication strategies are needed to ensure successful technology transfer (Morgan, 1991)
- A communication plan is necessary (Harvey *et al.,* 2000)
- Communication plans must be reviewed regularly, and adjusted if need be (Harvey *et al.,* 2000)
- Effective communication strategies needed to demand openness and tolerance of cultural differences (Wederspahn, 1998)
- Communication plans and strategies must be determined/established at the outset (Brock and Thomas, 1998)
- Meetings help overcome communication barriers and increase performance level (Hall, 1990)
- Timing is vital for effective communication (Meredith and Mantel, 1995).
- Organisational culture and objectives dictate communication process (Pheng and Leong 2000)

- National culture determines acceptable means of communication (Pheng and Leong 2000; Hofstede, 1980).
- Project funding influences tools and techniques of communication (Grove and Hallowell, 1999)

This paper describes a study of intercultural communication in the management of construction projects in Samoa. Intercultural communication as referred to in this paper encompasses the definition given by Harris and Moran (2000:32) which stipulates a process whereby individuals from different cultural backgrounds attempt to share meanings and feelings through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages. In this study three culturally different groups identified are: Australians, Samoans and Other Expatriates. These groups are culturally different from each other on important attributes as their value orientations, preferred communication codes, role expectations, and perceived rules of social relationship. Of particular interest was the sensitivity of expatriate nationals to the host culture and the effects on communication between project participants. This involved addressing three key issues (McCaffer, 2000):

- The particular factors within the categories of culture, human resource management, leadership and communication skills as well as practical experience that form the source of personal beliefs
- The perceived relative importance for each of the factors in contributing to performance, and
- The aspects of communication skills and strategies that are employed or evident within projects.

The paper provides the results of the survey in contrast with the general literature on the topic. For brevity, a full literature review is not provided here. Instead, the salient literature is referenced in recounting the survey's results.

THE SURVEY

Data collection

Data was collected by postal questionnaire. The questionnaire questions, which concern the skills that are required to manage everyday situations in a new cultural context, were loosely based on Furnham and Bochner (1982). Respondents were asked to rate on 5-point scales developed for various sojourner groups, and which have consistently proved to be reliable and valid (Ward and Kennedy, 1996):
a) their personal beliefs (endpoints: strongly disagree/strongly agree.)
b) the extent of implementation in their work experience (endpoints: never/always)
c) the impact of barriers to communication (endpoints: insignificant/catastrophic)
d) the extent to which communication strategies were employed (endpoints: never/mandatory)
A 3-point rating scale (after Zung, 1965) was also used for responses to part of the questionnaire to rate the extent to which communication barriers were overcome (endpoints: not at all/totally).

Consistent with previous perspectives on transition (eg., Zaharna, 1989), the questionnaire also elicited perceptions of the ways in which respondents' self-identity, personal beliefs, and worldview regarding international project management had

changed as a result of their cross-cultural experiences. Several behaviour questions were also included, such as: "To what extent did you employ communication strategies?" and "How did you overcome barriers to communication?". In addition, the critical incidents methodology was used to encourage individual reflection regarding unique experiences, with open-ended prompts such as "Are there any other issues concerning cross-cultural communication not covered in the questionnaire?" and "Has the questionnaire missed any important related issues?

Respondents

After piloting, questionnaires comprising both standardized measures of checklists of predetermined items and critical incident questions were distributed to 90 selected project managers in Australia, Japan and Samoa for completion in mid-March 2001. The selection and identification of participants was important. The research concentrated on personnel from international donor agencies such as the World Bank, European Union and from governments such as New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. Selection of appropriate respondents was conducted with the assistance of AusAID, New Zealand High Commission in Samoa, JICA representatives, and Samoan government personnel. The research population or cohort was defined as project managers who had worked or were currently working in Samoa. To gain a broad spectrum of perspectives a variety of industries were targeted, with respondents currently working or having worked within: *Construction*, *Institutional Strengthening*, *Industry Development*, and *Energy Supply and Distribution*. The random sampling was aimed at encompassing a wide range of experience and project size. To ensure consistent and authentic data collection the research sample was limited to those with experience in working in Samoa. This ensured that the sample population experienced working in the same environment in relation to social, political and economic impact. Telephone calls, e-mails and personal contacts were used to follow-up the survey form. Forty-one (46%) responses were returned.

The survey sample was adequate and relevant as it engendered responses across a cross-section of the major industries and organizations in Samoa .The research aimed at eliciting responses that were representational of key areas of economic and social development, which had been prioritized by the government of Samoa in their Statement of Economic Strategy. The survey sample reflects the areas of the main thrust of the international aid program projects in Samoa. Of particular note concerning the survey sample was that:
- The respondents were from geographical and culturally diverse backgrounds.
- There was a diversity of management experience.
- There was a diverse range of projects identified.

While a pre-condition of the survey was experience working and living in Samoa, there was considerable variation in the cross-cultural experiences of the group.

Data Analysis

37% and 39% of respondents were *Samoan* and *Australian* nationalities respectively, with *Other Expatriates* making up the remainder. 47%, 13%, 11% and 29% had less

than 6, 6-10, 11-15 and over 15 years cross-cultural experience respectively, indicating a diversity of cross-cultural experience and thus of project management knowledge and skills (McCaffer 2000). The types of projects managed by the respondents in Samoa are typical and correlate with the Government of Samoa's 'Statement of Economic Strategy' as well as 'aid' policies in the Pacific (World Bank, 2000), with projects in the areas of *Construction* (42%), *Institutional Strengthening* (37%), *Industry Development* (13%), and *Energy Supply and Distribution* (8%).

The responses to each question were grouped according to the nationality of the respondent and their sample means and variances calculated. The means were tested pairwise for differences between nationality groups by the formula:

$$t = \frac{(\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2)(n_1 + n_2 - 2)^{\frac{1}{2}}}{\{(1/n_1) + (1/n_2)\}^{\frac{1}{2}}\{(n_1 - 1)s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)s_2^2\}^{\frac{1}{2}}}$$

where $\bar{x}_1$ and $\bar{x}_2$ are the sample means of the first and second samples, s_1^2 and s_2^2 are the sample variance for the first and second samples and n_1 and n_2 are the number of values in each sample. The distribution of t can be approximated by the Student's t-distribution with $n_1 + n_2 - 2$ degrees of freedom, with the test for inequality conventionally made at the upper 5 per cent point (Pollard,1979:159). The test is robust for moderate departures from normality and homogeneity of variance. The procedure used was to (1) rank order the mean ratings for each nationality group for question 1, (2) test the difference between the means of the first and second ranked means, (3a) if the means are significantly different, test the difference between the second and third ranked means or (3b) if the means are not significantly different, pool the two nationality groups and test the difference between the mean of this pooled group and the third ranked mean. This was repeated for each question. The next step was (4) to rank order all the means for all the questions and nationality groups found to be significant in this way, (5) test the difference between the means of the first and second ranked means (6a) if the means are significantly different, test the difference between the second and third ranked means or (6b) if the means are not significantly different, pool them and test the difference between the mean of this pooled group and the third ranked mean. Repeating this for all the ranked means results in several sets of poolings each with significantly different means., the interpretation of which is provided in the next section.

Results

Part a): Personal Beliefs

This part of the survey focused on the knowledge, beliefs and skill factors associated with human resources and culture that the project managers believed to be necessary to effectively manage communication within a cross-cultural environment. Table 1 provides the mean and variance of the pooled groupings resulting from the analysis, the questionnaire statements contained in the grouping and the nationality of the respondents. The responses to indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement with the statements made. For example, the group with the highest rating levels is group A, with a mean (MR) of 4.88 (variance=0.11), comprising the statement "communication

is vital" (by the *Australians*, *Samoans* and *Other Expats*), "a communication plan is necessary" (by the *Samoans* only) and "open communication is required to provide management with some control" (by the Other Expats only). Overall, all the items have a MR of over three, indicating a general agreement on the need for effective communication in a cross-cultural environment – the higher rated items suggesting support for emphasising (eg., Dinsmore, 1984) the 'soft' side of project management.

The results for group A show that, although all regard "communication is vital" very highly, only the Samoans regard "a communication plan is necessary" very highly and only the Other Expats regard "open communication" very highly. The next highest group, group B, is dominated by the Samoans and then Australians, followed by the Expats. All believe "High levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are needed", "Culturally sensitive and appropriate communication is necessary", "Project managers must have excellent communication skills" and "Understanding and appreciating the different cultures involved in a project is vital" to be very important, while just the Australians and Samoans believe "Two way communication must be encouraged" and "Project proponents and stakeholders need to communicate throughout the project" to be equally important. The Samoans alone believe that "Meetings help overcome communication barriers and increase performance level", "Communication plans and strategies must be determined/established at the outset", "Communication plans must be reviewed regularly, and adjusted if need be" and "Effective communication strategies are needed to ensure successful technology transfer" to be of equal imporatance.

One interesting result is the relatively low rating for timing for the *Other Expats*, in contrast with the research literature (eg., Meredith and Mantel, 1995), which refers to timeliness as being crucial for communication in a foreign context. Similarly, the absence of the need for a communication plan from the *Australians* and *Other Expats'* higher rated items contrasts with the literature (eg., Harvey *et al*, 2000).

The impression overall is that, relatively speaking, *Samoans* favour meetings and planning (though not necessarily for the same reasons), while *Other Expatriates* have less regard for meetings, timing and other possible influences. *Australians*, though generally closer to *Samoans*, seem to favour a more reactive approach to management.

Part b): What happened in the projects that you worked on?

This section questioned respondents on what happened in the projects they were involved in, and whether their personal beliefs had changed or were affected as a result. The overall results for this section (Table 2) reflects the extent to which effective communication is evident particularly in projects where cultural values and attitudes influence the way project participants behave and communicate. The overall figures suggest that relatively effective communication processes are in place, as none fall below 2.9 MR, but that they are not regularly achieved or fully met, as none come above 3.8 MR. Cross-cultural theorists (eg., Jaafari 2001) may attribute this to the tendency of managers to apply key success factors intuitively, based on the manager's reference framework (knowledge and personal experience) and his or her ability to apply reflective thinking. Another interesting aspect is the marked differences between the results in part a) and part b), offering some support for Dieckmann (1996) and

Pardu's (1996) view that the quality of the intentions is often greater than the quality of what is actually practiced.

The largest differences between the three nationality groups show the *Samoans* recording relatively lower ratings against the other two for 'Understanding and appreciation of cultural difference involved', 'Effective communication reflecting openness and tolerance of cultural differences', 'Flexibility of form and style of communication' and 'Clear communication giving stakeholders opportunity to comment/cast a vote'. *Australians*, on the other hand, are high against the other two for 'Ongoing communication between project proponents and stakeholders'. This suggests that the *Samoans* found the management style to be relatively unresponsive.

Part c): Impact of Communication Barriers

The respondents' perceptions on the impact of barriers to communication have an overall range of 1.7 to 3.15 MR, reflecting a minor to moderate impact. Table 3 summarises the results of the statistical tests. Here the *Samoans* perceive a significantly **greater** impact of 'Conflicting cultural values', 'Lack of support and commitment', 'Unclear channels of communication', 'Interpersonal conflict', 'Conflicting interest', 'Poor leadership', 'Unclear objectives' and 'Lack of trust' than the other two nationality groups. In contrast, the *Australians* perceive a siginifically **lesser** impact of 'Political/community interference', 'Ineffective reporting system', 'Limited resources', 'Information filtering', 'Poor listeners', 'Lack of confidence', 'Personal preferences', 'Poor negotiation skills', 'Language difficulties' and 'Stereotyping' than the other two nationality groups. . The results support what some theorists posit as cultural values, tasks as well as situational variables that help determine the norms for communication. Terpstra (1991) asserts that the multiplicity of language use and the diversity of cultures may have a constraining influence on communication in cross-cultural situations .

Part d): Extent to which barriers were overcome

There are no significant differences in the results for the extent to which barriers are overcome, both between questions and between nationality groups. This may be an artifact of the rating method used, being a simpler, but less discriminating 3-point scale. This may also be attributed to what the respondents perceive constitutes effective communication and is a reflection of the manager's background and training. Gudykunst and Nishida (2001) point out that effectiveness of communication is a necessary function of an individual's ability to cope with uncertainties and anxieties. However, the types and nature of aid projects in the Pacific such as those carried out in Samoa, which involves adhering to government-to-government protocols and guidelines may have an influence on respondent's answers.

Part e): Communication Strategies- extent they were employed.

The majority of the results of the overall responses pertaining to the communication strategies employed range from 3 to 4 MR. This is consistent with the literature (Saphiere, 1996), which asserts that it is necessary for overseas assignments to have positive interactions between project staff, team-building, problem solving exercises, and strategies for conflict resolution and cultural adaptation, which may be integral ingredients for project success.   According to the literature (Black, 1988) conflicting signals about what is expected of individuals in a new setting i.e., role conflict would be expected to increase uncertainty and inhibit adjustment. In a new cultural setting, conflicting signals may generate a high degree of uncertainty since individuals need to first understand the messages about what to do and then decide which messages to either follow or ignore.   That none of the items returned ratings at either end of the score analysis continuum suggests that variables within cultural contexts need to be addressed through appropriate pre-departure training, as well as through support during sojourner period in cross-cultural environments (Black and Mendenhall, 1990).

As Table 4 indicates, the Australians rated 'Consultative Approach'and 'Incremental changes' higher and 'Comprehensive communication plan' lower that the other two nationality groups. The very low rating of 'Suggestion box' applies to all the groups.

Parts f) and g): Critical incidents

Questions in this section encouraged respondents to share individual reflections regarding unique experiences and perceptions. The responses leads us to posit that factors that tend to reduce the uncertainty associated with trying to determine which behaviours are appropriate or inappropriate relative to the host culture (in this instance, Samoa) would generally facilitate adjustment. On the other hand, factors that may increase uncertainty would tend to inhibit the adjustment. The results from this study in Samoa are consistent with the literature (Black, 1988), which assert that adjustment, generally is defined and is operationalised as the degree of a person's sociocultural comfort with various aspects of a new setting.

The responses relating to sociocultural adjustment are consistent with the literature (Ward and Chang, 1997) which indicates that sociocultural adjustment is related to culture specific skills, the ability to negotiate the host culture, or general cultural competence as measured by the amount of difficulty experienced in the management of everyday situations in the host culture.

The results of the critical incident responses relating to the cultural variable of time and uncertainty coincided with the mainstream literature (Hall, 1990), in classifying Samoan culture as polychronic. That is, Samoans are non-linear, responsive, informal and flexible in resolving problems and planning projects. The literature (eg., Linkels, 1995; Meleisea, 2000) on Samoa shows that the Samoans take a fatalistic approach to problem solving and greatly value face-to-face communications processes.

The ability, highlighted in the literature (eg., Linkels, 1995; Meleisea, 2000), of Samoans to handle multiple tasks and the tendency to ignore schedules, preference for spontaneity and informality in meetings, is supported by the survey responses. In addition, both local and expatriate managers viewed the ability to build personal

relationships (collectivistic trait) before formalizing business relationships, as well as the view that time commitments were desirable but not binding, as key aspects of *'faa-samoa'*. These views are consistent with contemporary literature (eg., Hofstede, 1980, 1997; Triandis, 1988) on individualism-collectivism in international project management.

Attitudes towards time and technology can interfere with the communication process (Victor, 1991) and the results of the critical incidents reflect the differing perceptions of time between expatriate managers and local counterparts in Samoa. The effect of coping with the impact of human and cultural factors on communication in cross-cultural environments such as Samoa may require some level of host country proficiency. According to the literature (Black *et al.,* 1991), without this proficiency it may be difficult to communicate genuinely with host country nationals in a new culture.

The responses indicated how cultural environment is posited to influence ethical issues, which in turn precedes individual ethical decision-making (Hunt and Vitell, 1986). Armstrong (1996) found a strong link between individualism and perceived importance of ethical problems. In collectivistic societies like Samoa, the individual is 'outer directed' and controlled by the need to save face by meeting the group's requirements (Armstrong, 1996). The responses in this section indicate how managers in societies characterized by low-power distance are less likely to accept their superior's questionable practices (Nyaw and Ng, 1994).

A number of the responses in this section mentioned that the questions provided them with a useful framework for reflecting on current and past experiences and focused on aspects of cross-cultural communication necessary for managing adjustment and change in foreign contexts. Issues relating to racism, and prejudice were raised by respondents and were consistent with the literature (Schlossberg, 1984) indicating how, by virtue of exposure to cultural customs and surroundings different from one's own, the individual redefines an understanding of self and/or the surrounding world.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey of intercultural communication in Samoa found beliefs to be generally in agreement with the literature. Virtually all those taking part in the survey agree that communication is vital; their experiences are positive for all the questions asked; with the exception of 'the suggestion box' all the popular communication strategies are in frequent use; the impact of communication barriers is generally low and all barriers are being overcome quite well. Some marked differences were found between the different groups involved. All have been reported here, but many are not easy to explain. As far as beliefs are concerned, the Samoans seem to bee more favourable to meetings and planning for improved communication, with Australians using a more responsive approach and the *Other Expatriates* being less flexible. In terms of their experiences, the Samoans claimed to have suffered from a lack of awareness of their culture, with less flexible, clear and ongoing communication but more planning for communication. The *Other Expatriates*, on the other hand, recorded awareness of national culture and clear, flexible, communications among their highest achievements (Australians had clear and flexible communications high on their list too). The Samoans also scored many of the barriers to communication higher than the other groups.

An interesting point to note is the insight into the importance and value placed by the Samoans on *faa-samoa* and how deeply entrenched this is in the political psyche of Samoan society, evident through its enshrinement in the Samoan constitution. This explicit constitutional recognition of 'Samoan custom and tradition' ensures the prominence of *faa-samoa* in legal, political and economic contexts as a matter of principle (Lawson, 1996). The *faamatai* system as noted in the literature (Hooper, 2000) on Samoa, mixed with Christian values, form the basic framework of modern society in Samoa. The emphasis on the cultural and human aspects in *faa-samoa* reflects the current literature on sensitivity to cross-cultural differences and how they may be managed through effective communication processes. The survey reflects the experiences of managers from individualistic or low context cultures (for example, Australia and New-Zealand) with local personnel from a high-context cultural society like Samoa. The situations presented are potentially stressful (consistent with literature), and may impact on the success of international projects.

Perhaps the most useful finding in the survey is the need for non-indigenous managers to achieve an adequate level of cultural competence. Of particular note are the managers' realizations about cultural influences on their own behaviours including value conflicts with others, and the importance of developing at least a tolerance for cultural differences. A feature is the link between personal transition and cultural adjustment. Managers, who were able to set aside personal discomforts and take on new ways of learning and relating to others, reported an impact on their value shifts and appreciation for the strengths of the host culture. This is consistent with the literature (Child and Rodrigues, 1994) on international project managers as agents of learning. Stress-management training has been identified as a necessary feature of programs designed to prepare managers for effective communication overseas (Harvey, 1997). This is likely to be especially useful at the initial entry into the new environment when differences between home and host cultures are most noticeable and overwhelming.

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APPENDIX A: SOME NOTES ON SAMOAN CULTURE

A salient feature of the island countries of the Pacific is the large part played by culture and tradition in national life (Hooper, 1998). *Faamatai*, (chiefly system) is the overarching and dominant institution of the traditional domain in Samoa. *Faamatai* reflects:

- The importance of, and the inclusive rights of the human being as an heir of, a *'matai'* title.
- The insistence of the culture on the unity or holistic view of life
- The inclusive decision-making process of '*soalaupule'*, and
- The ability of the Samoan culture to handle change and new ideas (Le Tagaloa, 1992).

Faamatai is a social organization of *matai* titles and heirs of *matai* titles, both male and female. Every Samoan (man, woman, or child) is a member of the *aiga potopoto* (extended family) of one or other *matai* title (Le Tagaloa, 1992).

The *matai* title can have the rank of paramount chief, chief or orator. All sons, daughters or descendants of a matai are heirs who have equal opportunity to the title because primogeniture does not apply in the *faamatai* culture of the Samoan (Le Tagaloa, 2000).

There is an unstated belief of the Samoan culture that there are no commoners in their social organization. This belief lies behind the often heard admonishment, '*e te tufanua i lau amio, ae le o lou gafa'* which, translates that a Samoan is a commoner only in behaviour and speech (Aiono Fanaafi, 1992).

According to researchers such as Aiono Fanaafi (2000) and Meleisea (2000) the *aiga potopoto* (extended family) reflects ideal social organization of the *faamatai*, which is the *nuu* (local community) or the *atunuu* (whole country) in microcosm.

Collectivistic values in Samoan culture reflects the tenets of culture and tradition which emphasizes the '*matai lufilufi mealelei or tufa lelei'* that is the *matai* who distributes food and wealth with all the members of the *aigapotopoto* leaving little or nothing for self.

'*Soalaupule',* states Aiono Fanaafi (2000), refers to the inclusive decision-making process pertinent to the *faamatai*. This process insists on a consultative basis for making decisions, which includes and involves all the relevant people. Aiono Fanaafi points out that the Samoan culture firmly believes in the efficiency of the consultative approach in the making of long-term decisions.

As stated earlier, *faamatai* lies at the core of the Samoan sense of national identity. Because people outside the rural village take *matai* titles, the system extends to the government and administrative domains as well as to business and the profession and into emigrant Samoan communities (World Bank Report, 1998).

CAPTIONS

Tables

Legend
ASO = Australians, Samoans and Other Expatriates
AS   = Australians and Samoans
AO   = Australians and Other Expatriates
SO   = Samoans and Other Expatriates
A   = Australians
S   = Samoans
O   = Other Expatriates

				Question	
Grp	**Mean**	**Var**	**No.**	**Statement**	**Nationality**
A	4.88	0.11	1	Communication is vital	ASO
			2	A communication plan is necessary	S
			24	Open communication is required to provide management with some control	O
B	4.58	0.27	3	High levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are needed	ASO
			4	Culturally sensitive and appropriate communication is necessary	ASO
			5	Two way communication must be encouraged	AS
			6	Meetings help overcome communication barriers and increase performance level	S
			11	Project managers must have excellent communication skills	ASO
			13	Project proponents and stakeholders need to communicate throughout the project	AS
			14	Understanding and appreciating the different cultures involved in a project is vital	ASO
			15	Communication plans and strategies must be determined/established at the outset	S
			16	Communication plans must be reviewed regularly, and adjusted if need be	S
			27	Effective communication strategies are needed to ensure successful technology transfer	S
C	4.22	0.36	3	High levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are needed	O
			5	Two way communication must be encouraged	O
			9	Communication helps achieve organisational and national objectives	ASO
			10	Project type and duration has a bearing on communication strategy and structure	A
			13	Project proponents and stakeholders need to communicate throughout the project	O
			17	Appropriate communication media for specific purposes/audiences are necessary	AS
			18	Timing is vital for effective communication	AS
			19	Clear communication is needed to help clarify the roles of project stakeholders	ASO
			20	Effective communication strategies needed to demand openness and tolerance of cultural differences	ASO
			21	Effective communication strategies are needed to minimise potential disputes and misunderstandings	ASO
			22	Situations determine form and style of communication employed by Project Managers	AS
			23	Communication is necessary for endorsement by the stakeholders	AS
			25	Communication gives project stakeholders the opportunity to comment or cast a vote	ASO
			26	Understanding the language(s) and practices of local culture enhances communication	ASO
			27	Effective communication strategies are needed to ensure successful technology transfer	AO
D	3.81	0.60	2	A communication plan is necessary	AO
			6	Meetings help overcome communication barriers and increase performance level	AO
			7	Organisational culture and objectives dictate communication process	AS
			8	National culture determines acceptable means of communication	AS
			10	Project type and duration has a bearing on communication strategy and structure	SO
			12	Project funding influences tools and techniques of communication	AS
			15	Communication plans and strategies must be determined/established at the outset	AO
			16	Communication plans must be reviewed regularly, and adjusted if need be	AO
			17	Appropriate communication media for specific purposes/audiences are necessary	O
			22	Situations determine form and style of communication employed by Project Managers	O
			23	Communication is necessary for endorsement by the stakeholders	O
			24	Open communication is required to provide management with some control	AO
E	3.22	0.56	7	Organisational culture and objectives dictate communication process	O
			8	National culture determines acceptable means of communication	O
			12	Project funding influences tools and techniques of communication	O
			18	Timing is vital for effective communication	O

Table 1: Personal beliefs

				Question	
Grp	**Mean**	**Var**	**No.**	**Statement**	**Nationality**
			28	Effective communication	ASO
			30	High levels personal/intrapersonal skilled management	ASO
			31	Culturally sensitive and appropriate communication	ASO
			32	Two way communication	ASO
			33	Ongoing meetings between management/staff/stakeholders	ASO
			35	Awareness of national culture	ASO
			37	Project managers with excellent communication skills	ASO
			40	Ongoing communication between project proponents and stakeholders	A
A	3.72	0.69	41	Understanding and appreciation of cultural difference involved	AO
			46	Clear communication clarifying roles of stakeholders	ASO
			47	Effective communication reflecting openness and tolerance of cultural differences	AO
			48	Communication strategies to help minimise potential disputes and misunderstandings	ASO
			49	Flexibility of form and style of communication	AO
			50	Essential communication to stakeholders for endorsement	ASO
			51	Some control by management through open communication	ASO
			52	Clear communication giving stakeholders opportunity to comment/cast a vote	AO
			34	Well established organisational culture and objectives	ASO
			36	Clear communication of organisational and national objectives	ASO
			38	Project funding influencing tools and techniques of communication	ASO
			39	Project type and duration influences communication strategy and structure	ASO
			40	Ongoing communication between project proponents and stakeholders	SO
B	3.32	0.95	41	Understanding and appreciation of cultural difference involved	S
			42	Determination/establishment of communication plans and strategies at the outset	ASO
			44	Selective use of communication media for specific purposes/audiences	ASO
			45	Effective timeliness	ASO
			47	Effective communication reflecting openness and tolerance of cultural differences	S
			53	Understanding of language(s) and cultural practices of local community	ASO
			54	Effective communication strategies ensuring successful technology transfer	ASO
			29	A communication plan	ASO
C	2.94	1.21	43	Regular review and adjustments of communication plans	ASO
			49	Flexibility of form and style of communication	S
			52	Clear communication giving stakeholders opportunity to comment/cast a vote	S

Table 2: What happened in the projects in which you were involved?

				Question	
Grp	**Mean**	**Var**	**No.**	**Statement**	**Nationality**
			1	Political/community interference	SO
			3	Varying perception/interpretation	ASO
			4	Conflicting cultural values	S
			5	Lack of support and commitment	S
			6	Varying capacity and capability	ASO
			7	Unclear channels of communication	S
			8	Ineffective reporting system	SO
			9	Language difficulties	SO
			10	Interpersonal conflict	S
			12	Conflicting interest	S
			13	Resisting change	AS
			15	Lack necessary skills	ASO
A	2.89	0.90	16	Varying concept of time	ASO
			18	Limited resources	SO
			19	Poor planning	ASO
			20	Limited time	ASO
			21	Lack of motivation	ASO
			22	Information filtering	SO
			24	Poor listeners	SO
			26	Lack of confidence	SO
			27	Poor leadership	S
			29	Personal preferences	SO
			30	Poor negotiation skills	SO
			33	Unclear objectives	S
			35	Lack of trust	S
			1	Political/community interference	A
			2	Lack of/inappropriate technology	ASO
			4	Conflicting cultural values	AO
			5	Lack of support and commitment	AO
			7	Unclear channels of communication	AO
			8	Ineffective reporting system	A
			10	Interpersonal conflict	AO
			13	Resisting change	O
			17	Organisational mishaps	ASO
			18	Limited resources	A
			22	Information filtering	A
B	2.30	0.88	23	Religious issues	ASO
			24	Poor listeners	A
			25	Family commitments	ASO
			26	Lack of confidence	A
			27	Poor leadership	AO
			28	Concept of space	ASO
			29	Personal preferences	A
			30	Poor negotiation skills	A
			31	Conflicting business/industry ethics	ASO
			32	Stereotyping	SO
			33	Unclear objectives	AO
			34	Lack of concern	ASO
			9	Language difficulties	A
			11	Age difference	ASO
C	1.86	0.65	12	Conflicting interest	AO
			14	Gender issues	ASO
			32	Stereotyping	A
			35	Lack of trust	AO

Table 3: Communication Barriers: impact

				Question	
Grp	**Mean**	**Var**	**No.**	**Statement**	**Nationality**
A	3.99	0.61	2	Clear communication channels	ASO
			3	Delegating responsibilities	ASO
			4	Adjusting and adapting	ASO
			5	Team Meetings	ASO
			9	Consultative Approach	A
			12	Incremental changes	A
			15	Timely reports	ASO
			17	Problem solving	ASO
B	3.57	1.09	1	Comprehensive communication plan	SO
			6	Cultural initiation	ASO
			7	Regular reviewing and reality checks	ASO
			8	Training	ASO
			9	Consultative Approach	SO
			11	Continuous Improvement process	ASO
			14	Feedback processes	ASO
			16	Dispute resolution	ASO
C	3.01	1.11	1	Comprehensive communication plan	A
			12	Incremental changes	SO
			13	Resource levelling	ASO
D	2.05	1.55	10	Suggestion Box	SO
E	1.40	0.54	10	Suggestion Box	A

Table 4: Communication Strategies