

Original Paper

The Impact of Globalization on Samoa's Education System: Cultural Integration and Educational Transformation in Navigating Globalization's Impact on Samoa's Education System

Epenesa Esera¹ & Neal Niupulusu¹

¹ Epenesa Esera (Faculty of Education, National University of Samoa), Samoa

Received: October 27, 2023 Accepted: December 03, 2023 Online Published: December 19, 2023
doi:10.22158/wjer.v10n6p200 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjer.v10n6p200>

Abstract

This research delves into the intricate interplay between globalization and Samoa's education system, guided by renowned theoretical frameworks and enriched by the voices of 40 diverse participants. These responses from the participants were then analyzed using thematic approach, generating themes that were elaborated in the findings. The impact of globalization is multifaceted, transcending cultural integration, technological advancements, curriculum adaptation, pedagogical shifts, and stakeholder perceptions. Drawing on Appadurai's (1996), theory of disjuncture and difference, the study examines how Samoa balances the infusion of global cultures with the preservation of its indigenous values. It underscores the need for cultural sensitivity training for educators and digital inclusivity initiatives to ensure equitable access to educational resources. The integration of global technology and curriculum adjustments in Samoa echoes global trends while demanding periodic reviews rooted in local contexts. Pedagogical shifts towards collaborative learning and critical thinking align with UNESCO's (2017), global guidelines but must be tailored to honor the Pacific's socio-cultural fabric. Varied stakeholder perceptions reveal the complexity of globalization's impact, emphasizing the importance of ongoing dialogue and collaboration to create an education system that is both globally accustomed and locally relevant. In essence, Samoa's educational journey in the age of globalization is a testament to its adaptability and resilience, offering a blueprint for navigating the complex forces of global change while preserving its rich cultural heritage.

Keywords

globalization, local contexts, pedagogical shifts, digital inclusivity, global technology, educational

journey

1. Introduction

Globalization, as explained by Appadurai (1996) is not merely an economic phenomenon, but one that embedded nations into a complex web of interdependencies that spans across cultural, technological, and educational domains. For Samoa, globalization poses unique challenges and opportunities, particularly within the realm of education. The Samoan education system, deeply rooted in its indigenous culture and values, finds itself in the subtle space of leveraging global innovations while preserving its distinct identity. As the Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture's (2019) Samoa Education Sector Plan 2019-2024 outlines, there is a keen focus on enhancing educational standards, improving access, and ensuring relevance in the curriculum. The overarching question then becomes: How does a nation with a rich cultural tapestry like Samoa incorporate global educational paradigms without diluting its essence? It is good to embrace globalization but not to the expense of losing one's cultural beliefs. Becker (2009) highlights the specific challenges faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in adapting to educational technologies. While there is an undeniable promise in embracing these technologies, there's also the concern of creating an educational divide, not just between Samoa and the world but within Samoa itself. Adding to this discourse, Huffer and Qalo (2004) posit an intriguing perspective in the current development of Pacific thinking. They emphasize the potential of local, indigenous thought processes to contribute to the global theoretical landscape, hinting at a two-way street of knowledge exchange. Furthermore, Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) underscore the significance of bilingual education in empowering communities, suggesting that embracing changes doesn't necessarily mean letting go of traditional linguistic and cultural practices. With the backdrop of such nuanced discussions, this research embarks on a journey to understand, from a Samoan perspective, the ways in which changes brought about by globalization are being embraced in the country's educational landscape. Drawing from global theories and local narratives, this aims to paint a holistic picture of Samoa's educational transformation in the age of globalization.

2. Context

Nestled in the heart of the Pacific Ocean, Samoa's unique blend of cultural heritage and geographical characteristics set it apart. As a member of SIDS, Samoa is defined not just by its limited land area and vulnerability to natural events, but also by a rich tapestry of traditions. The fa'aSamoa is at the core of its identity, emphasizing the significance of community, respect for elders, and the role of chiefs (matai) in local governance. This intricate sociocultural framework has woven itself into every aspect of Samoan life, including its education system, which is a harmonious blend of traditional communal learning and formal structures introduced through missionary and colonial influences.

The advent of globalization, however, has brought about a tectonic shift in Samoa's educational dynamics. With the influx of global media, cutting-edge technologies, and modern pedagogical

methods, Samoa finds itself at the crossroads of preserving its indigenous values while adapting to global educational paradigms (Becker, 2009). This delicate balance between the local and global, traditional and contemporary, sets the stage for this research, aiming to delve into the nuanced impacts of globalization on Samoa's education system.

3. Problem Statement

In an increasingly interconnected world characterized by the globalization of information, cultures, and economies, the education systems of small island nations, such as Samoa, face a critical challenge. This challenge lies in the need to navigate the profound impact of globalization while simultaneously preserving and promoting their unique cultural heritage. As globalization influences teaching methodologies, curriculum content, and pedagogical approaches, the delicate balance between embracing global knowledge and safeguarding indigenous values becomes a pressing concern. This research aims to explore the multifaceted impact of globalization on Samoa's education system and offer insights into how to effectively embrace the changes brought forward by globalization while ensuring the integrity of Samoan cultural identity and values.

4. Research Questions

A sum of forty questionnaires were handed out to 9 educators, (enrolled in the HED587 course) 5 policymakers (2 reside in the village, 3 are parents of students), 18 students of a Year 8 class, and 8 parents of Year 7 students. The questions were as follows:

- 1) How has technological adoption affected teaching methods in your classroom/school?
- 2) How do you perceive the balance between global influences and local Samoan culture in the current curriculum?
- 3) What changes would you suggest to better align Samoa's education system with the opportunities and challenges of globalization while preserving its cultural identity?

5. Literature Review

5.1 Globalization and its Impact on Education

The intricate weave of globalization has led to the spread of ideas, culture, and innovations across borders. Ritzer and Dean (2015) describe globalization as a force that transcends boundaries and alters the foundational structures of societies. Educational systems, not exempt from this force, undergo significant transformation in the quest to align with international standards and approaches. McChesney (2001) further discusses the role of commercial media in this, suggesting that media, as a tool of globalization, plays an indispensable role in shaping educational content and methodologies.

5.2 Education in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Samoa, as a SIDS, struggles with unique challenges in its educational journey. Becker (2009) extensively discusses these challenges, from limited resources and geographical constraints to the need

for technology adaptation. Yet, SIDS often possess rich cultural tapestries and traditions that demand preservation even in the face of global changes.

5.3 Preservation of Cultural Identity in Education

Huffer and Qalo's (2004) insightful exploration suggests that Pacific nations, including Samoa, have theoretical contributions that can enrich global academic discourses. This indicates the invaluable asset of indigenous knowledge. Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) emphasize this through the lens of bilingual education, indicating that language and education go hand in hand in preserving culture while embracing changes worldwide.

5.4 The Samoan Context

The Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (2019) outlines an ambitious plan to elevate Samoa's education system. Its emphasis isn't solely on global alignment but ensuring that education remains relevant and accessible to all Samoans. UNESCO (2017) further adds to this by defining learning objectives that focus on sustainable development goals, indicating a global trend that Samoa can align with, given its unique geographical and cultural context.

6. Theoretical Framework

6.1 Cultural Globalization and the Theory of Disjuncture and Difference (Appadurai, 1996)

Appadurai's theory elucidates the interplay between global cultural flows and local settings. In the Samoan context, consider the rapid technological integration in classrooms, with tools like interactive e-learning platforms. While these platforms might have a global origin, their content and delivery need alignment with Samoan values and traditions. For instance, while a global digital platform may promote independent learning, in Samoa, where communal activities and shared experiences are integral, the same platform might be modified to foster group activities and community-based projects. Appadurai's theory, will explore the interplay between global educational trends and Samoan cultural distinctions. It will guide the analysis of how global educational tools and techniques undergo transformation when rooted in Samoa's unique cultural environment.

6.2 Pedagogical Adaptation in Small Island Developing States (Becker, 2009)

Samoa's geographical positioning presents unique educational challenges and opportunities. Becker's perspective becomes vital here. When global educational reforms advocate for online learning platforms, in Samoa, with its limited technological infrastructure but rich oral traditions, a hybrid model might evolve. This model may blend online platforms with traditional Samoan "fono" (council) style discussions, wherein elders impart knowledge to the young. Using Becker's insights, we will assess how Samoa's geographical and cultural context necessitates unique adaptations in global educational trends. This theory will guide our exploration of the resilience and innovativeness inherent in Samoa's educational adaptations.

6.3 Empowerment through Bilingualism and Cultural Preservation (Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005)

Samoa's commitment to bilingual education can be viewed as a powerful response to globalization. While English becomes essential for global communication and opportunities, Samoan remains vital for cultural preservation. This duality is evident in Samoan classrooms where lessons might be conducted in both languages. For instance, a history lesson about the ancient Samoan "malaga" (journeys) might first be narrated in Samoan to preserve its essence and later translated to English, empowering students to function bilingually. This theory will enable teachers and students to dissect the importance Samoa places on bilingual education in the face of globalization which emphasizes the empowerment and cultural continuity of such an approach, highlighting its significance in maintaining Samoa's unique identity amidst global influences.

Incorporating these Samoan contexts with the theoretical perspectives, the research paper will offer a comprehensive, culturally-rooted examination of the changes in Samoa's education system due to globalization.

7. Methodology

7.1 Qualitative Approach

The methodology applied in this research is founded upon a qualitative approach. Such an approach seeks to understand and interpret the subjective experiences of participants. Given that the impact of globalization on Samoa's education system is vast and varied, a qualitative method allows for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the changes.

7.2 Research Design (Creswell, 2013)

A thematic approach was chosen, focusing on identifying patterns or themes within the qualitative data collected from participants. Creswell advocates for this approach as it is robust and holistic, offering a comprehensive viewpoint that considers both the diversity of perspectives and overarching trends.

7.3 Data Collection

Participants were handed open-ended questionnaires, which prompted them to share personal experiences, perspectives, and observations regarding the changes in the education system in Samoa due to globalization. Open-ended questions, as Gay and Airasian (2000) discuss, allow participants to provide rich, detailed answers, giving depth to their experiences and viewpoints.

7.4 Data Analysis

After gathering the data, thematic analysis was employed, a method supported by Nardi (2018). This involved:

- Familiarizing oneself with the data by reading and re-reading participant responses.
- Generating initial codes from the data.
- Searching for themes by grouping codes together.
- Reviewing and refining themes.
- Defining and naming themes.

This method to analyze collected data provided a deeper understanding of the responses from participants. Going over the data several times helped to better grasp what participants shared and reading between the lines generated themes by grouping together common thoughts and ideas of the respondents.

7.5 Method of Data Collection

The research engaged 40 participants, ensuring a broad spectrum of insights. Participants were 9 educators, 5 policymakers, 18 students, and 8 parents, chosen purposefully to encapsulate diverse viewpoints on globalization's impacts on Samoa's education system.

7.6 Trustworthiness and Credibility

To ensure credibility, the research employed member checking. After the initial data analysis of the questionnaires were collected from the chosen 40 participants, findings were then disseminated and shared with the participants. This was to ensure that the chosen 40 participants' perspectives were accurately represented. It was problematic especially with the fact that participants had to be tracked down as some were further out in the rural areas of Samoa. This method, as Creswell (2013) suggests, ensures that the interpretations align closely with participants' realities.

8. Findings

These findings are based on the theme with the highest percentage that was acquired while performing the thematic approach analysis.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings

Themes	Brief Description	Nearest whole percentage
Cultural Integration	Integration of global cultures and values into Samoa's education system	25 %
Technological Advances	The influence of global technology on educational methodologies.	17 %
Curriculum Adaptation	Evolution and adaptation of the Samoan curriculum due to globalization	20 %
Pedagogical Shifts	Changes in teaching methods and strategies owing to global influences	23 %
Stakeholder perceptions	Varied views of educators, parents and students on these changes.	15

8.1 Cultural Integration

A dominant theme that emerged from the participants' responses was the integration of global cultures and values into Samoa's education system. One participant noted,

"Classrooms are no longer solely Samoan. We now witness a blend of global influences, from the books we read to the values we teach." (p. 13)

This aligns with Appadurai's (1996) perspective on "scapes," which suggests that global cultural flows have led to a complex interplay of traditions and modernities. Becker (2009) further affirms that SIDS, like Samoa, often experience a fusion of global and local cultural values in their education systems. For instance, an educator participant shared,

"We now celebrate international events, engage in discussions about global issues, and even incorporate content from other countries into our teaching materials. While we cherish our Samoan roots, it's evident that globalization has broadened our horizons." (p. 8)

8.2 Technological Advances

Many participants highlighted the profound impact of global technological advancements on Samoa's education. One participant mentioned,

"Our learning has become more digital. We use online resources, participate in virtual classes, and even complete digital assignments." (p. 38)

This finding echoes McChesney's (2001) discussions on the role of global media and technology in reshaping local settings. The Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture (2019) has also acknowledged this shift, emphasizing the integration of digital tools into curricula. For example, a student participant said,

"I recently collaborated on an online project with students from New Zealand. Such experiences were unheard of a decade ago in our schools." (p. 27)

8.3 Curriculum Adaptation

In light of 53% of the participants' responses, it becomes evident that globalization has not only influenced teaching methods but also the core curriculum as one educator participant voiced:

"Our syllabus now includes global events, international literature, and discussions on global citizenship". (p. 9)

Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) support this observation, emphasizing the shift in content and pedagogies due to global influences. Reflecting on this, a policymaker participant asserted:

"We've actively integrated global perspectives to ensure our students are not just Samoan citizens but global citizens. They are now exposed to a variety of international ideas, broadening their worldview." (p. 35)

8.4 Pedagogical Shifts

Teaching approaches have undergone significant transformation. One participant remarked:

"There's now more focus on collaborative learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving – skills needed for a globalized world."

Such pedagogical shifts align with UNESCO's (2017) guidelines that advocate for education fostering sustainable development and global citizenship. Huffer and Qalo (2004) further emphasize the importance of contextualizing these shifts within the Pacific's unique socio-cultural milieu. A poignant reflection was from another participant, an educator, who mentioned:

"While we incorporate global teaching strategies, it's vital for us to stay rooted in our Samoan traditions, ensuring our students benefit from both worlds." (p. 5)

8.5 Stakeholder Perceptions

Different stakeholders in the education system perceive the influence of globalization differently. 69% of the participants supported this theme. A parent participant voiced:

"While I appreciate the global exposure my child receives, I'm also concerned about the erosion of our native values." (p. 37)

Such sentiments resonate with Ritzer and Dean's (2015) exploration of globalization that while offering numerous advantages, this might also lead to potential cultural dilution. A student participant, however, had a different perspective:

"Being exposed to global cultures, ideas, and methods doesn't mean we forget our Samoan roots. It means we are better prepared for a global future." (p. 28)

9. Discussion

The influence of globalization on Samoa's education system, as revealed through the responses of the 40 participants and supported by existing literature is manifested in multiple dimensions. This section further explores these dimensions, comparing participants' insights with scholarly perspectives. The infusion of global cultures and values into Samoa's education system resonates with the evolving educational landscapes of many countries worldwide. As one participant fittingly pointed out, Samoan classrooms now incorporate a blend of global influences. This mirrors Appadurai's (1996) conceptualization of "scapes," where global cultural flows lead to dynamic interchanges between the traditional and the modern. The intertwining of cultures can be viewed as an opportunity for Samoa to leverage global knowledge while ensuring the preservation and promotion of its unique cultural heritage. As Becker (2009) notes, SIDS face a unique challenge and advantage in balancing global influences with local traditions. However, it is essential to tread carefully, ensuring that this integration does not overshadow or dilute native Samoan culture.

The digital transformation observed in Samoa's education, as highlighted by several participants, undeniably marks the impact of globalization. The increased reliance on online resources, digital tools, and virtual collaborations signifies a shift towards modern pedagogical methods. McChesney (2001) underscores the pivotal role of global media and technology in effecting these changes. However, while these technological advancements hold promise for enriched learning experiences, they also bring challenges. There is a risk of deepening inequalities if some students lack access to these digital tools. The Samoa Ministry of Education's (2019) emphasis on digital tool integration needs to be

complemented with strategies that ensure inclusivity and equity. Adjustments in Samoa's curriculum to accommodate global events, literature, and ideas can be seen as an effort to prepare students for a globalized world. Tuafuti and McCaffery (2005) emphasize the transformative power of global influences on content and pedagogies. It's imperative, though, to ensure that such content additions and revisions are made strategically, considering the socio-cultural and historical contexts of Samoa. The aim should be to create globally aware citizens who are firmly rooted in their Samoan heritage.

The shift towards pedagogies emphasizing collaborative learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving indicates alignment with global educational best practices. UNESCO's (2017) guidelines emphasize the importance of such skills in today's interconnected world. However, as Huffer and Qalo (2004) rightly point out, while embracing global pedagogical strategies, the uniqueness of the Pacific's socio-cultural fabric must not be overlooked. Education in Samoa should be a blend of the global and the local, making students global citizens without detaching them from their roots. Varied perceptions of educators, parents, and students on the globalization-driven changes in Samoa's education system are insightful. Concerns about potential cultural dilution, as expressed by some participants, echo Ritzer and Dean's (2015) critiques of globalization. However, the optimism shown by others, particularly students, signals a forward-looking mindset. It underscores the need for continuous dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders to shape an education system that's both globally attuned and locally relevant. Therefore, globalization, with its myriad influences, offers Samoa a surplus of opportunities and challenges. The key lies in strategically navigating these influences, ensuring that Samoa's education system benefits from global best practices while remaining anchored in its rich cultural and traditional roots.

10. Limitations

This study, while offering invaluable insights into the impact of globalization on Samoa's education system, is not without limitations. Firstly, the sample size of 40 participants, while significant, may not comprehensively represent the diverse spectrum of perspectives within Samoa's educational landscape. Given the varied stakeholders in the education system, including teachers, students, parents, policymakers, and administrators, the findings might not capture the entirety of experiences and viewpoints present in Samoa's educational context. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data presents a potential limitation. The qualitative nature of the study means that the data is rooted in participants' subjective experiences and perceptions. Consequently, the findings might be influenced by individual biases and interpretations. While efforts were made to ensure the credibility of the data through member checking, the subjectivity inherent in self-reported data remains a factor to consider.

11. Recommendations

To navigate the changing landscape of Samoa's education system in the era of globalization, several recommendations emerge. Firstly, there is a pressing need for cultural sensitivity training for educators.

This training would equip them with the skills and knowledge to strike a delicate balance between embracing global educational content and preserving Samoan cultural values within the curriculum. Additionally, Samoa should prioritize digital inclusivity initiatives to ensure that all students have equal access to digital tools and resources. This would mitigate the risk of deepening inequalities and promote equitable learning opportunities.

Furthermore, Samoa should consider periodic curriculum reviews that involve input from various stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, parents, and students. These reviews should aim to align the curriculum with global trends while staying firmly rooted in Samoan culture and history. Professional development opportunities for teachers, focusing on modern pedagogical methods such as collaborative learning, problem-solving and critical thinking, should also be promoted. Community engagement initiatives, cultural exchange programs, and policy frameworks that address the impact of globalization on education should be developed and strengthened. Lastly, parental education workshops can help parents better understand the changing educational landscape and actively participate in their children's education. Longitudinal research efforts should be encouraged to monitor the long-term effects of these recommendations on Samoa's education system.

12. Conclusion

The research journey into the impact of globalization on Samoa's education system has unveiled a dynamic interplay of influences, challenges, and opportunities. This exploration, guided by renowned theoretical frameworks and enriched by the voices of 40 participants, has acknowledged the significance of constructing a comprehensive understanding of Samoa's evolving educational landscape. The infusion of global cultures into Samoa's classrooms highlights the need for a delicate balance between embracing global educational content and safeguarding Samoan cultural values. Appadurai's theory of disjuncture and difference elucidates this interplay, emphasizing the importance of recognizing "scapes" where global and local cultures intersect. As Samoa integrates global technology and adapts its curriculum, it reflects the broader trend of educational transformation seen worldwide. However, it's imperative that this integration is complemented by digital inclusivity efforts and periodic curriculum reviews rooted in local contexts. Pedagogical shifts towards collaborative learning, problem-solving and critical thinking are pivotal in preparing Samoan students for a globalized world. UNESCO's guidelines for education align with this, emphasizing the need for skills that foster global citizenship. Yet, the uniqueness of the Pacific's socio-cultural fabric, as emphasized by Huffer & Qalo (2004), must not be overlooked. Stakeholder perceptions, from educators to parents and students, reflect the complexity of globalization's impact. These varied viewpoints underscore the necessity for ongoing dialogue and collaboration to shape an education system that's both globally attuned and locally relevant. Therefore, Samoa's journey in embracing the changes brought forward by globalization in its education system is a testament to the nation's adaptability and resilience. As Samoa continues to navigate this path, it stands at the cusp of not only preparing its students for global

challenges but also preserving its rich cultural heritage, ultimately contributing to a more interconnected and harmonious world.

References

- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Becker, J. (2009). Pedagogical and technological adaptation of education in Small Island Developing States. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 12(2), 50-60.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. Sage publications.
- Gay, L. R., & Airasian, P. (2000). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications*. Merrill.
- Huffer, E., & Qalo, R. (2004). Have we been thinking upside-down? The contemporary emergence of Pacific theoretical thought. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 16(1), 87-116.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.2004.0011>
- International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 8(5), 480-503.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050508668625>
- McChesney, R. W. (2001). Globalization and the commercial media. In M. G. Durham, & D. M. Kellner (Eds.), *Media and cultural studies: Keywords* (pp. 407-421). Blackwell.
- Nardi, P. M. (2018). *Doing survey research: A guide to quantitative methods*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315172231>
- Ritzer, G., & Dean, P. (2015). *Globalization: A basic text*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture. (2019). *Samoa Education Sector Plan 2019-2024*. MESC.
- Tuafuti, P., & McCaffery, J. (2005). Family and community empowerment through bilingual education.
- United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2017). *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives*. UNESCO Publishing.