Perceptions of Quality in Pre-school Education:

How do the teachers, parents and children in one pre-school in Samoa perceive the quality of the pre-school education they have?

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Abstract

This thesis used a case study approach to examine how three different stakeholder groups in early childhood education in Samoa perceived quality in early childhood education. A case study provides a picture of how a group of people interact with their environment at a particular time. This case study was located in one pre-school in Samoa and looked at how three groups (teachers, parents and children) in that pre-school perceived their pre-school in terms of the quality of the education that was offered there. It is a documented account of the factors these three groups in Samoa considered to be of value when they assessed the quality of the pre-school they participated in.

A pilot study was used to trial questionnaires and adapt a methodology appropriate to the Samoan community. The research was then undertaken in another Samoan pre-school. Observations were carried out in the study pre-school followed by interviews and questionnaires for the three stakeholder groups. The beliefs these three groups had regarding their perception of quality in pre-school education in Samoa were explored in their own right. Beliefs about what makes a quality pre-school and the factors that contribute to a high quality pre-school were examined. The Samoan pre-school was assessed in terms of how the participants within it view quality pre-school education rather than by imposing some externally defined factors that contribute to a high quality pre-school in a more western society. This was also important when considering the need for development or modification of teacher education programmes for early childhood teachers in Samoa.

This study was a cross-cultural study in that the researcher was from a different cultural background to the stakeholders in the pre-school. The implications of having a researcher from a different background is discussed as part of the significant findings of this study. The teachers, parents and children in this study perceived their pre-school to be high quality because it fulfilled their major expectation, that of preparation for school. While this may not be regarded in a western society as being a significant factor in determining quality it was an important factor within this local community and must be valued in this respect. An unexpected outcome of this study for both the pilot group and the study group teachers was the increased level of awareness of professional development.

Preface

In mid 1998 my husband was offered a job working with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme based in Apia so the family packed up and went to live in Samoa for three years. This provided me with an opportunity to take time out from a hectic New Zealand life style and extend my interest in education. A teaching job in Samoa in a year one and two class combined with Master's papers in Education led me to think more about how education was perceived in different ways by different groups both within a society and between societies. The school that I was teaching in was not suitable for the kind of study I had in mind due to the exclusive nature of the school and the mixed cultural nature of the school population, expatriates from a range of countries, wealthy Samoan families and those who struggled to pay fees in order to give their child the best possible chance.

It was at this school that a colleague of mine suggested that looking at a pre-school in Samoa might present a better opportunity to look at the differences in perception between various stakeholder groups on the quality of the education received in the pre-school. It was a better opportunity than the primary school I was teaching in because the people involved in the Samoan pre-school were all from a similar cultural background and thus there was less chance of the results from this study being influenced by cultural variability. My colleague became a senior lecturer in pre-school education at the National University of Samoa and she was later to become a liaison between the pre-school and myself should the occasion arise.

My background is in the primary education field and while this study was based in a pre-school the major focus of the study was how different groups perceived the quality of the education they were offered or were offering. My training is in primary education and the majority of my teaching experience has been with children under eight years old. It is possible that the data that I gathered was influenced by my background in primary education and a pre-school trained teacher might have focused on different aspects of the study pre-school. Although I do not have specific experience in a pre-school, my experiences in teaching were not too dissimilar from those of the head teacher at the study pre-school. This study did not attempt to assess the quality of the pre-school programme or make judgements on how well the pre-school was operating in relation to external standards. It looked at how the quality of the programme was viewed by three important stake-holder groups in the Samoan study pre-school, and what constituted a good quality pre-school in their opinion.

Acknowledgements

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the participation of the teachers, parents and children at both the pre-schools involved in this study. Their enthusiastic participation and their willingness to include me in the daily life of the pre-school contributed enormously to the success of the study. Without their commitment and openness this study would not have been so successful. The teachers especially took me into their confidence and included me within the "pre-school family" and I thank them particularly for their trust in me.

Thank you to my supervisors, Barbara Jordan and Lesieli McIntyre. It cannot have been easy supervising a student in Samoa. Your support when the email was down and your continual encouragement were valued. Your willingness to make yourselves available when I managed to get down from Samoa, sometimes on short notice was greatly appreciated. In spite of the distance I never felt that I was isolated due to your ability to communicate promptly.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 01/22.

Finally, thank you to my family, my husband Greg for his unfailing faith in my ability to complete this thesis and for his useful comments on my drafts, to Nikki and Mark for putting up with their mother on the computer all the time, and to my parents for the start they gave me in learning to enjoy learning.

Figure 1. The study pre-school.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Quality is in the eye of the beholder. This study looked at how three different pre-school stakeholder groups perceived their pre-school in terms of its quality and the programme it offered. The issue of quality of a pre-school institution is probably a motivating factor in the popularity and consequent success of the pre-school. The study site was located within central Apia in Samoa and was based on a case study approach to research. How the children, teachers and parents perceived the quality of the pre-school was central to this study. The value placed on these important quality issues by these stakeholders was explored and assessed in the light of current research on quality issues.

An important consideration to keep in mind in this study is that it was cross-cultural in that the researcher was from New Zealand and the study took place in Samoa. The significance of any differences between the two cultures is discussed later in the methodology section (Chapter 4), along with the particular ethical concerns related to this work and how they were accommodated. The importance of promoting and developing a culturally sensitive methodology was a central feature of this research. Learning to recognise the importance of upholding the cultural values of the Samoan society and viewing the research data in this light was critical. All too often in cross-cultural research the results are interpreted from a different cultural perspective to that of the study group which lends a bias to the type of information gathered (Smith, 1999). As far as possible within this study the information gathered has been reported in the light of the cultural values of the Samoan society and not judged by Western values. Notwithstanding this, where some Western bias was perceived to have possibly infiltrated methods and interpretation of results, then this possibility has been exposed and discussed wherever possible.

The ethical implications of this study were also carefully considered and went through the full process of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC). This is more fully discussed in Chapter 4. The different cultural perspectives showed up very clearly during this process. The study was carried out with full ethical consideration of all the relevant issues and yet the ethical considerations were always an issue with the

study group, who did not accept or see the need for the rigorous examination of ethical issues. This caused some degree of confusion when the study was unable to begin until consent had been given by MUHEC and yet the participants were keen and eager to begin imparting information and sharing their perspectives. The high degree of ethical considerations in research were not yet part of the Samoan way in general and it was not easy to walk between the requirements of MUHEC on one hand and the expectations and involvement of the pre-school participants on the other. The comment made by the pre-school Principal "You are one of us now, you don't need to ask for permission" in essence summed up the attitude of the participants. This degree of openness and trust made it doubly essential to ensure that all the ethical considerations were fully complied with in spite of not being regarded as so important by this community at the present time.

In terms of a historical perspective on quality there is little doubt in the view that the organisation and the management of various human activities have influenced the practice of reflecting and acting on that activity (Zinchenko, 1995). In particular this applies to cross-cultural studies. While the nature of quality is heavily researched within Western frameworks, the principles and practices that have arisen from this do not necessarily apply within a different cultural framework with differing methods of organisation, management and philosophy. Thus perspectives of quality need to be evaluated within the cultural organisation that surrounds them and produces them. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) reinforce the importance of recognising the quality of the pre-school in relation to the environment that it has developed and evolved in. This post-modern approach to viewing quality in early childhood allows for each early childhood institution to be valued in its own terms.

The underlying philosophy of the organisation needs to be established in order to provide a measure against which quality can be assessed and viewed. This study has met this challenge of evaluating and looking at quality in a pre-school in a non-western setting. The quality of the pre-school was looked at in terms of what was perceived to be quality in Samoa and not in terms of what is regarded as quality pre-school education in a New Zealand situation. This is further discussed in Chapter 2, which provides an outline of the development of pre-schools in Samoa and sets the scene for the study.

Chapter 2 looks also at the general perspectives of quality that have arisen out of research and the importance of considering the issues arising out of cross-cultural studies. The indicators of quality as determined by research are also considered.

Chapter 3 looks generally at three different perspectives of quality. These perspectives arise from three major stakeholder groups in the pre-school organisation: the teachers, the children and the parents. Some recent literature relating to the perceptions of these groups is discussed.

The beginning of the methodology section, Chapter 4, contains a brief look at the importance of adapting research methods to suit the group that is under study. For this study it looks at how to adapt case study methodology, the observations, the interviews and the questionnaires, to be more culturally appropriate and fit within the bounds of fa'aSamoa – the Samoan way. The rest of Chapter 4 deals with the details of the research and the issues that arose in the selection of the participants and the participating pre-school. A discussion on the pilot study is also included.

Chapter 5 is a report of the results obtained from the observations, interviews and questionnaires. The results obtained from each group are separated and analysed. This chapter includes a report on an hour-long observation session of a typical pre-school session to help put the reader into the pre-school and allow for a deeper understanding of the operation of the pre-school and how it was viewed.

The results are discussed in Chapter 6. Perceptions of quality and quality indicators found by this study are related back to the perceptions of quality that are discussed in the literature on quality in pre-schools. These indicators were looked at in terms of their relevance and value to the pre-school that was studied. They were not assessed in the light of any other indicators of quality that have been developed from another cultural perspective. The differences between the perceptions are discussed but not judged or evaluated.

The conclusion, Chapter 7, looks at the major findings from this study and the implications and directions that could be followed in further research into perceptions of quality in pre-schools in different cultures and societies. The need for a researcher to be fully aware of his/her own cultural perceptions when undertaking a cross-cultural study is reinforced again. The raising of awareness of factors contributing towards a quality

pre-school in the study pre-school has implications for the professional development and training of pre-school teachers in Samoa. These are discussed further in this chapter as well as some of the limitations of this particular study.

Chapter 2

Quality in pre-school education and sociocultural implications of cross-cultural research

This chapter is broken into four sections. The first section deals with how quality can be defined in terms of pre-school education and the particular aspects of quality that are considered to be important and why in this research study. The second part of the chapter is a discussion on how these aspects of quality can be integrated into a cross-cultural research study. This section also looks at how the beliefs and values of a particular community need to be incorporated into the research and not separated from the study. Following this is a discussion on the sociocultural aspects of research in a cross-cultural study. The final section of this chapter outlines the evolution of the education system in Samoa that led to the development of the pre-schools. The review is included in this chapter to provide a rationale for the development of the methodology used in this study.

What is quality and how may it be defined and by whom?

Ask twenty or thirty teachers their views on quality and how it is evaluated and you will probably get twenty or thirty different responses. Ask parents and you will get similarly divergent views, and likewise with the children.

Quality in education means different things to different people depending on their involvement in the process of education (Moss & Pence, 1994). The important aspect of defining quality is not in the definition itself but the process of getting there (Pascal, 1992; Penn, 1994). This was evident in this study as reported in Chapter 7 when the Head Teacher of the pre-school commented on how being involved in the study made them more aware of what they were doing and why they were doing it. This beginning to think about what they were doing was an important initial step in the process of self-reflection for these pre-school teachers. They believed that they offered a quality programme in pre-school education but they had not thought about what constituted a quality programme.

The difficulty with an attempt to define the nature of quality is that it is not a fixed static concept but rather in its very nature a flexible, changing and evolving concept (Bacchus, Aziz, Ahmad, Bakar & Rodwell, 1991). Good quality is multi-dimensional and has a

range of attributes with different emphasis placed on each according to the group considering the concept. Another thing to bear in mind when defining quality is that because it is a flexible and changing concept, it needs to be constantly reassessed in terms of changing environments and developing practices. The assumption that a particular view of quality is the right one and best for everyone also needs to be carefully monitored, as quality is a relative concept and based on a particular set of values and beliefs that may only be appropriate for the particular community in which they were developed rather than to all communities (Woodhead, 1998). Woodhead reinforced the belief that assumptions about quality for one part of the world are not necessarily appropriate in another part of the world or for a different community within a society. All these factors have to be kept in mind when reflecting on quality in the early childhood setting. Even basic concepts such as the way we count or practice non-verbal communication can differ between communities, and researchers always need to be aware of these very basic conceptual differences (Metge & Kinloch, 1978).

Farquhar (1990) discussed two different approaches to the measurement or assessment of quality in pre-schools. One method of looking at quality was an evaluative view which measured the pre-school in terms of how well it meets its goals and its daily work. In this case quality was defined in relation to the features or characteristics of the pre-school. These particular features were determined by researchers to be indicators of quality that have a demonstrated relationship to positive outcomes for the children and the quality of the pre-school. For example, if the parents were happy with the service provided by the pre-school they were more likely to regard it as a quality pre-school. A good service was one that people have confidence in. Therefore an indicator of quality could be whether or not the parents were satisfied with the service their child was receiving. This does not indicate that the pre-school was high quality, but merely that it was perceived by the parents as such. The second approach to looking at quality was to look at a particular centre and its defining characteristics. This was a more analytic and holistic approach according to Farquhar and each centre defined its own quality through its practices, operation and unique attributes. This was the approach that was used in this study, and yet, as reported by the Head Teacher of the study pre-school (Chapter 7), it was not until the teachers at the pre-school were asked to think about what they did and how they perceived their practice that they began to think more about the reasons for what they did and the effect of their programmes on the children's education.

There is a reasonably well-documented set of criteria to indicate quality in a pre-school that is generally agreed on by most researchers. However recent writing on quality in pre-schools (Moss, Dahlberg & Pence, 2000) would suggest that the trend is moving away from the specification of quality indicators to the actual process of determining the parameters of quality. It is recognised as more important to participate in the process rather than listing quality attributes. The subjective nature of quality allows for the presentation of multiple perspectives and outcomes. Quality then becomes a flexible process that allows for different views and perspectives (Farquhar, 1993; Moss & Pence, 1994.) and the recognition of different cultural aspects to the quality picture. Determining quality in a pre-school becomes a continuous process of coming to terms with and accommodating the requirements of different groups. In many instances, however, quality is still regarded as a fixed issue; if certain external requirements or attributes of a high quality pre-school are reached, then the quality of the pre-school can be determined in relation to these. It is not easy for some institutions to accept the premise that quality is not an incontrovertible truth.

Quality according to Moss and Pence (1994) is a construction of ideas based on the values and beliefs of different stakeholders within the early childhood sector. This in fact makes it impossible to arrive at a universally acceptable definition of quality. It is important to go beyond a definition of quality to a more meaningful process that considers the viewpoints of all rather than that which is externally defined. The specification of what is meant and by whom becomes an important aspect of an expression of quality in a pre-school. This post-modern perception of quality is an attempt to come to terms with the nature of knowledge. Knowledge is socially constructed and value laden. The value of knowledge then lies within the process of acquiring it and what is determined to be important by a particular interest group. In this way the processes and the values and attitudes of the interested stakeholders in that community reflect the quality of a particular pre-school centre. This was of particular importance to this study, as the pre-school was located within Samoa and the perceptions and attitudes of that community were different to those of a pre-school located in New Zealand or anywhere else. Perceptions of quality arise in relation to the views of the people involved in the pre-school, how they construct a concept of quality together. Quality matters, but it is a process rather than an end, it is not static. The important thing to know is where you are going in regard to a quality pre-school

education and how you are going to get there rather than fixing on a specific goal (Edwards, 2000). The process that this pre-school in Samoa went through to determine the quality of the programme that they offered is elaborated on in Chapter 6 of this study.

Many researchers in the past have tended to assess the quality of the pre-school by looking at the degree of compliance to previously determined regulations or measuring the pre-school against set criteria. Ridley, McWilliam and Oates (2000) provided an alternative view of quality as they regarded the set criteria for quality as only relevant in terms of how those criteria affected the children. The quality of the programme offered was relevant in terms of its effect on children's daily experiences. Class size was relevant in terms of how it affected the programme delivered. These researchers believed that this approach was broader than the more traditional approaches to measuring quality because it allowed for the assessment of the quality of the care as well as measuring the quality of the environment. This particular approach to the determination of quality was useful for this study in that there are no set criteria against which to measure quality in pre-school programmes in Samoa. Therefore the criteria used by the parents and the teachers in the study group to judge quality can be used as a measure to determine the quality of the pre-school.

Pugh (1996) collected together a series of articles relating to quality in early years education. She has identified a series of indicators of quality, plus three key issues in the pursuit of quality. Quality is a process you move through in order to achieve certain goals. The key issues, as she perceived them, focus on the provision of an appropriate curriculum, the necessity of having well-trained staff and the development of good relationships between the parents and the staff. Each of these indicators of a good quality pre-school programme was defined in terms of the values and aspirations of the society in which they were developed. These factors that were indicators of quality programmes for Pugh are not universal for everyone. In Samoa, for example, the curriculum that was deemed appropriate for pre-schools was not necessarily the same as the appropriate curriculum for England and so on. Each society needs to determine for itself what an appropriate curriculum is and decide on the significance of having well trained staff. For her it was of primary importance that children wherever they are from have access to high quality learning experiences that are in line with their individual

needs and circumstances. These goals are possibly universal, but cultural differences mean that the definition of high quality learning experiences that develop children's individual needs is different for each group of people. In other words, the key issues that she has identified as important in the provision of a high quality pre-school education must be viewed from within the context in which they were developed and need to be carefully considered before they are applied to another cultural context.

The importance of monitoring pre-schools to ensure the provision of high quality programmes for children was also a focus of a Ministry of Education report in New Zealand (Hurst & Smith, 1995). The purpose of the report was to examine the procedures used to monitor quality in early childhood centres in New Zealand. An aspect of the report was the amount of time spent by Education Review Office staff in assessing the measurable attributes of quality, the structural features rather than looking at the process of interaction between staff and children and the components of the programme which are held to be more important facets of quality in research literature (Farquhar, 1994; Pugh, 1996.). In Samoa this kind of report has been difficult to incorporate into the pre-school system. For example, a private conversation with the Chairperson of the Samoan Council for Early Childhood Education (April 2001) suggested that the Samoan Government had in fact tried to implement the Health and Safety Guidelines for New Zealand Pre-schools directly to the Samoan situation but found it too difficult as so many of the guidelines were only applicable to New Zealand. The Health and Safety Guidelines for New Zealand pre-schools were then used only as a framework and specific criteria were developed or adapted that fitted with the circumstances of pre-schools in Samoa.

The most frequently used methods of evaluating quality use a top-down approach similar to the one above. These identify the quality of the programme by measuring standards and requirements that reflect observable and enforceable measures (Katz, 1993). However, these methods fail to reflect the nature of the interactions between the teachers, children and parents and their views on quality that are difficult to quantify. The importance of the quality of the observed relationships combined with the wider views of the outside community also affects the overall quality of the centre. Katz maintained that the importance of taking a wider view of quality as opposed to an easily

measurable structural view presented a fuller picture of the quality story of the particular pre-school.

Smith (1997) in her presentation to a seminar on quality contexts for children's development also looked at the structural aspects of quality in early childhood education but in addition she focused more on the nature of interactions between the teachers and the children. This aspect of quality was less measurable and yet it provided in her view a more dynamic view of quality. This also presented a picture of quality in a pre-school that was less structured and more in line with the needs of the child. She believed that if children were to learn about their world they must have the opportunities to be involved in shared experiences with adults as well as with their peers in order to develop fully. While she also considered the indicators of quality like group size, staff training and education, salaries and working conditions plus other indicators, these were not part of her study on the depth of the interactions between the children and staff. She believed that not all views on quality are equally valid and, in fact, accepting a parents' view that a centre was of high quality may be misleading, a view that was also supported by Barraclough and Smith (1995). The latter found that although parents reported on the high quality nature of the pre-school their child attended, the pre-school did not in fact rate very highly on a scale of quality factors such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale. This study will be discussed in further detail in the section on parental views of quality in Chapter 3.

An often overlooked feature of attempting to assess the quality of a particular programme or pre-school is the effect that assessment has on the pre-school itself and the stakeholders involved in it (Crooks, 1993). While Crooks looked particularly at assessment of individuals, the principles he outlined can equally well be used in monitoring the quality of early childhood centres (Hurst & Smith, 1995). His primary focus in assessment was the importance of looking for self-assessment and focusing on the valuable aspects of quality rather than listing the more measurable attributes of quality. The point of quality assurance was also to have a positive and motivating effect on the centre and contribute to the co-operative nature of the interactions within. Looking at aspects of quality and monitoring of quality that leads to motivation for positive change was in itself a positive feature of quality. Crooks' approach presupposed that teachers had a certain level of training and qualifications that gave

them a framework within which to self-assess. The pre-school teachers in this pre-school in Samoa had a range of training and qualification levels but it was not until they were asked to think about their practice that this process of self-reflection became useful. I will discuss this more fully in Chapter 6.

The focus of my study in Samoa was to look at how three different groups in the early childhood sector regarded quality. The study looked at what these teachers, parents and children believed were the important aspects of quality in regard to pre-school education. Farquhar (1989a) suggested that looking at peoples' values and beliefs was a valid way of establishing what factors and combinations of factors could be used to attempt to determine the quality of an individual centre.

Farquhar (1991) followed this earlier work with a report to the Ministry of Education that looked at factors contributing to the quality picture. She found that, in general, rating the importance of various programme goals for both parents and staff was linked to their definitions of the quality of the pre-school centre. The most important goals for parents and staff were related to the children's health, safety and socialisation. These goals included specifics that were difficult to measure, such as a warm and friendly staff, staff that demonstrated to children that they cared and provided for them in a warm and loving manner. Other factors considered to be important by all groups were the provision of developmentally appropriate activities and a welcoming environment for parents and families. There were some differences between staff views on quality and those of parents. These related mainly to the focus placed by the pre-school on child development and management and staffing. While staff education and training was shown through research to be a factor in the provision of good quality early childhood programmes (Smith, 1996a) this was not necessarily a critical issue for the staff of a pre-school centre (Farquhar, 1991). The two main reasons why a particular centre was chosen by the parents in this study in Samoa were because it was convenient and the parents liked what they saw. Factors for parents in the identification of a high quality centre relate to their child's happiness and some elements of the programme. New Zealand parents would have a similar list of reasons for choosing a pre-school for their child.

This approach outlined by Farquhar was used in my study. By looking at the beliefs, values and attitudes of the teachers and parents towards a specific early childhood

centre and complementing those beliefs with interviews with children and direct observations of practice and participation, a picture of the pre-school has been constructed. This present study attempted to present a perspective on quality from three different stakeholder views, the teachers, the parents and the children. The pre-school used was set in Samoa, and the attitudes and values demonstrated were particular to this pre-school in this particular environment at this time.

Cross-cultural research perspectives

"Knowledge was considered a possession that distinguished the superior from the inferior" is a statement from an article by Tanielu (p. 48, 1997). From a western perspective on education this statement would seem to be alien to many major educational philosophies and yet it was, according to Tanielu, an underlying belief about education commonly held in Samoa. Tanielu grew up in a village in Samoa in the 1950s and she writes from her own unique perspective of the education system that she experienced there. Smith (1999) also dealt with the idea of knowledge as power but she portrays it as a relic of old colonial attitudes. This obvious difference in perceptions of knowledge between a Western view and the Samoan view emphasises the importance in any form of cross-cultural research of being aware of the beliefs and values that are important to the particular society under review. The development of pre-school education in Samoa and the beliefs and values that underpin it are discussed further in this chapter.

In the past, research on quality in pre-school education has been linked to European traditions and values. The researchers have been predominantly of European origin and have studied across cultures from their own perspectives in the view that their values and attitudes have a superior intrinsic advantage over any other (Smith, 1999). This superior position has coloured many research reports and has presented an inaccurate perception of what was happening. The judgement of another culture or society within the parameters of one's own cultural values limits the effectiveness of the research and places an interpretation on any results that may not in fact represent a true picture of the events. It is perhaps impossible for any researcher from a different culture to that of the study group or event or society to present a completely impartial account of what happens. Smith (1999) was critical of research projects that do not acknowledge the validity of indigenous knowledge and seek to impose alien values on different

communities. She emphasised the significance and value of different perspectives and sought to discover the reason behind the evolution of such ideas.

Smith (1999) aimed her book predominantly at researchers who are working in or alongside a community that has identified itself as indigenous. She identified a number of issues that are of concern for the researcher in terms of ethical, cultural, political and personal issues that need to be considered as the research is undertaken. The notion of the researcher as both an outsider in the community to be studied and an insider within the research community can on occasion be difficult to resolve and must be considered. Although the Samoan people cannot be regarded in the same light as an indigenous community situated within another larger community, many of the principles applied to indigenous research are relevant in regard to the cross-cultural nature of this particular study. Throughout this study it is important to be aware of the different cultural background of the researcher and the community under study and to acknowledge the importance of recognising the limitations this places on the research. Limitations here are in the sense that a study of this kind was not free from cultural bias but as far as possible these limitations are recognised and accounted for.

There is no one particular approach to cross-cultural research, and each situation studied needs to be looked at in its own right with its own set of attitudes and perspectives. Each situation is special in its own right as well as in terms of a more complete picture. Clearly then there is an obligation on a researcher, particularly one from a different social, educational and cultural background, to have a commitment towards developing a method of working within that community that fits within the cultural parameters of that community.

It is difficult coming from outside a community to carry out research on that community. In Samoa, for example, the perception was of the researcher as an expert, a highly experienced teacher, and the local pre-school teachers listened carefully to every comment. It took a considerable period of time to break down these perceptions and many hours of socialisation before the teachers realised that they in fact were the experts in their area and that it was their ideas and perceptions of quality that were valued in this case and not those of the researcher. This acceptance of their importance to the study became evident as the teachers increasingly shared their ideas with me without fear of being judged. The amount of information that the teachers divulged and

the pleasure and value they received from the written report of their own information is reported in Chapter 7. This acceptance of different attitudes without one perspective valued more than the others was an important step in commencing research in Samoa.

Tupuola (1993) in commencing her research in Samoa looked at ways of reducing the impact of palagi (White or Western) frameworks of research and developing a methodology that was more appropriate to fa'aSamoa (the Samoan way) values. Along with any Western society the Samoan society is diverse and complex, and Tupuola invited other Samoan women to help her in her exploration of the concept of adolescence. She did not extract a random sample of the population but rather invited people to assist her along with their friends. This snowballing effect of participation ensured that the women who participated were interested in sharing their perceptions and willing to discuss their ideas. She used a format that allowed participants time to think about their ideas before sharing their views together. The participants were all given a series of quotations and text for them to reflect on and then share their ideas and perceptions on the research theme. They were then consulted on the methodology and the most appropriate ways of gathering information before, during and after the research. She claimed that this form of participation and dialogue was very much a part of the fa'aSamoa way and should not be labelled in western terminology such as collaboration, consensus or self-reflexivity. The methodology outlined gave priority to the communication style prevalent in Samoa and placed value on the Samoan way of doing things.

Particular care needs to be taken in research of this kind that the research is not just beneficial to the researcher but also has value to those being researched (Lather, 1988). In a situation such as this research study with a woman interviewing other women, extreme care needed to be taken to ensure one set of values was not imposed on the other group. This was a two-way interactive process that involved serious personal disclosures on both sides as part of the build-up of trust and confidence in each other. The process of developing this kind of relationship between the researcher and the researched was applied in this research on perspectives on quality in pre-school education and it led to a great sense of collegiality between the teachers in the study and the researcher. Caution still needed to be applied, in that there needed to be a constant awareness of the danger of imposing the researcher's values on the community being

studied (Lather, 1988) as it was all too easy to become too involved and tied up with the immediate details of the research and lose sight of the ultimate objectives of the research study.

Care taken with methodology appropriate to the Samoan way was also emphasised with research by Sauvao (in Podmore, Sauvao & Mapa, 2000). It was important that links were made between national organisations and the pre-school to validate the importance of the research. Consistent also with the work of Tupuola (1993), respect and consensus were important considerations for the researchers. The research approach had to fit in with the nature of the community being researched. Ample opportunities were provided by Sauvao to ensure full feedback of information and ensure that all the information was gathered in a culturally appropriate way.

The necessity of gathering information in a culturally sensitive way brings into question the appropriateness of using externally developed methods of gathering or rating quality such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale that has been developed and widely used in America (Harms & Clifford, 1983). Farquhar (1989b) sees the main use of this scale as a self-study in-service tool rather than as a measure of quality and in fact she has indicated that it has limited use in New Zealand and in cultures other than white middle-class America. The criteria for quality and the language uses are particular to the section of America within which it was developed. To use a scale like this one in a Samoan situation would not present an accurate view of quality as it does not take local factors into consideration. There is no value in using a scale that measures compliance to regulations when in fact there are no over-riding regulations controlling the early childhood sector in Samoa. A similar situation would apply in attempting to use any other early childhood rating scale unless it was developed specifically for use in Samoa taking into account the values and attitudes that were important to this society.

We do not see our own culture, as it is all around us. In order to more successfully attempt cross-cultural research, a researcher must be able to look at his/her own culture and recognise the values and attitudes he/she possesses that are embedded within his/her own life. The identification and recognition of one's own values develops a realisation that not everybody has the same way of doing things and fosters recognition that it is okay to have a different perspective on life. How a child develops in life is heavily influenced by the cultural mores of his/her society (Ramsey, 1998). These cultural

values govern how the child eats and sleeps, acts around adults, how he/she speaks and behaves. For example, in a more Westernised society the child is encouraged to sleep alone in their own bed, while in Samoa no child sleeps alone, let alone lies crying himself or herself to sleep; it simply does not happen. Samoan children are taught to respect adults and wait until they are spoken to and yet in New Zealand children are encouraged to speak out their ideas and views and be more spontaneous. Within some pre-schools in New Zealand, the Samoan child could be considered to be shy and withdrawn and yet within their own environment they would be regarded as polite and respectful of their elders (Fleer, 2001).

Differences in cultural practices and beliefs are important. It is a more Western perception that children learn by doing, young children need to be active and learn through active exploration. However in Samoa, young children are expected to sit still, listen and behave quietly for long periods of time either at village meetings or church activities and observe the activities. This observation tends to be regarded as a passive form of learning from a Western perspective and yet it is a valid form of learning within the Samoan society (Fleer, 2001).

It is important to understand the basic ideas behind one's own upbringing and how our background and position influence our own practices and teaching. Bronfenbrenner (1986) developed a tool for looking at how the child's environment shapes their experiences and prospects.

Ramsey (1998) advocated a similar way to look at different cultural occurrences from an outsider's perception. He believed that it was important to recognise that each person has his/her own set of perceptions and once these are recognised it is easier for that person to be able to step out of his/her own cultural traditions and see beyond personal limitations to daily experiences and values of others. It was the recognition and acceptance of diversity that was critical within this study on a Samoan pre-school.

The necessity of being sensitive to the viewpoints of others was also a feature of cross-cultural research (Brislin, 1979; Finley, 1979). This involved being able to communicate effectively with others and be supportive of different viewpoints. Both these authors emphasised the importance of developing an empathetic relationship with the hosts based on mutual trust and understanding. Consultation with the group on the

best ways to interview people and the appropriateness of questions developed a stronger relationship between the researcher and the target group. This relationship of trust and mutual consultation tended to lead to more open and honest feedback that has potential benefits for the quality of the data gathered.

Part of looking at the perspectives on quality as held by children, parents and teachers in Samoa involved looking at the microsystem and the mesosystem as described by Bronfenbrenner (1986). The microsystem in this case looked at the children, teachers and parents while the mesosystem looked at how these factors related to each other and influenced their perceptions on quality. The pre-school was situated within the Samoan society and the cultural expectations of this society and its institutions affected the attitudes and values of the participants. While the influence of the society and its institutions on the participants was important, this was not the major focus of this study. This was a study about how people perceived the quality of the pre-school they were involved in and not specifically about how their perceptions were influenced by outside factors. This study did not look further to the exosystem or the macrosystem that look more widely at the effect of institutions on the child and the cultural and social values that impact on their development. Using this scaffolding framework – that of the microsystem and mesosystem – allowed a better grasp of how each stakeholder's perception of quality fits within an overall view of perceptions of quality. My study was about how the groups involved in the pre-school perceived a quality programme.

Sociocultural perspectives in cross-cultural research

The research was undertaken within a case study framework with a sociocultural perspective. The study itself dealt with issues related to perceptions of quality within a pre-school in Samoa, thus it was based on the actions and thoughts of the participants and then these were in turn related to perceptions of quality in pre-school education that were based on other research projects. It was what actually was seen to happen and what was stated that were the critical features that determined the perception of quality rather than measuring what happened in relation to external reports on quality. This in fact then assumed that the actions of the participants provided the framework for the interpretation of quality and everything else followed from this (Wertsch, 1995).

This does not imply that this was a comparative study of quality perceptions in different settings but rather it recognised the need to look at the actions of the participants in

relation to their stated practices and perceptions within one particular setting. This approach considered the appropriateness of looking at the actions of the individuals and then relating those to the wider environment. The alternative sociocultural perspective where the whole picture was considered and then individual actions were related to this was not considered appropriate because of the lack of studies in this area in Samoa that were relevant. The wider picture that would have been portrayed relating to Samoa would have been based on western methodology and practices. The actions and thoughts of this particular community in Samoa cannot be directly related to these more western ideas because of the importance of valuing and appreciating the different perspectives and philosophy that have evolved in Samoa. In effect there is no resolution to the problem of which aspect is more acceptable (Wertsch, 1995); one view looks at the individual in relation to the society and the other view looks at society and how it affects the individual actions.

The individual views on quality perceptions of pre-school and how they were manifested in the pre-school are what were considered in this study. The impacts of Samoan society and cultural values on these perceptions were obviously important and relevant but there was limited documented research on these. The views of quality expressed by these individuals were looked at in terms of other views of quality in pre-school education but not compared with them. A comparison between one set of perceptions from one pre-school in Samoa to western studies on perceptions in more than one pre-school was not the aim of this study. In line with Wertsch (1995), the individual perceptions and the way they were translated into actions was the basis of sociocultural research. He calls this 'human action', the combining of thought and practice of an individual, a unit of analysis or an object that can be described and interpreted in its own right at a particular point in time. This unit of action fitted well within this study, as the actions and thoughts of the individual were related to their practices and perceptions. Actions in this sense were not shaped by one occurrence but by multiple, simultaneous influences and in fact it was not easy to pinpoint single or distinct causes for actions. This study alone cannot hope to provide a full explanation of how the pre-school teachers, parents and children perceived quality in pre-school education in this pre-school in Samoa and yet it goes some way towards the construction of an initial basis for looking at how this group of people perceived quality

in pre-schools in Samoa. It provides a basic framework that can later be expanded on through more research in action in this particular area.

Human actions and choices influence what happens around people and this needs recognition (Wertsch, 1995) but it must also be recognised that these actions are developed within a unique social system; they do not stand alone. People's thoughts and actions are also part of the social system, not just as result of developing within the social system. It is important to remember when reading the report on people's perceptions, that their views do not stand alone, and they are not only individual thoughts and actions; they are interrelated to the social system in which they have evolved. The social environment of the participants provides a framework for these actions to evolve and develop, and these in turn have an influence on the social system.

How people concerned in the pre-school environment in Samoa thought and felt about their actions and how they perceived them in terms of the whole picture of pre-school education was the focus of this study. It was about how teachers, parents and children felt about the quality of the pre-school education that was offered and what they did that enhanced its value to them. This study was about behaviour and perceptions of it by the primary stakeholders. It was not about the researcher's views on quality in pre-school education and how this particular pre-school measured up. It consisted of an active view of human actions, how people think, feel and act and the relationship of these actions to others. These actions and thoughts have then been interpreted in their own right and then related to other perceptions of quality without measuring one view against another.

The educational system as developed in Samoa was the basis of the perceptions. How the system has developed and the expectations of the Samoan people of their education system lie at the heart of the perceptions of quality expressed. The aims and objectives of the education system influenced how the system was sustained and developed. In turn these aims and objectives influenced the kind of teaching that was favoured. In a society like Samoa where the system has developed from the missionary influence and later from colonial influences from New Zealand, the teaching style was rather more conservative than in New Zealand and reflected the need to succeed in a more authoritarian society. The needs of the society outlined in the next section for a highly structured community have resulted in a directive teaching style. A successful teacher

was one who had control, and good students were considered those who sat back and listened passively (Pasikale & Tupuola, 1999).

Background on the development of Samoan education systems

Since the annexation of Samoa by New Zealand at the beginning of World War I, New Zealand has had a significant role in the development of education in Samoa (Coxon & Mara, 2000). New Zealand, following its own traditions, promoted the idea of a state-operated secular education system. The administrators of Samoa, however, did not fully support this idea due to the cost of education and they supported the various Christian churches that were already operating schools and developing their own systems of beliefs and values incorporated into the curricula. This scenario meant existing schools were maintained according to Church requirements. Establishing and building new schools only happened, when necessary, in response to Government policy. Much of the education that was offered was similar to what was offered in the New Zealand Native schools in the early part of last century that meant there was a very limited curriculum. This is still true today: the prospectus for the most prestigious private school in Apia still offers basic core subjects, a good sports programme and very little else (Robert Louis Stevenson High School, 2001).

The end of World War II led to a change in the New Zealand Government's policy in the Pacific. Policy became more oriented towards promoting the independence of Pacific Island Nations, Samoa included. The primary system was enlarged and more high schools were established or expanded in Samoa. A scholarship scheme was developed to enable some of the more academically able students to study in New Zealand. Education was promoted by the Samoan Government as the key to development and the school system expanded along with the population. The school system was unable to keep up with the demand locally and this, along with the perception of better educational and employment opportunities in New Zealand and beyond, led to a large number of Samoans migrating to New Zealand. Preparation for life outside Samoa was seen as a legitimate goal of the education system within Samoa (Coxon & Mara, 2000).

By the 1970s this goal was slowly changing in response to the large numbers of urban unemployed in Apia. The rising unemployment meant there was a need to provide an education that was more relevant to local needs, as many pupils would not now be

successful in getting to New Zealand. Instead, most students would need to return to village life after their schooling. In the 1980s and 1990s the funding structure of aid to Samoan education from New Zealand was relocated from the Department of Education to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The New Zealand Overseas Development Programme emphasis on self-reliance led to the Samoan Government defining for itself what its needs were and then requesting aid. This view reflected the need for an education system that was firmly based on social, cultural and education factors relevant to Samoa rather than being devised elsewhere in the best interests of Samoa.

The development of a system of pre-school education in Samoa needs to be viewed within this context of self-determination. The first formal pre-school was opened in the early 1960s according to the Chairperson of the National Council For Early Childhood Education in Samoa (NCECES) (Personal communication with the Chairperson, 1999). Many other pre-schools have been established since then, predominantly run by various church groups and organisations. However, in more recent years there has been a growing trend in the development of more secular pre-schools that are run as profit-making operations. The Methodist Church was a leading group in the establishment of pre-school education in Samoa, and by 1996 they were running over fifty pre-schools of their own. Villages and other private organisations were also establishing and running their own pre-schools. This range of providers led to an increasing diversity of operations, and in the early 1990s an attempt was made to unify the pre-schools under an umbrella organisation, the NCECES. This attempt was only moderately successful and by 1996 the Methodist pre-schools were withdrawn from the umbrella organisation in order to maintain their unity of purpose.

In 1998 the Methodist pre-schools came back again to the NCECES and together with the other pre-schools they formed a constitution that has since been approved by the Samoan Cabinet. The constitution took about two years to develop and clarify due to the differences between the various groups involved. Since the constitution's approval, the committee of the NCECES has turned its focus to improving standards and conditions within the pre-schools, and establishing guidelines for health and safety. This has been done in conjunction with the Public Works Department and the Water Authority. Although the guidelines for standards are similar to those in New Zealand, they have been specifically adapted to fit with conditions in Samoa. Originally the

guidelines for health and safety issues were taken straight from the New Zealand guidelines for pre-schools but the NCECES quickly realised that these were not suited for a direct adoption by Samoa. The major problem has been to ensure compliance from those pre-schools that are registered with the NCECES, especially with the health and safety issues that are not always regarded as important in Samoa. The other problem is the lack of recognition of the financial cost of compliance to external standards, which many pre-schools have not been in a position to afford.

At the beginning of 2001 there were one hundred and twenty eight pre-schools registered with the NCECES and by then its committee had begun to apply for aid money to help with health and safety compliance issues. The pre-schools that were not affiliated to this organisation were generally profit-making ventures and in the opinion of the Chairperson of the NCECES there was a huge variety of standards, over-crowding of children, poor conditions and a pre-occupation with making money rather than the development of a high quality pre-school education. Any village or pre-school could also apply for money on its own initiative, which could spread aid money thinly. The Government was supporting the health and safety initiatives and had given all registered and unregistered pre-schools up to a year to comply with minimum standards for health and safety. At the end of 2001 an inspection should have been carried out to check compliance. Those pre-schools that were not up to standard should have been closed down and become disqualified from receiving Government grants or grants from the NCECES that originate from donor countries such as Canada or New Zealand.

Now that the health and safety guidelines were under way the NCECES was focusing on developing a single document to support curriculum practices. There was not yet any uniformity of practice although the pre-schools that were part of the NCECES were beginning to address this. Teacher training in Samoa was as diverse as the pre-schools that operated there. There were at least four major training providers and a couple of smaller institutions.

The University of the South Pacific (USP) ran an early education programme that was based on a series of three modules that were currently being revised. Once the modules were developed, they would be trialled in each of the Pacific Islands Nations including Samoa and modified according to the particular needs of that country. The USP course

could be taken over one year fulltime or longer if done module-by-module if resources were limited.

At the National University of Samoa (NUS) there was a three-year primary teacher training programme operating. In this course the student teachers could choose to specialise in early childhood education. There were five special papers over the three-year course and at the end their certificate was endorsed for early childhood. This was a relatively new programme and the first group of graduates finished in 2001. In the opinion of a senior lecturer (Personal communication between lecturer and myself, July 2000) at the NUS it was not yet a popular course because it was still in a trial stage and pre-school salaries were considerably less than that of a primary teacher. This lecturer also believed that even if the students had their certificates endorsed for early childhood they would mostly end up teaching in the primary schools because of the salary differential.

The Sogi Institute (a private training provider) ran its own pre-school training programme staffed with part-time experienced pre-school teachers who may or may not have had specific pre-school training themselves. The students were predominantly young school leavers who had been unable to find work. The students had an eight-month course with some practical work. At their graduation they were given a manual of ideas and themes that laid out a year's work, idea by idea. The teachers at the Institute also invited a number of speakers from different education and church groups to extend their students as well as having regular lectures dealing with child development, curriculum and managing a pre-school. A Televise Samoa news item (23 Feb 01) reported on a government initiative to raise the standard of pre-school teacher training at the Sogi Institute by subsidising the training for their thirty students. The item stated that the course was designed to enhance the training of pre-school teachers in science and agriculture so the children would learn to grow trees and vegetables. The idea behind this, as reported in the TV item, was to make use of all the available resources within Samoa to enhance the curriculum and lift the already high standard of pre-school education. Whether or not this has been incorporated into the programmes operated by the pre-schools has not been determined but it was not included in the programme run by the study pre-school, as the head teacher pointed out that they already had enough to do without adding-in extras.

The Methodist Church also ran a one-year training course for early childhood teachers who were then placed in Methodist pre-schools. The content of this course was very similar to that of the USP. The tutors in this course were from existing Methodist pre-schools and from the Church. From my discussions with the Chairperson of the NCECES it was doubtful whether or not these tutors were trained in early childhood education or had some other form of training. There were also a small number of other training providers that were operated from various villages. These were run by parents (often the local Minister's wife) for parents.

The aforementioned training programmes had several features in common: they all charged fees and the majority of their graduates did not usually end up in the pre-school environment. The NUS lecturer (personal conversation, July 2000) stated that a lot of their students completed one of the other pre-school training courses and then came over to the National University of Samoa hoping to gain a more comprehensive qualification. Obviously there was still a long way to go to achieve a more unified system of pre-school education in Samoa. In response, the Government had devolved primary responsibility for pre-schools to the NCECES, which was a non-governmental organisation, and they were attempting to bring more pre-schools and training providers under one system. The NCECES now believed that if it could control the funding it would then be more able to ensure compliance to regulations and develop an overall improvement of the quality of the pre-school education system.

In summary, there was a fragmented system for the provision of early childhood education in Samoa. There were a number of different training providers, a large diversity of different kinds of pre-schools, a large discrepancy in standards and not yet any national guidelines. Salaries were very low, around two thousand New Zealand dollars per annum which was less than a third of what primary teachers in Samoa received and yet there were still more and more pre-schools opening to cater for the demand (Informal interview with the Chairperson of NCECES, May 1999). The election manifesto for the main political party, the Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP), consistently claimed that it had lifted the standard of education and there were now "equal opportunities at all levels from pre-schools to primary schools" (Samoan Observer, 2001) and it would continue to place an emphasis on the value of education.

The highly structured nature of Samoan society and the cultural requirements of that society (Pasikale & Tupuola, 1999; Pasikale & Yaw, 1998) lent itself to a formal system of education starting with pre-school. The teacher was typically authoritarian and exerted a large degree of control over their students. Teachers were expected by parents to direct the children's learning. There was a sound tradition of oral learning and story telling which has lent itself to encouraging the children to listen, to keep quiet and to speak only when asked. This tradition has also fostered a high level of rote learning. It was only when song and dance and the less formal aspects of education were delivered that the children became involved in a more co-operative style of learning (Tanielu, 1997). Tanielu claimed that classroom learning became an exercise in passivity and social control and it was these values that became the measure of a good teacher. This view of the teachers' role and the style of education they delivered was supported by the matai (the village elders). Thus in Samoa the teacher was considered to be the source of ultimate knowledge about education and provided this knowledge in order to ensure the success of his/her students (Jones, 1991). It was considered important to know one's place and position in society and accommodate that in learning and teaching. This hierarchical approach to education and learning was evident in the pre-school used for this study and their philosophy, methods and learning were all bound up in the hierarchy. Thus, on looking at the perceptions of education and what contributed towards a good quality pre-school in Samoa it was very important to bear in mind the approach to education that was prevalent.

Conclusion

This chapter contains an overview of aspects of looking at quality perceptions in pre-school education and the factors that contribute to a quality pre-school followed by an outline of the development of the pre-school movement in Samoa. These factors are firstly looked at in terms of the western culture within which they were developed and then their application to a non-western society was discussed. Of particular importance in this chapter was the belief that the values and attitudes of the Samoan society that have influenced the perception of quality in pre-school education by the Samoan people in this study need to be valued in their own right rather than being looked at from a more western framework.

Chapter 3

Perspectives on quality

This chapter consists of a discussion of how three different groups look at the quality of a pre-school or childcare centre. Quality is discussed from the point of view of a parent, a teacher and a child. The latter section of the chapter looks at the indicators of quality that have been identified in research studies and how they can be linked to the situation that existed in Samoa.

Quality from a parent's point of view

One of the issues in defining quality is necessarily the question of who actually defines it. What one particular group regards as quality in early childhood education may not be judged to be so important by another participant group. Williams and Ainley (1994) report on their study in Australia that looked at how different participants in an early childhood centre viewed quality. This study did not attempt to determine how children viewed quality but focussed on the teachers', supervisors' and parents' perceptions of quality. From the parents' point of view, while factors involved in the professional management of the school were regarded as important, they were not as important as the health and safety aspects of quality and the quality of the staff-child interactions. Parents in general were more concerned about their individual child and their happiness and wellbeing than the qualifications of the staff and their ability to plan and develop appropriate programmes for their child. Quality in early childhood education for a parent was generally defined in terms of the needs of his/her own child (Larner & Phillips, 1994). Parents all liked to know that their child was well looked after, kept safe and had positive experiences. Evans and Schaeffer (1996) in the Coordinators notebook also supported this view along with the notion that parents wanted a pre-school that was affordable and fitted in with the needs of the family. Parents attempted to find a safe and pleasant place where their child would be well looked after that met the needs of their child. Parents also wanted to know that their child would be prepared for school.

Te One (1998) further supported the emphasis on personal factors influencing parental choice of a pre-school. While her report was solely about her own views on choosing a pre-school for her child, the attitudes and values she supported were reflected in the

above research on why parents selected a pre-school. The decision about which pre-school to choose was constrained by its affordability and whether or not it was easy to get to. She emphasised that it was a personal choice and influenced by factors that were specific to the family. Once she had decided that a particular pre-school was acceptable for her child, she then looked at the other factors relating to that pre-school such as the education and training of the teachers, the feelings engendered when she walked through the gate with her child and the Education Review Office report on the pre-school. The values promoted by the pre-school were important to her as well as the ability of the pre-school to make her feel as if the education of her child was a partnership between the home and the school. Although it was difficult to evaluate people's feelings about different events, they play an important part in parental choice.

In Samoa, for example, a friend mentioned that she was looking for a pre-school for her two children that would nurture them. She visited the study pre-school with the children and decided that she would not send her children there because it did not "feel right". She thought that because nobody had made a fuss, welcomed her children and singled them out for extra attention the pre-school was not the right one for her. She was lucky enough to have the choice to try elsewhere and so could afford to pick and choose. In elaborating on this for me at a later stage she said that the welcome her children got on the first visit was a critical feature for her in determining whether or not the pre-school would be a good one for her and her children. In fact, from the data gathered it appeared that this pre-school was very welcoming but because it did not feel like that to her on this day she did not send her children there. She finally took her children to a pre-school that was much closer and more convenient and said that this ended up being the most important consideration for her.

A study by Farquhar (1991) gives a slightly different perspective on what parents considered to be important factors in choosing a good quality pre-school for their child. Her study looked at four different types of early childhood centres and asked parents and staff to rate the importance of various goals in relation to the quality of the centre. Parents in this study valued the personal attributes of the staff in terms of how they affected the children's wellbeing. This in turn related to the importance parents placed on the 'family type' attributes of the centre, a safe and happy environment in which to play. Parents also liked to ensure that their children were 'entertained' while staff did

not rate this objective so highly. There were also different cultural expectations of what constituted quality although these were not discussed in this particular report.

Barraclough and Smith (1995) also looked at parental attitudes towards pre-school education. Although the study looked at two main questions, one in particular was more relevant to this study in Samoa. They looked at whether or not parental satisfaction with the quality of the childcare centre their child attended was related to measures of quality of the centre based on research methods. By looking at 100 childcare centres across New Zealand and assessing them according to the Abbott-Shim Assessment Profile (Abbott-Shim & Sibley, 1987 cited in Barraclough & Smith, 1995) and doing specific observations (Melhuish & Howes, 1992, cited in Barraclough & Smith, 1995) and sending out a questionnaire for parents, they rated the quality of the centre in two ways. One was according to parental perceptions of quality and the other was based on a more formal assessment of quality supported by observations and anecdotal notes. While there was a relationship found between the cost of the centre and the quality (the better the quality of the centre the more it cost), they found that, in general, parents in New Zealand were very satisfied with the quality of care their child received regardless of the actual measured quality. A possible explanation for this is that parents may be looking at some other attributes of quality that the current practices in pre-school education do not recognise or that they just do not know what specific factors to look for in assessing quality and so take a general view. Barraclough and Smith (1995) concluded that, at this time, parental views of quality child-care are not yet a viable indicator of a quality centre.

There is little work on the attitudes of Samoan parents on the factors they consider important in choosing a pre-school. However, a study by Fairburn-Dunlop (1986) which looked specifically at Samoan parents in New Zealand and their use of pre-schools found that for these parents the overriding factor in deciding on a pre-school was convenience. This finding was in line with anecdotal evidence from Samoa as well as well as for other groups in New Zealand. There were a variety of reasons why some of the parents did not send their child to a pre-school, but if they did, the pre-school needed to be close. Parents in this study wanted the pre-school they chose to be a controlled environment with teacher direction. One of the main aims in sending their child to pre-school was to get them ready for school, which reflects the high value the

parents placed on their child doing well at school. Once their child started at a formal learning institution such as the pre-school, they wanted their child to learn to listen and follow directions. Learning how to question was not an expectation of the pre-school by the Samoan parents.

This general view of what the child should learn in order to be ready for school and the value of firm discipline was supported also by Tanielu's (1997) account of her experiences in the Samoan school system. Education for her started in the village at the Minister's house at age three; it was about sitting still, keeping quiet, listening carefully and only speaking when asked. Education and the knowledge gained were considered to be very desirable and this led to a competitive school system where children had to succeed if at all possible. The opinions of many professionals cited by Tanielu were critical of the education system that had evolved in Samoa and yet in her view the practices that have developed reflect the expectations that people in Samoa have of education and thus should be respected for this. They may well seem "out dated and socially deadly" to a Western professional (Tanielu, 1997) but to the local people they served a real need to do well and succeed in education and the very formal education system that has developed fits with the needs of the society.

Quality from a teacher's point of view

Without denigrating the importance of quality issues parents valued, teachers and professionals in early childhood education tend to focus their definitions of quality on more professional concerns. Williams and Ainley's study (1994) illustrated this nicely. Teachers and supervisors rated factors such as professional development, planning appropriate programmes and staff qualifications as more important in determining the quality of a centre than the health and safety factors that are rated highly by parents. Smith (1996b) in her work on quality in early childhood education regarded the enhanced learning and development of children as a primary factor in determining the quality of any early childcare centre. From a teacher's point of view, then, their ability to meet the perceived needs of the children in their care was of major importance. In order to best meet these needs a teacher must develop goals and aims for each child based on their individual requirements. To do this effectively teachers valued the importance of staff training, qualifications and regular in-service professional

development as components in evaluating a good quality education for young children (Jorde Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Moss & Pence, 1994).

In a research report on quality (Hedges, 1999) special attention was directed to the views of individual teachers in New Zealand. Three staff members at an early childhood centre were asked to choose three features of quality that had the most influence on their ability to deliver a high quality programme. All three of the teachers thought that inter-relationships between children, parents and staff and the dynamics of the pre-school were critical. The third factor was different for each teacher, one chose the size of the group as a quality indicator, one chose teacher commitment, and the third thought the degree of support received from the management committee was important. While they recognised the value of qualifications and on-going professional development this was not one of the most important features for them unless it was accompanied by teacher commitment to what was learned. Another problem with valuing qualifications was the amount of variability between different qualifications that makes them difficult to rate. Contrary to many research reports, the data from this study indicated that teacher education and low adult-child ratios were not in themselves as important as other factors relating to quality, in the opinion of the teachers surveyed. The teachers were more concerned with harder to measure factors like the quality of the relationships and the dynamics of the organisation. The teachers surveyed also agreed that the personal beliefs and values of the individual teacher were important indicators of quality and the staff in a pre-school wanted to feel valued.

It is important to realise when looking at the views of teachers towards quality that teachers' beliefs about education may be firmly set and often difficult to change (Bell, 1990; Carr, 1998.). Bell's research in particular highlighted the fact that there was sometimes a discrepancy between what teachers said they believed in and what they actually did. That is, there was often an inconsistency between stated beliefs about educational practice and observable behaviour. Teachers hold beliefs about their practice but it seems from the Bell study that teachers hold differing abilities to think about what they are doing. This self-reflection enabled teachers to identify and reconcile differences between their beliefs and their practices. The beliefs of the teachers were drawn from both their life experiences and their training, and she suggested that in some circumstances the more formal theories held by teachers were

not properly integrated into their beliefs about teaching unless they were able to reflect upon their practice. A study like Bell's (1990) provided a useful insight into the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practice.

Stipek and Byler (1997) provided another viewpoint on the relationship between teacher's beliefs and their practice. Their study explored the relationship between beliefs, goals and practices of early childhood teachers and how these were transformed into classroom teaching. Of particular importance in this study was the association between teachers' beliefs about appropriate practice and the practice in action in the classroom. They investigated two major theories of teaching practice: the child centred approach and the basic skills approach. The child centred approach allowed more opportunities for the child to explore and interact with their environment whereas the basic skills approach was more teacher orientated with a focus on highly structured tasks involving repetition, practice and review which was more in line with what was happening in the study pre-school in Samoa. The basic skills approach followed a theory of learning in which necessary skills were transmitted to the children through repetition and reinforcement. Learning occurred when the children repeated appropriate responses to the teacher. Stipek and Byler (1997) found that those teachers who emphasised basic skills teaching believed that their primary aim was to prepare children for formal schooling. The basic skills approach assumed an approach to learning and teaching based on how knowledge is transmitted and how children learn.

Rogoff (1990) supported a broader view of how children learn in which the children's cognitive development was regarded in the context of social practices and relationships. This sociocultural perspective emphasised the active role of children in learning rather than the more passive role of the basic skills approach where children were filled up with knowledge. This wider view of learning was based on an approach where adults and children together explore new understandings and skills. This is more a problem solving approach to learning, where children develop their understanding through their interaction with their own environment. Learning is more than just an individual child acquiring basic skills through repetition, it happens through interaction and participation in a particular community. Learning, like quality, is not a static event but an ongoing process. Whether the learning approach is collaborative or based on the acquisition of basic skills through rote learning and repetition, it needs to viewed in the light of the

cultural community in which it developed and evolved (Rogoff, 1990). Learning and the acquisition of knowledge are embedded within a cultural context and need to be viewed in that context and not judged from another different cultural perspective (Fleer, 2001, Rogoff, 1990, Tanielu, 1997).

From a teacher's point of view, quality in early childhood education was the extent to which they could meet the needs of each of the children they were dealing with, as they perceived them. In order to best meet the needs of the children the teacher must develop goals and aims for each of the children based on the teacher's perception of the children's requirements. To do this effectively the teachers need to have an understanding of the aims and objectives of education and how they could best develop programmes to extend a child in all areas of learning and development. Pugh (1996) has collected together a series of articles relating to quality in early years education in a variety of cultural settings. She has identified a series of indicators of quality, plus three key issues in the pursuit of quality. Quality is a process you move through in order to achieve certain goals and, like Moss and Pence (1994), she recognised that quality was not a set of complete measurable outcomes. A central focus to identifying quality is the recognition of certain quality indicators. The indicators of quality look both at the provision of national guidelines and policies relating to quality in a pre-school but also at the kind of relationships that occur within the pre-school. In line with other studies (Farquhar, 1989a; Moss & Pence, 1994) she included factors like staff-child ratios, staff development, record-keeping and a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that met the needs of the child along with less measurable factors such as good relationships between adults and children, warm and sensitive caregivers, and a secure emotional environment.

Farquhar (1993) cited a study by Whitebook, Howes and Phillips in 1989 that showed a significant relationship between the salary received and the quality of the service provided. She also reported that teachers had a higher level of job satisfaction when salaries were improved and this was then related to better and more appropriate care for the children involved.

A child's perception of quality

How does a child regard quality? Until relatively recently a child's view of what quality was has largely been disregarded or held to be of little value (Moss & Pence,

1994). This has been partly due to the perceived difficulties of obtaining information from children and deciding whether or not what the child says bears any resemblance to what was actually observed. In fact, however, the data and observations of reality obtained from children are important in their own right, as this information is unobtainable from any other source. It needs to be regarded as valid information for that very reason.

The Danish Government was among the first agencies to formally recognise the rights of children to have their voice listened to and respected (Langsted, 1994). The rights of children were identified through the legislative process and their well-being and development was of primary importance to the State. Children's views and opinions must be listened to in the planning of services and in the organisation of the pre-school centres. A programme was set up in Denmark to further educate and inform the children as to their rights and the importance of ensuring significant people in their lives listened to them.

One of the problems with researching with children is the difficulty of establishing whether or not the information they give is reliable. The information the child gives can be assessed in relation to observations of the child by the researcher to help determine reliability but these observations may not correspond very well. It is important to recognise that the information gained directly from the child cannot be gathered in any other way and thus the issue of reliability is not so important. The information gathered is unique to that child. Similarly with validity, which deals in most cases with consistency of information, the information is unobtainable from anyone else and therefore needs to be accepted in its own right as a valid representation of what the child thinks and perceives.

In a study by Langsted (1994) the main focus was in designing a valid method of interviewing young children. Langsted looked at how best to gain information from a child without compromising or intimidating them. The first priority was to get to know the child so that he/she was comfortable and relaxed in the presence of the interviewer, researcher or other adult. The teacher was not used as the interviewer even though they would have had a greater knowledge of the child. The interviewer made a point of ensuring that the child was acknowledged as an expert in his or her own life and was treated as such. The value attributed to the child's testimony by the interviewer gave

additional motivation to the children to participate. The child was the only one who could relate these happenings. Using an outsider to interview the children gave the children a feeling of value about the importance of their views. The life of the child was looked at in terms of the daily structure of life, what he/she did and thought in a variety of situations and across time and space. All the young children interviewed had an opinion about what was happening to them and they all had far more to communicate about their pre-school than about their home. For the children in this study the pre-school was a place to play and meet with their friends. There were other important factors as well such as the staff and the toys available but their friends were a priority.

The Langsted study (1994) highlighted the importance of listening and valuing the views of the children as important in their own right. This attitude was also reflected in other studies on children's perceptions. Huttunen (1992) looked at children's perceptions of quality and their experiences of their early childhood education. This study used older children to reflect back on what had happened to them and used this information to develop a picture of the quality of the programme experienced. Huttunen claimed that value lies within the children's own experiences and must be recognised in the same way that adult's experiences are valued. A major problem in this study was the limitations imposed by the children's writing skills. The children reflected back on the kinds of experiences they had had, and the positive and negative features they recalled. For the majority of the children in the study the other children at the pre-school and the interactions with them were the most positive feature followed by their relationship with the primary caregivers at the pre-school.

One of the problems in working with children as an outsider (i.e. not the familiar teacher or adult) is that children may feel intimidated or want to please and report on only what they think the adult may wish to hear. Evans and Fuller (1998) tried to allow for this by an extensive use of role-play, which relaxed the children and increased the likelihood of more spontaneous responses. This study was also interesting in that a great deal of time was spent familiarising the researchers with the study situation before any research was undertaken. The consequent familiarity enabled the researchers to develop a better understanding of the pre-school before attempting to explore the children's perceptions.

Research with children as main contributors is still a relatively new field (Moss & Pence, 1994). Much of the current research gives only a partial picture of what happens as it has been carried out in relatively artificial situations with a researcher who is not familiar with child (Smith & Haggerty, 1980). These factors combined to present an environment that was out of the ordinary for the child, with the researcher having more control than the child. This study also pointed out the need for more research to be carried out within the normal confines of the child's daily life in order to present a more valid context for research, and to look at what was actually happening to the child through his/her eyes and from his/her perception.

Indicators of quality

In the light of the above three sets of perceptions of quality in pre-school education there is also a need to look at the general, more commonly agreed indicators of quality in pre-school education. As already indicated, this study does not measure quality in a pre-school in Samoa against a pre-determined set of quality indicators. However, it is useful to outline the quality indicators supported by research to gain an overall perception of the field of quality in pre-schools. Phillips and Howes (1987) in their research on quality in pre-schools have developed a useful definition of quality.

> In research, quality has been viewed in several ways. First, global assessments of quality have been used to capture the overall climate of a program. Second, efforts to extract the specific dimensions of quality have emphasised (a) structural aspects of child care, such as group composition and staff qualifications, (b) dynamic aspects of child care that capture children's daily experiences, and (c) contextual aspects of child care, such as type of setting and staff stability (Phillips & Howes, 1987, p. 3)

From this definition, specific dimensions of quality relating to the structural, dynamic and contextual aspects of pre-school education will be outlined. The global assessments of quality in relation to the climate or atmosphere of the pre-school will only be briefly mentioned because the global assessment measures have been developed within particular cultures and do not easily relate to another culture due to the differing underlying assumptions of various cultures. For example in using the Day Care Quality Assessment Instrument as designed by Peterson and Peterson (1986), which was designed to differentiate between various quality levels of day care centres, the

criteria which are used are not applicable to the systems that have evolved in Samoa. This measure was based on measures of the equipment, the teacher behaviour, child-adult ratios and the quality of the staff involvement and observations. Each pre-school in Samoa was set up independently. There were as yet no central guidelines, no uniform curriculum standards and no overall coordination of services. Any measure that then attempts to rate these pre-schools would have difficulty in even starting with a common baseline of aims and objectives, let alone structural requirements. It was for this reason that no established systematic methods of rating quality have been used. It was also necessary to take into account the different cultural expectations between one country and another that make it difficult to use rating scales that have been developed for use in a particular country. Even within a country there are likely to be variations across different communities that would also affect the usefulness of a standard measure of rating quality.

Similar problems existed with using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (Farquhar, 1989b). It was developed in America and then used in New Zealand as a way of providing information about the quality of the pre-school and looked at ways in which this environment could be enhanced. Even using it in New Zealand, differences in cultural expectations and practices emerged which then reduced the value of the rating that was given (Farquhar, 1989b). The main value of using this scale in New Zealand was then seen to be as an in-service tool rather than a rating scale.

Quality is an issue that faces pre-school centres and there are numerous studies which identify features that contribute towards a high quality pre-school (Farquhar, 1989b; Pascal, 1992; Pugh, 1996; Smith, 1997.). While these studies have predominantly been carried out in the Western world the features that they identified as contributing to quality in pre-school education can also be identified as factors that contribute to quality perceptions in pre-school education in Samoa.

Pugh (1996) identified a number of quality indicators that contributed towards having a high quality pre-school. While these can be broken down into three major categories: an appropriate curriculum, well-trained staff, and good relationships that exist between the staff and the parents, it was more appropriate to discuss the specific factors that contributed towards quality within these categories. The specific factors were valuable in this instance because this study dealt with peoples' perceptions of quality and these

perceptions fit with many of the specific indicators of quality that have been found to lead to a high quality education system.

The first category of quality indicators relate to the provision of an appropriate curriculum. In a good quality pre-school, children have access to high quality learning experiences that are part of a broad and balanced curriculum relevant to the needs of children of that age. This curriculum takes into account not only the children's intellectual needs but also their physical and emotional needs. The curriculum also incorporates a system of assessment and evaluation that ensures that the needs of the children are being met. Another goal of this broad and balanced curriculum is that children are not just passive learners but actively involved in their own learning and are busy playing and talking, all activities that enhance the learning experiences. Learning is recognised as something which takes place all around the child, not just in the classroom but outside in the environment as well (Farquhar, 1989a; Podmore & Meade, 2000; Pugh, 1996.). Factors such as optimum adult-child ratios and the overall size of the group also influence the ability to deliver a high quality curriculum (Early Childhood Development Unit, 1998).

The second category of quality factors relate to the kind of relationships which develop and are fostered within the pre-school, not only between the teachers and the children but between the teachers and the parents as well. The quality of these interactions leads to inter-subjectivity (Smith, 1997), that is, the ability of the caregiver to establish a shared context of meaning and understanding with the child. In turn, this shared understanding allows the child to move forward in his/her learning because the adult is providing the appropriate scaffolding to facilitate it. The learning experiences for the child are not stand-alone events but bound up in the quality of the interactions and relationships that are built up and nurtured at the pre-school. This quality is also linked with factors that relate to staff stability and the kind and nature of support given to staff (Early Childhood Development Unit, 1998; Roupp et al., 1979; Smith, 1996a, 1997; Tavers et al., 1980.).

The final category of quality indicators relate specifically to the staff; how well they are trained and whether they have some form of on-going professional development. Well-trained and qualified staff were more able to respond in an appropriate way to the children's needs (Pugh, 1996). There is clear evidence in research to support the

relationship between well-trained early childhood teachers and a high quality programme (Farquhar, 1990; Meade & Kennedy, 1992; Smith, 1992, 1996a; Wylie, 1989). While there were, as yet, no overall formal guidelines for teacher qualifications and standards in Samoa it was clear from some of the results obtained that this was also a factor in perceptions of quality of pre-schools. Not only were well trained staff valued but the on-going professional development and opportunities for teachers to continue to learn and reflect on their practice were also important factors in determining the quality of the pre-school (Moss & Pence, 1994; Pugh, 1996.).

In summary, there needs to be a well-balanced curriculum, well trained and qualified teachers combined with good positive relationships with the important stakeholders in the pre-school (the parents, the teachers and the children), in order to be on the way to ensuring a high quality pre-school evolves. The presence of these factors that contribute towards quality in pre-school education must be taken into consideration along with the view that quality is the dynamic, flexible and changing concept that was discussed in chapter two of this report.

The following chapter looks at how an appropriate methodology for this research study was developed. The development of a methodology that takes into account the nature of the society under study rather than imposing some external methodology based on Western philosophies and values was crucial to the success of this research.

Chapter 4

Methodology

The main aim of this study was to investigate how three different groups within a pre-school community in Samoa perceived quality in pre-school education. The first section of this chapter outlines the case study approach that was used in this study. This is followed by a discussion on the ethical concerns that are both specific to this study and common to all case studies. Particular care had to be taken in this case study because it was situated in Samoa and I am from a different cultural background to the study group. The last section of the chapter looks at how the methodology and research design were incorporated into the requirements of the study group. This includes a section on the development of questionnaires and interview techniques that were particularly appropriate to this group of Samoan people.

The case study approach

Case studies involve a researcher looking at a single study or phenomenon, over a prescribed period. Case studies are restricted to a particular activity and collect data using a variety of methods and techniques (Cresswell, 1994). They identify interconnected relationships and underlying concepts and then find explanations for them. There is no one definitive view of what exactly a case study is (Bottery, 1994). Out of each study different views, perspectives and understandings are discovered which are peculiar to that study. Case studies involve trying to understand the complex relationships between people and events (Stake, 1995) and understanding why things happen the way they do. A lot of case study research looks at a direct interpretation of events, with the observer interpreting what happens from their own point of view. Smith (1999) was highly critical of the method where an impartial observer looked in and reported unfolding events. She claimed that there is no such thing as an impartial observer. To enable an observer to accurately report on what was happening, the observer needed to have empathy and understanding of the complex nature of what was being observed. The observer must have an understanding and awareness of their own beliefs and values before they can hope to report on another's. Thus by definition it is almost impossible to have a completely impartial observer. Observation and unstructured interviewing as in this study led to a close relationship between the participants. A clear understanding of the diversity of cultural values and a non-

judgemental attitude are vital to the success of the case study (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999; Stake, 1995). This was a critical issue to be aware of in this particular study as the researcher was white and middle class, and all of the teachers, parents and children in this study were Samoan and quite possibly had different ideas and concepts. The recognition that the participants in the study did not necessarily share my views was a central feature of the research methodology. By focussing on the perceptions of the participants and using participant feedback in the case of the parents and the teachers helped to ensure that my perception of what happened in the pre-school did not influence the views of the participants.

Case study observations and interviews take place over a period of time that allows for the development of a relationship of trust between the participants. The research is social in that it develops through a set of social processes that influence and shape it from the beginning to the final presentation (Walker, 1980).

Recognising the rights of those being studied is a more recent development in the case study (Burgess, 1985; Smith, 1999.). The group under study also owns the information gathered and has the right to have the last say on authenticity and the right to decline to take part in the research at any stage. The ability of the participants in the research to comment on the written feedback they were given helped avoid any bias that may have arisen from my interpretation of their comments. Providing this feedback was a major way of establishing the validity of the data gathered. The informal responses of the participants to the written feedback helped to counter possible researcher bias that may have developed when interpreting the data gathered.

The kind of information required, the nature and the involvement of the researcher and their ethical values and the overall practical constraints of the research govern a case study. The kind of information required and the time available dictate the methods of data gathering used. In this study both interviews and questionnaires were used in conjunction with extensive observations. As in all research the questions of reliability and validity were important. A combination of a variety of research methods increased both the reliability and the validity of the data obtained. By comparing data obtained from different methods the validity of the information gathered was increased. Using a variety of methods to gather the data also increased the reliability of the information received because omissions or misinterpretations in one set of data were compared with

information gathered from another method. This checking enhanced all aspects of the data gathered. Using different methods on the same study (e.g. informal interviews, questionnaires and participant observations) provided methodological triangulation that also increased confidence in both the reliability and the validity of the information gathered.

Ethical considerations

A number of issues arose during the course of this study that deserved particular ethical consideration. This consideration of ethics was carried out in accordance with the regulations and the guidelines established by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

One of the most important issues to consider was that of confidentiality and anonymity. Neither could be absolutely guaranteed but the subjects were given an undertaking that as far as possible this would be ensured. The names of the pre-schools mentioned plus any teacher or child's name was changed from the original to help ensure confidentiality. The teachers and the parents were given an information letter and a consent form in Samoan and in English two weeks apart that outlined the procedures and precautions that would be taken and asked for their agreement to participate in the study (Appendices 1-4). The English version is the "a" form of the relevant appendix while the "b" form is the corresponding form translated into Samoan. The parents of the children to be interviewed were also given a letter asking for permission to allow their child to participate in the study (Appendices 5 a and b). Photographs were not taken of the children to ensure they could not be identified at a later date. The teachers, however, were quite happy about photographs being taken of their surroundings and were not concerned about the possibility of identification of the pre-school at a later stage. Photographs were taken of the pre-school environment with care to reduce the chance of later identification.

Informed consent was thus obtained from all participants in writing, except for the children. Parents were asked to consent to participation on behalf of their child. When the interview time came, the child was asked verbally if he/she was happy to answer some questions and have the answers written down. This was agreed to in all cases.

The ethical considerations in regard to the children involved in this study recognised the extent of the responsibility the researcher had towards the children. Within this situation in particular there was a marked imbalance of power between children and adults, and adults controlled almost every aspect of the child's life. Because of this power imbalance it was important to acknowledge the primary aim of all research in the early childhood area, that no harm shall come to the children or to the other participants (Feeney & Freeman, 1999). At issue in Samoa was the lack of national guidelines that related to disciplinary matters in regard to young children. What would happen if a child in the pre-school suffered some form of physical discipline was of concern to the researcher and to the Human Ethics committee. After extensive consultation with the Samoan support person at the National University of Samoa and the Human Ethics Committee combined with early observations in the pre-school (before formal data collecting began) it appeared that there was no evidence to suggest that physical disciplining of the children occurred in this pre-school. Should it have occurred the researcher would have formally approached the Samoan support person and asked her advice on the most appropriate action to take. Fortunately throughout the whole time there was no evidence whatsoever of physical disciplining of the children although it was quite possible that this happened within the wider community.

In New Zealand there has been an increasing number of researchers in pre-schools and more and more participants have been involved. This increase was not yet the case in Samoa, but the issues that have arisen in New Zealand need to be addressed in Samoa before they arise. One of these issues involves taking care not to disrupt the pre-school environment and recognising the importance of fully communicating with the participants so everybody is quite clear about the aims and objectives of the research and the value it may have (Hedges, 2001). Hedges (2001) outlined a number of issues and questions that need to be considered when starting research in a pre-school environment which were also supported by Brislin (1979), Smith (1999) and Stake (1995). The questions raised by these authors focus on issues relating to confidentiality and the relationship between the researcher and the participants. The research also has to have some value for the participants and they need to be able to check that what is reported on agrees with what happened and what is actually written up.

Specific provision was made in this study to ensure that all the participants were given copies of what was observed and what was written up from the informal interviews and questionnaires. The value of this will be discussed in Chapter 6. Hedges (2001) also spent time discussing the value of getting to know the participants and the situation before commencing the actual research. This was done in my study and became enormously beneficial to the teachers and myself because of the open and confident relationship that developed between us.

Establishing a culturally sensitive methodology

Subject participation

Tupuola (1993) in her research study on Samoan adolescents found that traditional western methods of selecting research participants by random selection and other impersonal methods were not appropriate to the cultural setting of Samoa. Selection of participants on a random basis was contrary to the nature of the Samoan society. It was not considered appropriate that some got chosen and some did not on a purely random basis. Samoan people wanted to feel that they had the choice as to whether or not to participate. In general they did not want to feel singled out above others. Within a more Western framework for research, a random selection of participants is appropriate but in Samoa it isolated people from each other as one was chosen and the other was not. Participants heard about her study through word of mouth from friends and acquaintances of the researcher and were invited to take part if they so wished. This network of willing friends and acquaintances provided the basis of her research population. She then consulted with this group and formed culturally appropriate methods of obtaining information that were acceptable to the group and fitted in with their perceptions of the study. Such selection of participants might provide a biased sample of views from a Western perspective but it was in line with the nature and expectations of the Samoan society and this consideration was important for the successful conclusion of her study.

Selection of pre-school

For this study, after considering the study by Tupuola (1993) and reflecting on the most appropriate way of finding a pre-school that was willing to take part in this particular study, the Chairperson of the Samoan Council for Early Childhood Education was approached for advice and consultation. After several lengthy discussions about the

nature and the requirements of the study he came up with the names of three pre-schools that he felt would be willing to participate. The three pre-schools were all chosen from within Apia for several reasons. The main reasons were because he felt that the village pre-schools would be less able to adapt to having a long-term visitor and the town pre-schools would be more open to taking part as they were more accustomed to having a variety of people in their schools. Another reason for selection of town pre-schools was for ease of access, as many pre-schools were remote and isolated.

For each pre-school he provided a letter of introduction (Appendix 6) and a brief overview of my purpose in the study. Each pre-school was asked if they were willing to take part. It was then my responsibility to visit each of these pre-schools to see if they were willing. One pre-school did not wish to take part as they had a lot of current involvement with the National University of Samoa and felt that it would be too much for them. Another pre-school (Vaiala) said that although they did not want to take part in the formal research they would be very happy for me to come along and be involved with them in their daily lives at school. There I was allowed to try out the questionnaires and observations and along the way become accustomed to the way they did things. This pre-school became the pilot study. They were happy to try out the questionnaires, practice interviews and comment on how they felt about being involved without feeling that they were on show or being formally involved in the study. This preliminary stage of developing techniques was not only very useful but also all involved in this pilot study provided feedback on their enjoyment of the process.

The third pre-school (Aganoa) was happy to take part. Like the other two pre-schools it was situated in Apia itself and run by the local Church community. Their reasons for wanting to take part in the study were complex but revolved around wanting exposure to ideas other than their own, interest in furthering their own knowledge and enjoyment of having a variety of people coming through their school and seeing how they did things. They had no previous experience of participating in a research study but they were involved in the Japanese volunteer programme and the National University of Samoa teacher-training programme. The benefits of doing research with these teachers with no other experience of research will be discussed in the final chapter of this study. They were accustomed to visitors in their school and also felt that the children would feel comfortable with a palagi (European) around without upsetting their routines.

Negotiating access to the pre-schools

At each of these pre-schools a letter of introduction from the chairperson of the Samoan association for Early Childhood was given to the head teacher. On both occasions the head teacher read the letter, briefly asked a few questions predominantly about what they would have to do and then agreed to participate without seeking approval from anyone else. Although Aganoa pre-school had a school committee who made funding decisions it appeared that their approval was neither necessary nor sought.

Of major concern to the researcher then was how the parents, teachers and children would feel about taking part in this study. Neither head teacher was concerned about this. They both felt that everybody "would be happy to help and that it was not a problem for them to be involved".

The pilot study

Vaiala pre-school

The pre-school (Vaiala) that had decided that they would rather take part in a low-key pilot study was in many ways similar to the study pre-school (Aganoa). Vaiala pre-school was opened ten years ago in a house that was located in Church grounds although it was not run by the Church. Prior to cyclone Ofa in 1991 the pre-school operated out of the Minister's house and was run by his wife. After the cyclone the pre-school received UNDP grant money that enabled them to purchase the house next to the church and upgrade it and their resources. The current Minister's wife (Alofa) also ran the pre-school. She was a trained primary teacher and had spent many years teaching in government schools before taking over the pre-school. She believed that the main purpose of the pre-school was to give the children in her community opportunities that her own children never had at this age. She wanted to ensure that the children were prepared for school in every possible way. She believed that her primary teacher training helped her in the pre-school to get the children ready for school. Her training was seen as an advantage as she knew what the primary schools were looking for when the children started school. Being the local Minister's wife also lent her status and credibility within her community.

The pre-school had a stable roll of 28 children. The children ranged in age from eighteen months up to nearly five years old. It opened at 7.30 am to cater for those children whose parents were working but the official pre-school programme went from

9 am until noon four days a week. It used to open on a Friday as well but Alofa said that it was not a well-paid job and she used Friday to take part in other paid employment. She also lectured twice a week at the Sogi Institute that ran a pre-school teachers training programme. She employed three teachers, one of whom was part-time. The teachers had a range of training and experience, from very little to nearly qualified through the USP.

Vaiala pre-school followed a curriculum put out by the Sogi Institute that was also used as a basis for training new teachers in how to follow a curriculum. The curriculum document contained a philosophy, aims and objectives. It was based on a thematic approach to education. The teachers in this pre-school followed a weekly thematic plan taken straight from the document. For example the first week that I was there the theme was "My family". All the day's extra activities, those not incorporated in their regular daily routine, centred around the family, oral language activities, games and songs. When the children broke off for specific theme activities they were divided into three groups that were age structured, less than two years old, middle years (3-4 years old), and advanced (those that are nearly ready for school). The underlying theme of all the teaching and planning was to give the children the best possible start to their schooling within the national education system. This downward extension of school practice was a reflection of the value the community placed on succeeding in school. The values and attitudes of the community were reflected in the programme offered by the pre-school. Alofa explained that although the thematic approach to learning was used, underlying it all was the need to teach the children those skills she believed were necessary to be successful at school: the ABC, and how to listen, rote learn, write their names, and behave in an appropriate manner.

Trial of the techniques

Using the pilot study pre-school, Vaiala, allowed for an opportunity to trial the questionnaire, interview and observation techniques as well as adjusting to a new cultural environment in a non-threatening way for all participants. It was a unique chance to try and get all procedures used more culturally appropriate than they may otherwise have been. The head teacher of the pre-school explained to her staff that she had agreed to me coming in and observing for six sessions and I would be taking notes. She asked the teachers if they felt comfortable with this. They all agreed. I had

individual meetings with all the teachers and further explained that I was observing and practising my observation skills and that the data I collected from here would not be reported in any way. I explained that if they wanted to, I would very much appreciate their comments and advice on interviewing Samoan people and the value of the questionnaire and the questions that I intended to ask. I explained that I wanted this study to accurately reflect people's views on quality and needed to ask the best questions for them. Initially the teachers said that they would feel uncomfortable telling the best or most appropriate way to go about collecting data because they felt that I was an expert having come from teaching in a private school in Samoa that they held up to be excellent. Over the six-week trial period, as we developed a relationship based on trust and a significant exchange of personal confidences, the information that the teachers shared with me reflected their views and they were able to tell me the most appropriate ways of gathering information in Samoa.

Initially, a considerable period of time was spent on observing and answering teachers' questions as they stopped for a chat in my corner. All the teachers managed to pass by my space at least three times each session to have a conversation. These initial conversations consisted of the teachers asking me very personal questions that within my culture would be inappropriate and yet within the Samoan culture were very acceptable and something that was expected. Metge and Kinloch (1978) also reported on the importance of understanding the differences between cultures in terms of communication styles. The time spent getting to know a particular community before attempting to carry out any research or discussions allowed for the development of a better understanding of communication differences and nuances. It was important for the teachers to establish who I was and where I came from and my connections. Once all participants were comfortable with each other and our expectations were clear, work began on refining data collection techniques.

The head teacher Alofa and her three teachers were asked individually how they would prefer to give information - through a formal interview or an informal interview, group interview or a questionnaire. Without exception they all preferred to be given a questionnaire that they could take home and think about. After that they said that informal individual discussions to talk round the issues raised and clarify information would be appropriate. They were very pleased to hear that the information that they

gave would also be written up and given to them to comment on and modify if they felt that I had not accurately represented what they had to say. It was quite clear that this information gathered would not in fact be used in the formal reporting of results or written up in any way without their express permission. Without exception the teachers said that they had no problem with their data being used in the study. However, their data have not in fact been used other than to help develop more appropriate questions and data-gathering methods. It took longer than expected to get the questionnaires returned. However, during this waiting period the teachers used the time for clarification of some questions. This resulted in minor changes for the final questionnaire and also led to many discussions about quality and how it was perceived. The notion of having a formal interview with each teacher and parent who took part was also abandoned on the teachers' advice.

Parents were not involved in this stage of the research although the teachers had an input into how to approach the parents at the study pre-school. Children were also not involved in formal interviews or discussions at Vaiala pre-school. In a similar way to Tupuola's (1993) study on adolescence in Samoa (referring to her method of selection of participants) these teachers also felt that a group of parents ought not to be singled out to take part in the study. Rather they felt that it would be much more appropriate if questionnaires were sent out to all the relevant parents to let them decide whether or not they wished to take part. Similarly with the children, it was felt best to allow the parents to choose whether or not their child should be involved. This advice is contrary to most studies in which the participants are selected randomly or by some other specific means but in order to fit with the perceived needs of the community, parents of the study pre-school were invited to take part if they wanted to along with their child.

In summary, Vaiala pre-school offered some useful suggestions and alterations to make the study more appropriate with the customs of the local community. Teachers at Aganoa pre-school had already agreed to take part in the study but on advice from Vaiala teachers there would be no formal interviews, just a questionnaire followed by informal discussions to clarify and comment on issues. The Vaiala teachers also agreed that the long lead in time (six sessions) before any data were gathered or questions asked had been important to them. They felt much more comfortable with me as they were given plenty of time to establish a relationship with me and find out all about my

background. They felt that this long period also helped the children become used to my presence and encouraged them to communicate more freely with me. All individual data gathered from the teachers was written up and given back to them for comment to ensure their accuracy. Teachers who participated in the trial were very pleased to be given a transcript of all the ideas that were discussed. Parents with children in the study group (those in the group almost ready for school) were all sent forms asking for their permission and approval for their children to participate in the study. Only those who sent back forms were used in the study. In this way singling out individuals, which could have been seen as inappropriate, was avoided. If parents wished I was available at the pre-school for any comments or opinions that they wished to share with me. The modifications to the questionnaires related to the translations. A bilingual colleague who was not involved in the field of education translated questions from English into Samoan. On several questions this resulted in the direct translation not carrying the sense of the original question. Many English words have no one-to-one direct translation with a Samoan word. Thus in some cases the translation had to incorporate the sense of the question rather than the literal meaning. The Vaiala teachers were very useful in fixing some of these errors to do with the sense of the question. They also liked having the opportunity to respond in either language. The questions needing modification in Samoan related mainly to the planning and preparation questions for the teachers.

The study pre-school

This study was carried out in Samoa during the first half of 2001 after ethical permission was received from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. I carried out all the questionnaires, interviews and observations. One person from the National University of Samoa was available if necessary as a liaison person to assist in any difficulties that may have arisen.

Preliminary planning

Two weeks of learning about the pre-school, adjusting to the language and allowing all participants to get used to me was the original plan. There was also room to use an interpreter but I found that my command of the oral language at this level combined with the bilingual nature of the pre-school meant that an interpreter was not necessary. The support person who was available was a lecturer at the National University of

Samoa in the early childhood field and was also well known in this pre-school. Her role was to act as a translator, liaison person and interpreter should any difficulties arise. She also had a confidentiality arrangement with me. While she made several visits to the pre-school with student teachers while I was there, her services were not necessary on site. She provided a useful sounding board with several issues of cultural differences and views on the state of pre-school education in Samoa.

Procedures

Preparation

Initially there was a two-week observation period of the general routines of the pre-school. There was a total of 30 hours of observation data gathered. The long lead-in time allowed the parties to get accustomed to each other and have a chance to get to know each other. Although data were gathered during this period on pre-school routines they are not analysed or reported on in the results section. The data gathered in the lead-in time were to gain practice in recording at this pre-school and to get the children and the teachers used to me being there writing everything down. The recording diary was always freely available for teachers and children to look at. Teachers initially came by and checked the contents of my diary and discussed what I was writing and this reassurance and openness helped us in getting to know each other. The children in the older age group never gave up on checking the diary and liked to come by and have a turn writing on the comments page or drawing a picture for me. About two-thirds of this group returned consistently to me and my diary over the whole time I was involved in the pre-school. This familiarity with writing in the book allowed me to record information freely without the participants being concerned.

Observations

After the two-week settling in period, formal observations were carried out. These had three parts to them. The first part was observing the routines of the pre-school, the second part was following and observing each teacher for three sessions, and the third was observing then interviewing the target children.

Observations on the daily events of the pre-school, recording the routines and practices and linking what occurred with what was planned, were recorded in diary form in five-minute intervals. One side of the page recorded the timed observation while the other side was used for recording comments, thoughts and conversations that happened with

various individuals. As mentioned above, at first the teachers passed by frequently, reading what I had written and commenting on various events, but that lasted for about a week. The children were more interested and consistently came over and helped me record by drawing little pictures before wandering back to their prescribed activities. This unexpected interest by the children in my book allowed me to get to know them and vice versa, so that when it came time to interview them they were already familiar with what I was doing and accustomed to talking with me.

The three observation sessions with the teacher followed the same pattern, observations at five minute intervals recorded on one page with comments and conversations recorded on the page facing. Each teacher was observed for three continuous morning sessions from 9.00 a.m. to noon, a total of nine hours per teacher. Where possible the observations were carried out in the same week for the same teacher. There was a total of thirty-six hours of observation for the teachers.

All the interactions of the teachers were recorded during their observation periods, not those just relating to the target children. Each teacher was informed when they were being observed for the three sessions and by this stage they were used to me being around and being unobtrusive. Thus my making observations did not appear to alter their programme or methods in any significant way.

The target children were observed in the same fashion as the teachers. There was a total of twenty-four hours of observations on the 12 children who were part of the study. Each child was observed once a week for four weeks at different times. On several occasions the planned observation period had to be postponed due to an unforeseen disruption or the child being absent but in each case the observation was carried out at a similar time in the following week. As for the teachers, data were gathered on the interactions between the child and the teacher and the details of the context in which it occurred. Data were also gathered on child-child interaction and any incidents that occurred during the observation periods that could allow more insight into the events.

Interviews

At some time during their observation session the teacher would direct them to show me some of their work or to tell me what they were up to. At this point I asked if they would be happy to talk to me about what they were doing and what they thought of the pre-school. Six of the target children agreed easily and proceeded to chat away about

what they liked and did not like while the other six were less forthcoming. The shyer children tended more towards non-verbal communication with short one or two word responses if they had to. None of the children were reluctant to take part, although some were quieter than others.

Questionnaires

At the end of the observation sessions the parent questionnaire (Appendix 8) was sent home. The head teacher personally gave it to each parent who had signed the consent form when they collected their child. She took this opportunity to talk with the parent and discuss how their child was doing at pre-school and asked them to return the questionnaire as soon as they were able. She also reminded them that they could come and talk with me at any time if they had any questions regarding my study. The two parents who had come in originally to talk with me came back and personally handed in their questionnaire and had a chat. The others handed their questionnaires back to the head teacher. Informal chats to parents by the head teacher and myself elicited some further comments on early childhood education that will be reported in the next chapter.

Data collection

The teachers

There were five teachers involved in the study site; the head teacher and the four classroom teachers. The Japanese volunteer pre-school teacher was not included in the observation schedule nor was she given a questionnaire to return. She did, however, request a questionnaire to look at.

The teachers were given the questionnaire (Appendix 7) after the orientation observation sessions so that they had ample time to complete them. The teachers took approximately two weeks to return the questionnaire and all of them commented on various questions on an individual basis over that two-week period. Several of them also came up to me and elaborated on some of their ideas. Discussion about this is included in Chapter 5. If the teachers approached me at any time for a discussion or made comments about what was happening or their beliefs then these were also recorded in the field diary.

As mentioned above, each teacher was observed for a total of thirty-six hours. The observations recorded interactions between the teacher and the children and between the staff and details of the context in which this occurred, similar to a running record. The

time sampling observations were made every five minutes. Alongside this were recorded any incidents or activities or passing comments that could allow a greater insight into what was happening and why it might have happened. Details about the number of adults and children present and the daily theme were also recorded. The weather was only recorded if it had an impact on the programme, for example if there was a tropical downpour it was impossible to work due to the noise of rain, thunder and lightning.

The parents

After discussion with the head teacher, Sa, it was decided that the target group of children would be those in the group nearly ready for school because she felt that these children would be best able to communicate directly. From the pilot study I had already decided not to single out any children to take part. The head teacher of this pre-school also agreed that no children should be singled out to take part. All parents of the target children were given information letters and permission forms. The parents then could choose if they and their child wished to be a part of this study. Only the parents who returned the signed permission forms for themselves and their children were included in the study. These parents were given the questionnaire (Appendix 8) to fill out the week the formal observation sessions started. The head teacher gave out the questionnaires as parents picked up their child from pre-school and talked briefly about it. It was made very clear to the parents again at this time that they could come and speak with me at any time. Two parents approached me after a week for an informal chat and these two plus one other also came and talked with me when they returned the questionnaire. They could decline to take part or not answer some questions. This option was not used. It took on average three weeks to get all the questionnaires back. Twelve out of the twenty-three parents in the target group of children returned the permission forms for their child to take part along with completed questionnaires.

The children

The children's observation sessions were undertaken after those for the teachers, but the same format was used. The children had four half-hour observation sessions spread over a couple of weeks and at different times of the day. The research diary was used with the double page opened. One side was used for timed five-minute observations while the other side was used for comments and recording any times the child came up for an informal interview. The child was not told that this was the day of their observation as

the teachers felt that this would make them very self-conscious and uncomfortable. Although all the children in this group had been coming up and talking with me on various occasions and all the children were accustomed to my presence, on the observation day for the target child the teacher sent them over to talk with me. The teacher gave the child a purpose to come, "Go and show this lovely work to Brenda", or "Go and tell Brenda about your picture". Once the child came over, they were then asked if they would be happy to stay and talk with me for a while and answer a few questions. The children all agreed, either verbally or with a nod. The children at this stage were used to me writing things down and many of them had contributed little pictures to my diary so recording what they said was normal to them. The children were not constrained to stay and talk and were free to wander off when they decided. This meant that in some cases the interview was conducted over two or three short sessions. The questions the children were asked are listed in Appendix 9.

The questions the children were asked were based on several reports on children's perceptions of quality (Evans & Fuller, 1998, Huttenen, 1992, Langsted, 1994). A list of questions was put together and then the questions were given to the teachers at both pre-schools and their advice was sought on whether or not the children would be able to answer the questions and whether or not the teachers felt the questions were culturally acceptable. With all the children, language was not expected to be a problem and if it was, the regular teacher was always within earshot and able to translate questions and or answers. Translation was not required which indicated a level of competence in English that was better than expected.

Analysis of data

All the observations of the teachers and the children were transcribed in full. From the data gathered these interactions were put into categories according to the main purpose of the interaction. The categories for the interactions were developed as the research progressed and were not determined beforehand. Using categories that were directly related to this study reflected more clearly the intent of the interactions within this particular society. The development of the categories for recording the interactions of the teachers and the children was in line with similar work by Bell (1990). She systematically looked at the patterns of the interactions of the children and the teachers to enable her to begin to identify trends that could offer further insight into the practice

of the teachers. In the same way this study has attempted, based on the categories used by Bell, to sort the information gathered and place this information into mutually exclusive categories. These categories were then discussed with the teachers in the study and, subject to their approval, were used to collate the data gathered. The categories for both the teacher and child observations were descriptive and represent the behaviour that was observed.

Categories for teacher observations

Social - greetings and comments about each other in relation to the pre-school or what might be happening outside the pre-school. It did not relate to actual pre-school activities or events.

Activity based - comments made generally by the teachers about what the child was doing, neither positive nor negative.

Monitoring - comments related solely to the teacher checking on what the child is doing and where they are going next. These comments were also in relation to giving support to complete a task as well.

Directive - comments related to telling the child what to do and what to say. The teacher was controlling the child's behaviour. These also related to the child's compliance with the rules of the pre-school.

Leading - group sessions where the teacher led and the child followed. In some cases the child would lead and the rest would follow.

Affirmations - teachers and children who made positive remarks about an event.

Approval - the child seeking approval from a teacher for their efforts or a child giving approval to another child regarding an activity.

There was no evidence of disapproving or negative remarks made to the children during the observation periods relating to the child's activities so no category was needed for this.

Categories for child observations

Teacher-child interactions - the teacher was directing, organising or telling the child something.

Child-teacher interactions - the child was initiating a conversation with the teacher.

Child-child interactions - the child was initiating a conversation, an activity or involved in a dispute with another child.

Child alone - the child was playing or doing something on their own without interacting with others.

Child watching - a child was in a group or alone just watching and observing without taking an active part.

Child help - the child actively sought help from another child or teacher to sort out a dispute or to complete an activity.

Child approval - the child sought approval from the teacher for their completed work or activity.

There were no observed examples of the teacher and child interacting on a level that was not related to the pre-school. For example there were no apparent discussions about what had happened to the child at home or what they might be going to do at home in the weekend or anything along those lines. There were no observations of "morning talks" or "news time" where the children could have had an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings with the group.

The teachers were asked if they agreed with the categories developed. They were given a written list of the categories but were only asked to comment verbally if they wished. The questionnaire was enough writing without asking for more. The head teacher was the only one who said she liked the categories, the other teachers said that they did not mind. This kind of response to a direct oral question seemed to be characteristic of this pre-school in many instances. The teachers did not mind what happened, only the head teacher had an opinion.

Interview data: Teachers and children

These data were all individually transcribed and then both the teachers and the children's data were matched up and added to the data obtained from the questionnaires and observations to present a more complete picture of what was happening.

The children's interviews were put into categories to reflect their views on the pre-school that were in line with the questions they were asked. These related to their likes and dislikes, what they came to pre-school for and if they thought the pre-school could be improved. The children's interviews were repeated on several occasions to gain an estimate of reliability and consistency.

Questionnaires: Teachers and parents

The same format was used for analysing both sets of questionnaires. The written answers were transcribed in the order in which they appeared on the questionnaire. Then the answers from each section were put together to help determine similarities and differences in responses. These were then put into table form (refer Table 1 in Chapter 5 and Table 7) to look at patterns of responses.

Discussion of results

Once all the data were gathered and analysed they were assessed and used to address the following questions:

- What was valued by teachers, parents and children in the pre-school in terms of the learning needs of the children?
- How did teachers, parents and children in the pre-school view quality in education?
- What were the teachers doing to reflect their views on quality in pre-school education in terms of their teaching programmes?
- What were the overall perceptions of quality in this pre-school in Samoa and how did they relate to other perceptions of quality in relevant literature?

These points will be discussed in Chapter 5, which looks at how the parents, teachers and children viewed the quality of the pre-school education and what they considered to be important.

Figure 2. The playground at the study pre-school.

Chapter 5

Results

This chapter begins with a brief outline of the study pre-school, Aganoa, in order to give the reader a perspective of the character of this pre-school in Samoa. An overview of the timetable and a detailed description of one hour's general observation of the routines will complement this description. This is included in the results section because the study takes place within another culture and it is important that the reader is able to easily interpret the results in the light of the total environment of the pre-school and have a better understanding of the way it operated. The latter three sections of this chapter deal with the observations, interviews and questionnaires from the teachers, children and their parents.

The study pre-school: Aganoa

This pre-school has been operating for around twenty years. It was established by the Anglican Church to provide a programme for the young children in the congregation. It was originally operated out of the Church Hall that meant that every Friday all the resources, equipment and displays had to be packed up so the hall could be used over

the weekend for community events and meetings. This task became a source of friction between the Church and the pre-school teachers. The packing up process was also frequently a problem during the week if a meeting was scheduled after school hours. In 1998 a new purpose built pre-school was opened on the Church grounds which was light, airy and specially designated for the pre-school.

The head teacher, Sa, has had more than sixteen year's experience teaching in Government schools before taking over the pre-school six years ago. She had sixty-eight children on the permanent roll although not all of them attended every day. The children ranged in age from eighteen months to nearly five years old. There was no upper limit on how many children could attend the pre-school although Sa said she had enough at that time. Sa was a member of the Church congregation but was not affiliated with the Church hierarchy other than as the school head teacher. She had four teachers under her and a Japanese volunteer pre-school teacher for the year. The pre-school opened, like Vaiala, at 7.30 am to cater for those parents who worked and the official programme began at 9 am and went until noon. Parents were expected to collect their children before 1 pm although sometimes this did not happen. Most children were collected on time.

This pre-school kept some records of the children's progress in the form of portfolio files. These individual files contained examples of the child's work throughout the year and served also as a recording mechanism for the work covered. Each work sample was dated and titled. The file was given to the child when they graduated from the pre-school to formal schooling. The file contained a record of how the child was progressing in getting ready for school. Work samples showed how the child first learned to trace their name, copy it and then write it independently.

Sa, as the head teacher, outlined what was required in the individual work plans for the teachers and the theme topic to be covered during the fortnight planning period. The teachers then had to develop this into a plan for their particular age group. The teachers always taught the same age group. The children were divided up according to age and school readiness and when they separated for group activities they went into these groups. As well as planning their own work for this group time the teachers also followed a master plan or timetable for specific responsibilities or duties. They took turns at leading the mat time, greeting children, distributing water and minding the door.

If the teachers wished they were able to have an input into the main theme plan but this was rare according to the head teacher. Sa checked the work plans each week. The theme topics followed a similar outline to the manuals distributed by the University of the South Pacific in their training modules. They used this outline because they felt that it covered most of the topics they wished to teach. The modules for pre-school were currently in the process of being revised in the South Pacific Region and will then be distributed to member countries to adapt according to their own specific needs.

Sa kept an overall roll book in which she checked the children's attendance against the records kept by the individual teachers for their own groups. No written record or assessment or achievement record was kept although at the end of each session the teachers sat down and had a cup of tea together and discussed various aspects of the pre-school, from difficult children, achieving children to the activities for the next day. This session attempted to keep the teachers in touch with what was happening in the pre-school. Children who conformed and did not cause difficulties were generally not discussed at these sessions.

Sa had agreed to allow me to observe in the pre-school, interviewing and observing teachers, children and parents. No one in the pre-school was asked if they were comfortable with this prior to my arrival so the negotiating access to participants began in earnest when I started at the pre-school. Because the long lead in period had been so successful at Vaiala pre-school, a two-week lead in period was also used here. The teachers (including the head teacher) were all individually told about my aims and what I hoped to achieve and I asked orally if they would be willing to take part in my study. I also mentioned that I would be doing no observations or giving out questionnaires for at least two weeks so they had a chance to get accustomed to me. All the teachers were very happy to take part.

The two-week period followed a similar pattern as before - the teachers asked me many questions about my work, my family, what my husband thought and about myself. I also had the chance to discuss similar issues with them. Each day we shared a cup of tea at the end of the session and had a chance to chat informally. The letters of consent (Appendix 3) in both Samoan and English were given to them at the end of this period and I asked again whether they were happy to take part in this study. Without exception they agreed and also said they did not need to sign the formal document although they

would do it anyway. There was a long discussion about the ethics of the study, gaining permission and ensuring confidentiality. These issues while important to me did not seem to be a problem for the teachers; they signed the document but emphasised again that it was not necessary for them because we were friends. The trust and friendship that developed here was crucial to the success of this study.

Gaining the permission of the parents for their child to take part and for them to answer a series of questions was equally straightforward. Letters and consent forms (Appendix 2 and 4) were sent home with the children in the top group (those nearly ready for school). This involved twenty-three families. Those who returned the signed permission forms for themselves and their child formed the study group and only those children were specifically observed. The children with permission were also interviewed informally at the pre-school during sessions if they wanted to. This reduced the potential group from twenty-three to twelve. Two of the parents who returned the permission forms also popped in to the pre-school to introduce themselves to me and clarify what I was going to do. The teachers all said they were discussing my project with the parents as well and supporting it which helped me gain further acceptance in the community. These target children did not appear to differ significantly in any major way from the other children in their group and on the surface appeared to be a reasonably representative group of children.

The pre-school routines

The outline below followed a typical hour in the pre-school week with the exception of a Friday, when the teachers were able to be more flexible. The detailed outline is included in the main body of the text in order to give the reader some background knowledge of the routines before the data gathering and observations occurred. The pre-school day in Samoa was different to a regular day in a New Zealand pre-school and it is important to recognise that. The pattern of interactions between the teachers and the children in this Samoan pre-school are important to be aware of when looking at the data that was gathered. The emphasis on the formal teaching time was an important feature of this pre-school. The responses given by the teachers and parents were a reflection of the value they placed on formal teaching.

Teachers here have been given a label, A, B, C and D while the head teacher was referred to by another name, Sa, to protect hers and their identities. The information

was collected in the form of a diary with entries every five minutes recording the general activity of the day. One side of the diary was used for five-minute observations while the other side recorded notes and comments about what was happening.

7.30 a.m. – 8.45 a.m.

The children were able to arrive any time after 7.30 a.m. as it suited their parents. They were supervised during this time. Three of the four teachers arrived when the pre-school opened and the head teacher and the fourth teacher arrived by 8.30 a.m. The children were permitted to have free play in the main mat area and during this time plenty of construction and imaginative play occurred. Toys, cars and blocks were scattered round the mat to use at will. The teachers sat around the main area and had coffee and some breakfast and chatted with each other. There was very little interaction between the children and the teachers during this time. The duty teacher met parents and children at the door. In the majority of cases the child was carried to the door and given to the duty teacher. The duty teacher greeted the child and put her/him down and encouraged the child to hang up his/her bag, move to the mat area and join a group. Shoes were only removed by a quarter of the children, which is atypical in Samoan communities where walking on the mats with shoes on was not generally acceptable. None of the children went to the group areas or the book space. Children occasionally came up to a teacher to talk with them but this was very rare. The children appeared to be totally absorbed in playing and talking with each other. No detailed observations were done during this informal part of the pre-school day. The teachers said that this time was not part of their programme, it was just time to fill in before the formal day began at 9 a.m. All recorded observations occurred during nine o'clock to midday because that was when the formal pre-school teaching took place. Although this time before pre-school started was generally the only time the children had for free play, it was not considered to be part of the pre-school day by the teachers. There was a higher level of interaction between the children at this pre-commencement time than at any other time of the day, indicating that the children probably had quite a different view of this time than the teachers. Observations of the teachers and the children did not take place during this pre – nine o'clock time because of the lack of recognition given to it by the teachers as part of their programme and the variable arrival times of the children indicating that their parents did not regard this time as particularly important either.

8.45 a.m.
The duty teacher A put out the plastic baskets that the toys were kept in and slowly started giving out instructions to tidy up. "A" then modelled how to tidy up and began to sing a little rhyming song about putting toys away. As the children joined in the song they began to put toys in the containers. Teacher A continued to tidy up, B and C finished their coffee. The children were communicating with each other in a mixture of English and Samoan. This was a very low-key tidy-up time, but the children put everything away with great attention to detail.

8.50 a.m.
Most of the tidy-up was complete. Children were still arriving for the morning session. B took over greeting the children and parents at the door while A asked all the children to sit on the mat. C took over a child who was reluctant to come to the mat. D was watching and tidying up the breakfast dishes. A banged two wooden blocks together and the children began to clap in time with her as they moved towards the mat. The children's own pattern of seating round in a circle on the large mat was reorganised by A and C for a more satisfactory placing. The children continued clapping their hands in time with the block beat and teacher B was still greeting arriving children. A was calling out instructions in English and Samoan that the children modelled: clap high, clap low, clap to the front, clap fast, clap slow. The children were told to stand and then they walked around in a circle in time with the clapping block and followed more instructions: hands high, hands low, hands on shoulders, fold your arms. Then they were told "nofo i lalo", which means "sit down".

8.55 a.m.
Fifty-five children were present at this session. Children were seated in a circle and they were greeted by the lead teacher for the day, Teacher A, in two languages. Samoan was always used first. Only English language will be recorded here. Teacher B was still by the door while C and D were sitting watching the children. The head teacher was in her office.

"Good morning everyone"
"Good morning teachers"
"What are you doing today?"
"I am sitting down"
"How are you today?"

"I am very well thank you"

9.00 a.m.
A lead off with a song, "Jesus loves everyone". The children sing equally well in both English and Samoan and switch from one language to the other. A led this song, then she encouraged children to have a go at leading a song themselves. This section of the day was generally taken up with songs with a religious message reflecting the strong religious convictions of the teachers and the pre-school.

A child led the next song, "The joy of the Lord is my strength" and all children and teachers join in both singing and actions.

The Lord's Prayer was recited in both languages. Five boys were being disruptive but they were ignored until the prayer was finished. Afterwards they were told by A "You had better sit properly. Okay. Good boys" and the next song was introduced. About five songs were sung every day in this time. Most children were generally very attentive in this section because they sang a large variety of action songs and they enjoyed joining in with the movements.

9.05 a.m.
Teacher A led a group conversation. All the responses from the children were repeated by the teacher and then again by the children. The conversation was first carried out in Samoan and then in English.

"Good morning everyone."
"Good morning teachers."
"How are you today?"
"I am very well thank you."
"Are you happy to come to school today?"
"Yes, I am happy to come to school today."

The children were beginning to get restless, so A clapped her blocks together and led off the singing, "Good morning to you, talofa lava lava" and the conversation continued again.

"What day was it yesterday?"

The children all called out answers in both languages and one child was selected to give the answer, which was then rephrased as a sentence. The child said Monday, which was then rephrased as "Yesterday it was Monday" and all the children repeated this after the teacher.

9.10 a.m.
The days of the week were recited in two languages with the children repeating everything the teacher says. Children called out responses and then all repeated the rephrased answer in unison. The conversation is repeated verbatim below.

> "What's today? Tuesday. Yes, that's right. Today is Tuesday. Say after me; today is Tuesday. Today is Tuesday. How many days in the week? Seven. That's right. There are seven days in the week. Say after me; there are seven days in a week. (This is repeated in both English and Samoan.) Say after me; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. There are seven days in the week."

After this all the children sang a song about the days of the week and the process was repeated again.

9.15 a.m.
The children were wriggling. A, the lead teacher asked the children to get up and all four teachers went round the circle checking the children's fingernails and whether or not they had a handkerchief attached to their uniform. Those with clean nails were given positive reinforcement. They all sat down and sang a song about using a handkerchief and modelled the actions.

9.20 a.m.
Teacher A began on the theme work for the week, a discussion on the uses of the coconut and how it was grown. This was a continuation from the previous day. A small coconut plant had been brought in to the pre-school and all the parts of the plant were discussed while the children sat and watched. They were permitted to call out if they wanted to. The lead teacher discussed how the various parts of the coconut were used and the other teachers and children offered comments as they wished. All the children's ideas were reinforced positively. Children who gave correct answers or ideas were given a stamp on the hand by one of the teachers. Children were encouraged to

put up their hands but this did not change the pattern of responses. Incorrect answers were not rejected, the teacher just moved straight on to the next question.

9.25 a.m.
The children were restless. Teacher A banged blocks together and the other three teachers asked the children to be quiet. The discussion on the uses of the coconut continued. A talked about weaving mats and the kava ceremony using coconuts; she demonstrated the use of half coconut shells for instruments and allowed a couple of children near her to try them out.

9.30 a.m.
The children were very restless so teacher B led a song about coconuts. There did not appear to be any verbal communication between the teachers about this; it just happened. The song merged into a well-known action song, which all the children vigorously joined in. This song then changed into a marching song where the children all marched round in the circle doing various actions as the teacher called out what to do. Once the children had settled Teacher A sat them in the circle again and then divided them up into their various groups which were age appropriate. The children moved off to their particular area of the pre-school.

9.35 a.m.
Teachers now operated in their own area. The target children were all in the four-year-old group. The children in the other three groups were settled and singing little songs. The children in the four-year-old group were sitting in their space waiting while teacher B to gathered up her resources for the session. They talked quietly to each other.

9.40 a.m.
Teacher B was organised. She had some items made of coconut fibre that she showed the children. Any response the children gave was reinforced. She talked for about five minutes on the uses of coconut while the children listened. She discussed what each part of the coconut tree was used for. She showed them how the coconut shell was used for musical purposes and all the children sang a little song with her about the coconut.

9.45 a.m.
Teacher B recited a poem about the coconut and the children repeated it after her. Two very restless boys were told to come and sit at the front of the mat under her eye. She moved on to reciting the alphabet and then the children sang the alphabet in English and

Samoan. She introduced the activity for the group. They had to trace around a fan shape that was outlined for them and then they had to colour in the parts of the fan. Once this was done she came around with the glue and helped them to glue pieces of coconut fibre on to the fan shape in patterns. She demonstrated this for them. She began to hand out pieces of paper.

9.50 a.m.
Some children were still waiting for their pieces of paper. Teacher B was moving around the children talking to them individually as she handed out the paper. The children were shown again how to trace round the lines. Children who were still waiting were given a book to look at as they waited patiently. The teacher commented "You see, they are behaving like the primary levels now".

9.55 a.m.
The children were all tracing and colouring. Every attempt was reinforced positively although they were always shown the correct way if necessary. The other three groups were busy in their own spaces.

10.00 a.m.
The children were organised for gluing. Teacher B demonstrated how to glue the pieces of fibre. The children did the activity as they had been told.

Comments from the hour

One teacher took the lead role for the combined session for the week. The other three teachers had responsibility for greeting the children as they arrived and maintaining control if necessary when the lead teacher signalled. These teachers sat around the circle with the children and participated in all the singing and activities. They led their own groups off when the time came and followed their own theme plan according to the ages of the children in their group. This was quite a formal programme where the children were expected to listen and then do the activity as directed. There was not a lot of flexibility here for the children. The teachers had a roster to go outside with their group for up to half an hour when the children were allowed to have free play in the play area.

The language of instruction was a mixture of Samoan and English. Most instructions and directions were given firstly in Samoan and then repeated in English. Songs and activities followed the same language format; first Samoan and then English. When the

children responded, their response was elaborated on in Samoan and expanded. If they responded in English their response was generally elaborated on at the surface level within the formal pattern of English that they were learning. For example, if the children were asked to name the day of the week, and responded with Tuesday, the teacher would expand that into "Today is Tuesday, say after me, today is Tuesday", and the children would then repeat this in unison. Whereas if the child responded in Samoan that the day was Tuesday, the teacher responded in a much fuller way and the children did not all repeat her sentence. Positive reinforcement was given in both languages. During the majority of the sessions there was little interaction with the head teacher, Sa who generally remained in her office and dealt with administration.

There were eight three hour observation sessions of a general nature observing the routines of the pre-school and allowing all parties to become accustomed to each other.

During this formal time the children were taught to conform to teacher expectations and to take responsibility for various activities, such as tidying up and leading the odd song when requested to. The Christian message was strongly reinforced in the morning programme which was a reflection of the strong Christian values of the Samoan society. The majority of the time was spent with the teacher clearly in charge of the children's learning and knowledge was seen as something that had to be passed on to the children. A pattern of rote learning and responding in unison was established and little time was allowed for the children to question or interact with the teacher or each other in order to further explore their ideas. The activities given to support learning were structured and did not particularly allow for creative learning outside of the teachers' directions. The children learned to take turns, wait and follow directions.

The daily timetable for the target group of children

Time	Activity
7.30 a.m. – 9.00 a.m.	Children arrive and teachers have morning coffee
9.00 a.m. – 9.35 a.m.	Prayers, singing, whole group teaching
9.35 a.m. – 10.10 a.m.	Split age groups, formal alphabet and theme work
10.10 a.m. –10.30 a.m.	Morning tea, formal grouping
10.30 a.m. –11.00 a.m.	Supervised play outside, teacher watching only
11.00 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.	Formal writing, drawing and theme work
12.00 p.m. – 2.00 p.m.	Home time, children wander round waiting to be collected

The time before 9.00 a.m. was a time when the children played and the teachers had coffee and watched and caught up with each other. There was no interaction of any note between the teachers and the children in this time except to greet the children as they arrived. Similarly with the playtime outside, the teachers took a group out and stood in the shade and watched the children play. They did not interact or talk with the children unless to direct them to play in another space.

Data gathering from teachers

Each teacher not including the head teacher agreed to three observation sessions - each of three hours' duration. The head teacher was not observed, as she had no formal teaching role in the pre-school. The format of the observations was the same as for the general pre-school session, a diary with five-minute observations plus space for additional comments on the facing page. On three occasions it was not possible to have the complete three hours so this time was made up on a different day at the same time. Incomplete observation sessions all occurred when a visitor came to the pre-school and changed the format of the session. For example, the nurses visited one day, the volunteer dentist another day, and the vet came a third day.

The teachers (including the head teacher) also had a questionnaire to complete. Informal interviews happened with teachers as they felt the need rather than on a pre-arranged and formal basis. The teachers said they were more comfortable with this approach. The results from the informal interviews and transcripts of the answers on the questionnaires were given back to the appropriate teachers for their comments and approval before they were used for reporting the study. The teachers had a chance to review what they had said and adjust it if necessary. Without exception none of the teachers wished to change from their original comments and views. A transcript from the observation session, the questionnaire and the informal interview with teacher D is included in Appendix 10.

Teacher responses to the questionnaire

All the responses to the questionnaire were in English for the teachers, although the questions were written in both English and Samoan. The teachers took between one and three weeks to complete the questionnaire and during that time each of them approached me for informal chats about pre-school education in general. The discussions revolved predominantly around the clarification of terms and my own teaching experience that

was not directly relevant to the questionnaire. It was possible that the teachers felt that in giving me all this information they needed more information about me as well. Table 1 below is a summary of the information from the questionnaires given to the teachers. The head teacher is included in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of results from teacher questionnaires regarding their views on aspects of pre-school education.

Category	Teacher A	Teacher Sa	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
Training	2 year course Primary	3 years at teacher's college Primary	3 months at USP, 1 year at Sogi ECE	USP training course half completed ECE	On the job experience plus mini courses at the theological college; ECE
Experience	7 years teaching Primary	7 years teaching Primary	13 years teaching Primary	4 years teaching Pre-school	4 years teaching Pre-school
Planning and Preparation (Teacher descriptions of factors they bear in mind while planning)	- Sharing - Songs and poems - Behavioural guidelines - Developing language - Do work like writing names - Learn the ABC	- Getting to know the children - Plan for needs of children - Listen to children - Positive experiences - Develop motor skills - Develop confidence	- Listen to the children - Talk to them slowly - Preparation for a good future life - Do as they are told	- Offering the children a chance to make decisions - Listen to the children's needs - Encourage sharing - Meet their developmental needs - Behave themselves	- Play with children - Give them toys - Make them happy - Follow Sogi guidelines - Teach independence - Preparation for the future - Reach a higher level of education
Evaluation and Assessment (how the teacher decides whether or not they have achieved their aims)	- By observing - By collecting their work - By deciding who can answer questions well	- By talking to them each day - By asking questions and getting answers - By keeping their work all year - By having a file on their work	- When they answer a question correctly - By recording in a notebook	- By thinking about the theme and asking questions - By looking at their pictures of the theme work - By keeping their work and looking at it	- By observing the children - When the children show me what I have taught them - By keeping a record in my workbook

Table 1 (continued)

Category	Teacher A	Teacher Sa	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
Communication with children (telling the children that they are doing well.)	- By praising them - By giving them stamps	- By praising them - By stamping their hands - Allowing them to choose another activity - By talking to them if they are not doing well	- By praising them - By letting them express themselves through song and dance - By letting them do things	- By telling them they are smart - By telling them they are all different - By recording their progress	- By telling the children they are doing well.
Communication with parents	- By talking to them on parents' day	- Letting parents look at children's work - By talking to them after school	- By sending work home - By talking to them	- By talking to them	- By meeting them - By sharing what we do
Communication with others	- By having a special day for the Department	- By showing my plan book to the inspector	- By filling in forms	- By writing to the Department	- By reporting to the Department
A good pre-school	- Has active teachers - Good facilities - Well trained teachers - Good playground - Parent-teacher organisation - More work - Has visits	- Has quality teachers - Has good resources - Has a good environment - Has a positive feeling	- Children, parents and teachers all work together - Three main aspects: the soul, mind and body	- Good building-good resources - Good clean toilets - Safe play area - Enough money - Well paid teachers	- Has a lot of activities - Safe environment - Relevant to children's needs

There was no mention of the importance of religion in this questionnaire but this could be because the Christian nature of the pre-school was so much a part of the programme and everyday life in this community that it was taken for granted as important.

Training and experience

All the teachers at this pre-school had had some form of teacher education ranging from mini-courses in early childhood education to full primary teacher training at the National University of Samoa. Three of the five teachers had uncompleted courses in

both primary and early childhood education which reflected the cost of the course and the low level of their salary. These three teachers wanted to finish the courses offered by the University of the South Pacific because they felt that there was more to know about the children and teaching. In every instance the cost was too great for them as they had too many other commitments. Provisions for in-service training at the pre-school were non-existent and while the head teacher recognised the need for fully trained staff there was no money available for this. She made the comment about the board whom together with her ran the pre-school, "They don't understand the needs of the school and the teachers. They should come and look and talk to us". She had to ask for every little thing she wanted and because none of the board were teachers she found it difficult. She also commented that the board did not understand that they ran a programme not a babysitting service.

There were a number of training providers but all of them were expensive in comparison to the local salaries. A pre-school teacher earned around three to four thousand tala per annum which was equivalent to around two or three thousand New Zealand dollars. The cost of fees to do a unit of training at the USP was four hundred tala and double that for University fees at the National University. Thus the cost of extra training was out of reach for many teachers unless they found a sponsor. All the teachers in this study commented on the lack of in-service courses run by the Department of Education. The other problem with courses was that, even if they were held, often the pre-school was not informed about them until it was too late to organise attending. The National Council for Early Childhood Services was also trying to initiate some in-service courses through the National University. The courses were all ready to run at the beginning of 2001 but the course co-ordinator reported that the NCECES had not had the meeting to finally approve them and so she was unsure when, if ever, the courses would occur. The head teacher, Sa, commented that although her teachers had a range of different and incomplete qualifications for teaching she valued their experience and attitudes to the children more than formal qualifications.

Planning and preparation

Sa had an overall plan for the pre-school programme that she had developed from guidelines issued by the USP early childhood programme and the outline that came from Sogi. She gave the teachers a list of themes for each week of the term and organised the routines and duties of the pre-school. Each term she put up a planner with

the overall organisation outlined. Each teacher rotated round greeting the children, leading the mat time, organising morning tea and farewelling the children. She checked the teacher's plan books every week and from her office she kept an eye on what was happening. She was available for the teachers to come and talk at any time and liked to be involved in the programme when she was not too busy with administration.

The teachers wanted their planning to reflect their behavioural guidelines. Exactly what those behavioural guidelines were, were never clearly explained. They planned to meet the needs of the children by giving them positive learning experiences. The teachers wanted to ensure that the children developed good motor skills, sang songs, had fun and learned to make some decisions for themselves. Two teachers mentioned that they wished the children to learn to do as they were told and behave themselves. This attitude was reflected in the observations made of all the teachers. While the teachers wanted the children to have fun, they were also expected to behave and have respect for their teachers by being obedient. The children were taught to respect each other and look after their resources. Children were heavily praised for good behaviour and compliance.

Three of the five teachers emphasised the need to prepare the children for the future, by encouraging the children to learn their work (ABCs) in order to do well at school and succeed. Preparation for success at school was emphasised in the programme and stood out in my observations of teacher practice. Even in the younger groups children were taught to stand up and recite the alphabet in both languages, to recognise colours, numbers and recite the days of the week. The pre-school programme was thus a formal organised programme with a high percentage of work oriented towards doing well at school. In effect, then, the programme was driven by the perceived needs of the primary school.

In Chapter 6 the teachers' perceptions that they planned to meet the needs of the children by giving them positive learning experiences and planning according to behavioural guidelines will be discussed.

Evaluation and assessment

The main method of assessing the children, from the written word of the teachers, was through the collection of the children's work and recording detail of this in the teacher's notebook. Two teachers also assessed the children by observing them at work and

asking them questions about what they had learnt. There was no evidence from any observation sessions of written records of the children's learning although teachers did ask the children about what they had learnt and they did collect the children's work and date and store it. No written records were shown to me but Sa had a file on each child consisting of work samples from when they began at the pre-school. She used these to determine how far the child had progressed in their time at the pre-school. The work samples were all dated and filed in order but there was no comment on them from any teacher. The work samples showed a developmental progression in terms of the children's ability to use pencil, crayon and paper. Sa filed the work at the end of each week on a Friday while the other teachers carried out the less formal programme. Although all teachers had access to the files, only Sa appeared to use them. She was able to recall a vast amount of detail on each child and his/her progress by referring to his/her work samples. Files for children who had left in the previous three years were stored at the pre-school which suggested that they were not used to pass on information about the children at all.

Communicating with the children

The teachers told the children they were doing well by praising them and giving them stamps and allowing them to choose other activities if they did well. This positive reinforcement was supported by data from the observations of the teachers (refer to Table 2). One teacher mentioned that she spent time with children who were not doing so well and talked to them. It was never specifically made clear how the teacher decided who was not doing well at pre-school in spite of repeated questioning by me. From the observation of the teachers it was apparent that the children who were doing well in the teachers view were those children who were able to fulfil the teachers' expectations of success.

Communicating with the parents

The main method of informing the parents about how their child was doing was by catching them when they picked up their children after school or when they dropped them off in the morning. This was a very social time and the teachers appeared to enjoy the meeting and greeting duty in the morning and afternoon and certainly a great deal of communicating went on then. When the child took a picture or piece of work home the teacher always gave it to the parent and commented on it rather than squashing it into the child's school bag. About ten parents spent the mornings in a separate fale next to

the pre-school waiting for their children. There was no communication between the parents and the teachers unless the parent was physically picking up his/her child. The parents in the fale talked amongst themselves. These parents were reluctant to communicate with me, even on an informal basis possibly due to the language barrier although they were actually all able to speak English.

Communicating with others (Outside agencies)
There did not appear to be a significant amount of interaction with the Department of Education other than a special day once a year when the school was inspected and the occasional filling in of forms. The teachers, including the head teacher, did not specify what exactly the Department came to look at. It seemed to be an inspection to check that all was well in very general terms. The pre-school Board met monthly and only the head teacher went to the meetings. As has already been mentioned she found it hard to communicate with them because she felt they did not really understand her needs or have the same view of the importance of a pre-school education.

Views on what constitutes a good pre-school
For these teachers at Aganoa pre-school, a good pre-school was one that had trained and active teachers. These teachers did not specify the need to have training in early childhood education. They believed there needed to be a positive environment in which teachers, parents and children were working together for the "good of the child" (the mind, body and soul). The teachers also thought that the provision of good resources (not specified) was important along with ensuring that the children were safe. Only one teacher mentioned the need for a good salary and while having quality teachers was mentioned, no one commented on the lack of in-service training and the cost of completing or updating training in early childhood education. Quality teaching to these teachers was assessed in terms of fulfilling certain requirements involving good resources, safety, training and a positive environment.

What makes this pre-school a good one?
The comments from this section along with the next section of the questionnaire on the importance of pre-school education were not included in Table 1 because of the diversity of responses and the detail that was given.

The comments are reported below, as each teacher wrote them.

Teacher A

"This is a good pre-school because of the good teachers, the playground and the nice school building with many resources and facilities. The children are active and safe and happy. It would be better if we had more resources and teaching materials. We need to be always kind and good to the children. It would be easier if the children were always on time for school. It would be improved if we had more preparation, that is more training for the good of the children. This is important because when they grow up they will have had a good start in learning the things that they need to know for their future life."

Teacher Sa

"This is a good pre-school because this school has good, clean facilities for the children. The staff and the children are all happy to be here. It has good resources and provides a good environment for learning. The teachers have the skills and ideas to provide a good education. It would be even better if there could be more training easily available for the teachers and we could improve the ratio of children to teachers. It would be easier to do my job if we were able to provide more training and reduce the group size. If these things happen the child will have a better chance to learn and understand and cope with the activities."

Teacher B

"This is a good pre-school because many people want to send their children here. We have good things here, we make sure the children are safe: they have a good playground and good resources. Teachers need to be able to control the children in a friendly way. The teachers need to have smiling faces. If the teachers do not look happy and smiling and are unable to control the children and love them, then the children will not want to come to our school."

Teacher C

"This is a good pre-school because the teachers are well prepared and it has good resources. It is a good pre-school because the children are regularly assessed. I think this pre-school would be even better if it was able to keep the good teachers they already have." (This remark was not qualified and seemed unusual in that all the teachers had been there for at least three years.)

Teacher D

"This is a good pre-school because the children are happy and give good feedback to the teachers about the programme. They are able to express their ideas about what they do and what they have learnt. In order to be more successful at my job I think we all need to have more resources and better access to training programmes. We do not have enough money to obtain the resources we need."

The importance of a pre-school education

Thus in summary, pre-school education was seen by the teachers as an important step n preparing the children for their future life in society and to enable them to play an important part in their own country. The teachers felt it was a time when children learned how to love, to play and to eat nicely and share with their friends. The Aganoa pre-school teachers felt that children learned to have confidence in themselves and this would prepare them for life at school. The children needed to learn to be controlled in a positive manner and this was very important for their education. The socialisation aspect of pre-school was also important for all the teachers and as teacher A said, "Makes them get rid of their fears to be with others".

Observation data on teachers

The data gathered from observations on teachers is organised into seven categories of interaction and is reported in Tables 2 and 3. The data are reported both as the number of interactions and as a percentage of the total number of interactions for that teacher (Table 2) and the group as a whole (Table 3). The information gathered was put into categories and sorted according to the outline given in Chapter 4.

Table 2: Number of interactions and percentage of time spent in different verbal interactions by the teachers, based on the observations.

	Teacher A		Teacher B		Teacher C		Teacher D	
Activity based	30	16%	24	12%	8	5%	15	9%
Monitoring	15	9%	20	10%	16	9%	14	8%
Assessing	20	10%	35	19%	30	16%	23	14%
Directive	50	27%	42	21%	45	24%	41	26%
Leading	24	13%	20	10%	29	15%	20	12%
Affirmation	30	16%	44	22%	37	20%	32	20%
Social	15	9%	12	6%	20	11%	16	10%

Table 3: Total number of verbal interactions and percentage of total interactions of teachers.

All teachers	Totals and percentages	
Activity based	77	9%
Monitoring	65	9%
Assessing	108	15%
Directive	178	24%
Leading	93	13%
Affirmation	143	20%
Social	63	9%

Overall there was a higher percentage of directive comments than any other kind of interaction. Not mentioned in either Table 2 or Table 3 is the number of non-verbal interactions that were difficult to classify into any of the identified categories. In total these interactions amounted to one-quarter of all the recorded interactions that were observed. These non-verbal interactions consisted mainly of a look, a nod of the head, a gesture with the hand, and raised eyebrows. They were evident in all the observed periods and across all activities. Because of the more generalised nature of these interactions and their use over all categories they were not included in the data of verbal interactions. These non-verbal interactions were difficult to classify into specific categories and yet they played a role in the pattern of the pre-school interactions. A child stopped what he/she was doing with a look from the teacher, a child moved out of the way with a hand gesture from the teacher and smiled after a nod. These non-verbal

interactions occurred across all categories of verbal interactions, they have not been singled out for specific mention because they were a significant part of all interactions.

Along with the high percentage of directive comments made to the children was the relatively high percentage of remarks that gave the child positive feelings about what he/she was doing. Comments relating to social activities, checking on what the child was doing and commenting on what he/she was doing accounted for less than thirty percent of the total activities, which was consistent with the high percentage of directive comments. The teachers generally were directing the children's activities so there was less need to check on what they were up to. Comments relating to the assessment of the children made up fifteen percent of the verbal interactions and this percentage is supported by data from the teacher's questionnaire as well. Teachers monitored children's progress by asking them questions about what they had just done to see if they had understood. Similarly, comments and interactions that related to the teacher leading and the children doing accounted for thirteen percent of verbal interactions. These comments were, in some cases, difficult to distinguish from comments that were related to directing the children. Overall leading interactions were classified as those comments during a lesson that meant the children had to follow; "repeat after me", "you do it now", "all of you say it now". Directive instructions were classified as more organising remarks related to the children tidying up or getting ready for an activity.

Informal interviews with teachers

In general, these happened as the teachers came up to socialise or ask for further clarification of the questionnaire. There was, however, no apparent pattern to the teachers interacting with me.

There were ten recorded informal interviews; of these eight occurred towards the end of the week when the teachers appeared to be more relaxed. Teacher A had three interviews along with the head teacher Sa and teacher B had 2 interviews and the others had one each. This is not to say that there were not other occasions where they discussed matters with me, but the recorded sessions were all longer than a brief comment in passing. A session was recorded as an informal interview if the teacher came over and either sat or stood nearby and talked about what was happening and what they thought or moved on from asking for clarification of the questionnaire. In all cases

the session was longer than two minutes. A summary of the topics discussed is included in Table 4. There were 50 minutes in total of recorded informal interviews.

Table 4: Summary of informal interview data from the teachers.

Teachers	Personal and Social	Personal goals	Monitoring children	Children's achievement	Children's background	Educational goals	Future aims for children	General goals
A	y	y						
A		y						y
A	y				y		y	
Sa	y	y	y	y	y			
Sa			y	y	y	y		y
Sa	y				y	y	y	
B	y	y						y
B	y	y					y	
C	y	y	y				y	
D	y	y					y	y
Total	8	7	3	2	4	2	5	4

The 'y' on Table 4 indicates that, 'yes', the teacher discussed this particular topic with me to some degree. The categories under which to classify the information were determined after the interviews with the teachers. Each remark or comment was analysed in terms of content and then classified. The majority of the comments made were in the personal and social areas. The teachers came up and talked about what they were going to do or had done over the weekend and what they hoped to do next. All of the teachers expressed a desire to continue with their own education and this was classified under personal goals. For comments relating to the children's needs, they were put into five categories, relating to monitoring their activities, achievements, backgrounds, daily goals and future goals for the children. Together these accounted for nearly half the comments. It was important to separate these goals in order to breakdown the nature of the comments about the children.

Monitoring remarks about the children referred to comments dealing with what the child was currently engaged in:

- Remarks about the children's achievement were in relation to how well they were currently doing. For example: " See Josef, he is writing so well now".

- Comments about the children's background dealt solely with the occupation of the parents and whether or not they were employed.

- Educational goals were all the comments relating to children needing to know how to write and say the alphabet in order to be prepared for school.

- Future aims for the children were all the comments relating to the necessity for the children to make their way successfully in their own society.

- General goals related to comments about where they hoped the education sector was heading in the future.

Teacher Sa made the most comments relating to the children and this perhaps reflects her higher level of training and education and her maintenance of all the records. She made more comments relating to the children and their achievements than any other teacher. The other teachers regarded this informal interview time as a chance to have a chat about what everyone was up to and what they wanted from their job, although they all discussed future goals for the children. The future goals discussed, all related to the importance of preparing the children to do well in school in order to be successful in later life. No comments were made in relation to preparing the children for education overseas.

Observation of teachers' after-school sessions

Two sessions after school were formally observed and recorded after the children had gone home. These sessions were not initially planned for, as their existence was not originally made explicit to me. It was not until half way through the observations of the teachers that a remark was made that indicated that the teachers had regular sessions to "catch up" on the children. The catching up on the children referred to talking about what was going on with the children in each of the groups so that all the teachers knew what was happening. These sessions occurred about once a week after 1.00 pm when

the last child had been collected and the pre-school was clean and tidy ready for the next day. The teachers all sat down and had a cup of tea together and discussed the children. It was not a formal staff meeting but rather a catch up, consulting time. They talked about any children with whom they were having success or difficulty and gave each other ideas about what to do to help the child. From asking questions about these sessions, the primary focus was on children who were causing concern. However, occasionally it appeared the meetings looked at children who were doing well and how to extend these children further.

At the end of the observation sessions for the teachers I was invited to attend two of these weekly sessions. The teachers indicated that they were happy for me to continue writing notes during the sessions but they were not so happy to have it tape recorded. Thus, information is only from my written records. The sessions lasted up to an hour depending on how many children were discussed. The teachers looked at these sessions as an opportunity to ask their colleagues for help and to gather ideas on how to deal with particular problems. The teachers enjoyed these times as a chance to talk about the children and where they were going without having any interruptions or pressures on them. The majority of the children would not have been discussed during these sessions because they would be conforming to the teachers' expectations. The teachers referred to no written notes when a child was discussed nor were any notes taken from the suggestions offered. Judging from the tenor of the discussions it was clearly an assessment session where needy children were looked at and suggestions were offered as to how to improve the child's behaviour or skills. These sessions were primarily to deal with those children who stood out in a particular way, such as non-conformist or very successful.

In retrospect, however, these sessions were primarily of benefit to the teachers. They were an occasion to have a cup of tea together and go over the events of the day with a particular focus on some of the children. From follow-up observations of the teachers, the children who were discussed in these sessions were not specifically targeted later. In other words these sessions provided an opportunity to discuss specific children, socialise and talk about what the teachers were going to do but no further action was taken.

A brief transcript of a session is offered below which was typical of the two sessions that were observed and recorded in writing (10 minutes from a total of 50 minutes).

Teacher A. Maria is not listening today.

Teacher Sa. I think she is tired, her father brought her today. Yesterday she was like that as well. I told her to go sleep and she was better then.

Teacher A. I think maybe that will be okay. I will try tomorrow.

Teacher D. Maria was like that for me. I made her sit with me and then she listened. I don't think she is always tired. I think she is not attending. Maybe she doesn't hear well. It was better when she was close.

Teacher A. Um, maybe that would work, I must look and see if she is better when I am with her. She is good at doing her pictures. She is like a schoolgirl I think.

Teacher C. Iese is like her. He listens when he is near but mostly he is looking at the other children and not me.

Teacher A. He is good at his work, isn't he? I think he knows the ABC and he can always answer the question I ask about the work. Brenda did you watch him today on the mat? He was trying hard wasn't he?

Brenda. Yes, he did say the alphabet.

Teacher Sa. He is like a schoolboy. I think his parents may take him to school soon. He is ready even if he is not five. Those children next to him were naughty today. We must look at them later, they were naughty.

Teacher C. They didn't listen when I told them to sit. They were naughty.

Teacher Sa. We look tomorrow and see how to make them do the work.

The conversation went on like this for nearly an hour, and included about a quarter of the children. It was evident from the manner of the teachers that they found this discussion both useful and relaxing. It allowed them not only to have a chat with each

other but also catch up with what all the children were doing. It was both a relaxing and a supporting session. There was no obvious system or organisation, it evolved according to the needs of the teachers at the time. In general, at these sessions, only those children who were disruptive or causing some concern were discussed.

Data from children

Findings from observations of children

Table 5: Summary of data from observations of children.

Target child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total	Percentage
Teacher – child interactions	12	10	10	12	7	13	12	10	10	11	12	10	129	45
Child – teacher interactions	1	2	5	1	3	4	4	1	4	5	4	5	39	14
Child – child interactions	4	3	3	5	3	1	1	1	3	4	1	3	32	11
Child alone	4	5	1	2	1	1	1	6	1	1	5	1	29	10
Child watching	3	1	4	1	6	3	4	4	4	3	1	4	38	13
Child asking for help	0	3	1	0	1	2	1	2	1	0	0	1	12	4
Child seeking approval	0	0	0	3	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	9	3

From Table 5, it can be seen that the majority of interactions or activities that the child was focused on originated from teacher directions. These were occasions where the child went to an activity or was doing something in relation to direct instructions from the teacher. Children interacting with each other, or initiating an interaction with a teacher, working alone or just watching what was happening all occurred in approximately similar percentages of time. Children who asked for help with an activity or sought approval from the teacher occurred in a small percentage of time (Table 5). It was not very common for children to seek out approval or help. The teachers were aware of which child was under observation. It was difficult to determine from the data gathered whether that child was given extra attention from the teacher when he/she was under observation but if this happened the attention became less obvious as time went on. The teachers became very accustomed to my presence and took me for granted. This was apparent in the way they reacted to the children. When I

was first involved the teachers would glance in my direction when they raised their voices, gave directions or reinforced the children. After two or three weeks this behaviour almost completely disappeared and the teachers carried on regardless.

Findings from interviewing children

Although ten of the twelve children had more than one interview, the information gained from each child has been combined. This was done because some of the interviews were very brief, such as when the child sat temporarily or had a conversation in passing. Several interviews are reported verbatim in Appendix 11 and 12. Both these children had more than one session.

Table 6: Children's responses to interview questions.

Target child	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Likes playing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
Likes mat time	1		1		1			1	1		1		6
Likes friends	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
Likes learning	1	1	1	1	1			1	1			1	8
Likes drawing	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
Likes stories			1	1			1			1			4
Preparation for school	1	1	1	1	1			1		1	1	1	9
Some dislikes	1		1			1				1	1		5
Suggestions for improvement			1	1	1					1	1	1	6

The child is identified along the top of Table 6 and if he/she responded to the question it is marked in the appropriate section of it. The categories are listed down the side of the table. All the children enjoyed coming to pre-school to be with their friends, to play and to draw. Three quarters of the children specifically mentioned that they liked coming to pre-school because it enabled them to get ready for school. This was indicated with positive comments regarding school. These included:

- I come to school to learn things for that school (points over the road).
- I learn my name for school.
- I know my Sunday, Monday, Tuesday for school.
- I learn my ABC, you know, for school over there.

Half the children also had ideas on things they thought would improve the pre-school. The improvements were quite specific:

- More play would better.
- Painting and drawing would make it better.
- We should learn writing.
- I like more play.
- I like more time to eat.

These comments were all in English. There was no need for an interpreter.

Findings from the parent questionnaires

The responses from each questionnaire were typed up and sent back to the parents to ensure that it was a correct representation of what they thought. This was particularly important in four cases where some of the responses were in Samoan and had been translated. None of the parents returned their transcriptions or commented on them. The translator was not given information that could lead to the identification of the parents. Many parents recorded more than one reason for each question, and so the responses for each question have been listed in individual Tables, collectively labelled as Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of information received from parent questionnaires.

Why do you send your child to pre-school?	Number of responses.
To get used to the idea of going to school.	7
To prepare them for school.	8
To make friends.	5
To learn to share.	2
To begin their education.	9

What do you want them to learn at pre-school?	Number of responses.
To work with other children.	8
To gain experience of school.	5
To learn to sing.	5
To learn to listen and obey.	4
To learn good manners.	4
To enjoy learning.	7
To appreciate education	9

Why did you choose this pre-school?	Number of responses.
Close to home.	7
Because it is run by the Church.	2
Because it is clean.	4
It is safe.	5
Because the teachers are nice.	4
I heard good things about it.	9

What do you like about your child coming here?	Number of responses.
They meet new friends.	4
They love it.	7
They learn to sing and read.	7
It is safe.	4
It is bilingual.	3
They learn to be smart.	7

What does this pre-school do well?	Number of responses.
They use good resources.	5
The teachers are good.	9
They learn to share.	4
They give the children clean water.	5
The children are taught to listen.	6

What could they do better?	Number of responses.
They need more resources.	4
The teachers need more training.	3
They need more teachers.	2
Nothing-Satisfied parents.	8

What makes a good quality pre-school?	Number of responses.
Higher level of teacher education.	9
Better salaries for teachers.	4
Good facilities.	6
Good health care.	4
More operating money.	4

The final section of the parent questionnaire dealt with any other comments that the parents had regarding pre-school education in general. One parent's comment sums up what all the other parents wrote one way or another:

> "I think children should be encouraged to read and write. They need to be taught how to identify the difference between letters and symbols. There needs to be enough time for the teacher to concentrate on teaching a small number of children rather than one large class. Children should learn to work independently. School fees should not be too expensive as that is one factor that draws parents away and they tend not to send their child to pre-school. Schools should encourage children to bring a healthy lunch and not junk food. We should have more programmes on TV in our own language instead of Sesame Street showing all the time. We need to encourage every parent and tell them how important it is for their children to go to a pre-school instead of going straight to primary school. The government has a role to play here."

In summary then, the parents recognised the importance of pre-school for their children. They wanted their child to learn in order to do well at school and be prepared for their future education. They regarded the socialisation aspect of the pre-school as moderately important which was evident from the number of comments related to sharing, working with others and meeting new friends. They wanted their child to be safe which included valuing the cleanliness of the facilities, particularly the toilets and the importance of giving the children plenty of clean water to drink. This was especially relevant in a place like Samoa where not all the water was safe to drink. The parents also valued the importance of having well-trained teachers.

Figure 3. Inside the study pre-school.

Chapter 6

Discussion on perceptions of quality

This chapter looks at how quality in a pre-school was perceived by the three stakeholders in the pre-school. Quality is a difficult concept to define and hence this chapter views it through the perceptions of the participants in an attempt to determine what was considered to be important in this pre-school.

Aspects valued by the teachers, parents and children

From Table 1 (Chapter 5) it was evident that the teachers were very concerned about the needs of the children. It was important to be able to plan to meet the children's needs and teach accordingly. The teachers said they wanted to listen and talk to the children to find out what their needs were. From Table 2 and Table 3 it was evident, however, that the teachers at this pre-school spent more time in directive and affirming interactions rather than listening to the children to find out what the children's needs were. There were a relatively low percentage of interactions with the children that were classed as social. The teachers wanted to make the children happy and equip them for their future life within the Samoan community and the wider world. Education was seen as a critical factor in this and success was important. Therefore the teachers worked towards

teaching the children the things they needed to know in order to be successful in the primary school system. The children needed to know their alphabet, how to count and how to behave and do as they were told. This directive, skill based approach was supported by the data that was gathered. Teachers also stated the need to meet the child's developmental needs. Meeting the children's developmental needs and following guidelines were stated objectives for learning in this pre-school. From the planning documents viewed, observations of the pre-school programme and the teachers written responses and interviews, it appeared that the interpretation of these objectives into teacher practice in the pre-school was not the same. Meeting the children's needs implied that the needs of each child were assessed and then met. In terms of this being a needs based curriculum the teachers' objectives were met but in terms of the teachers assessing the needs of each child and teaching according to those needs there was no evidence to suggest that this happened.

The programme that was followed in this pre-school was a formal programme designed to give all the children the skills they needed in order to succeed within the school system in Samoa. There was a difference between the stated objectives of the teachers and the actual practice similar to that found by Bell (1990). While the teachers in this study had formal beliefs on the nature of educational planning, meeting the needs of the children and following formal behavioural guidelines, their actual practice was based on their understanding of education in Samoa; getting the children ready for school and from observations carried out (Table 2 and Table 3) a high proportion of the teachers' time was spent in directive interactions. This high level of direction in the formal pre-school programme and lack of time for the children to engage in spontaneous activity suggested that the main focus of preparing the children for school was dominant in this pre-school.

Tanielu (1997) in her descriptions of life in school in Samoa described an environment in which children were encouraged to sit and listen, to behave, not to question and above all to succeed. She described a passive environment where the teacher was firmly in control and was seen to be a good teacher if the children listened, sat still and did as they were told. This was the measure of a good teacher Tanielu (1997) and in this case the high level of directive comments and control exhibited by the teachers in this pre-school would indicate that they were good teachers. These teachers were

fulfilling their own expectations of the behaviour of a good teacher and they were teaching the children what they needed to know to get on in school. In this way the teachers at the pre-school were providing a quality education. These teachers were able to discuss their planning and preparation in terms of meeting the children's needs but in reality their programme followed their own practical view of educating the child to meet the needs of the society in which they lived. That is, the child was taught to listen, to sit still and to do as he/she was told in order to succeed. A dominant aim of this pre-school was to prepare the children to do well at primary school and this was reinforced with having a head teacher who was primary trained. From a more Western perspective quality encompasses more than just preparing the children to succeed at primary school, but in the view of these teachers in Samoa, quality in practice was about getting the children ready to do well at primary school. From the perspective of these pre-school teachers in Samoa, a high quality education was being delivered by their pre-school because they believed that they were enabling the children to succeed at school.

The expectation that the children will be prepared for school was also important for the parents. From the summary of findings from the parents (Table 7) their major reasons for sending their child to pre-school was to get their child used to the idea of school, to gain experience of school and to learn to work with others. They wanted their child to have a head start on their education and learn how to listen and behave. In these terms then, this pre-school was achieving the aims of the parents. This pre-school was thus a high quality pre-school in the view of these parents. The children listened, behaved and were learning their ABC ready for school. Parents valued education, they wanted their child to appreciate what education was all about. For them it was about learning to succeed, learning to listen and obey. The socialisation aspects of the pre-school were also important for the parents; they wanted their child to learn to get on with other children and to learn to share. The transmission of culture was also seen as important, the parents valued the opportunity their child had to learn songs, poems and to fit in with other children and value the education they were given. The teachers supported this view of preparation for their future life (Table 1), by teaching the children to do as they were told, by learning songs and prayers and by learning to be part of a group.

From observations of the children (Table 5) a high percentage of their time was spent in doing as they were told during the formal hours of the pre-school. Children were

responding predominantly to the directions given by the teacher. The majority of their interactions were directive. That is, they did as they were told, they drew a picture when they were told, they listened when they were told and they used the blocks and toys when it was scheduled into the programme. There was a high degree of compliance by the children; they responded to questions in unison, they automatically responded with correct actions when the teacher began to sing the tidy up song, and they generally sat and listened as required. However from the interview data, the things the children (Table 6) valued most highly about this pre-school were the opportunities to play, to be with their friends and to draw pictures. These activities were the least directive in the whole programme except for the occasional opportunities to draw unsupervised. In general, however, although the children were initially told what to draw in relation to the theme of the day, once they had finished they were permitted more independence in this area. Preparation for school was mentioned by three quarters of the children in that they thought it was important to get ready for school by learning their letters and days of the week. However, overall the value of the pre-school for the children was the opportunity to play with their friends, a finding that is consistent with other studies regarding children's perceptions of quality (Langsted, 1994, Huttenen, 1992). Unlike a New Zealand kindergarten where the children are not encouraged to come before the scheduled time, the children in this study liked to come early to pre-school because it was their major opportunity to participate in free play on the mat with their friends with very little teacher direction. The importance of having opportunities to socialise as valued by the study children was consistent with the information in the Langsted (1994) study on what children valued about pre-school. Whether this was true for other children in Samoa needs to be established through further research.

In summary then, the teachers in practice, valued meeting the learning needs of the children that prepared them for school, the parents wanted their child to receive a good start to his/her education and the children predominantly valued the socialisation aspect of the pre-school. These findings are not dissimilar to other studies in this field. The parents who wanted their child to do well at school have similar aspirations to those parents in Evans and Schaeffer's (1996) study where they also wanted their child to succeed at school. However parents in other studies (Farquhar, 1991, Te One, 1998, Williams & Ainley, 1994) all emphasised the importance of the health and safety factors more than the parents in this study did. The study group parents valued a clean

and safe environment but there were other aspects of the pre-school that they valued more. The teachers' views in this study reflected the practical aspects and aspirations of education in Samoa and the differences between their stated goals and actual practice were line with some of the findings by Bell (1990). The children's views on what they valued are similar to other studies; they enjoyed the opportunity to play with their friends.

Views on quality in pre-school education

To the teachers in Aganoa pre-school, quality meant having good resources, well trained teachers and having a positive environment in which the children could learn. All the teachers surveyed emphasised the importance of resources that were in turn related to financial aspects. There was a paucity of resources in the pre-school and they were also very expensive to buy in Samoa relative to the income of the pre-school. The pre-school did not have overseas contacts or access to aid funding that would have facilitated the acquisition of extra resources. The teachers recognised that they would have been able to provide a fuller programme for the children if they had had more facilities. Another effect of lack of extra funding that a teacher mentioned was the low salaries. She felt that if the salaries were greater it would lead to better teachers. More money available would enable more teachers to take advantage of the training and the in-service courses that were available and this in turn would lead to higher quality programmes (Farquhar, 1990; Meade & Kennedy, 1992; Smith, 1992, 1996b; Wylie, 1989). However, the issue of the lack of consistent training in early childhood education and limited in-service provisions was not of vital concern for these teachers on the written questionnaire although several teachers mentioned this in their informal discussions with me. The teachers in this study did not mention the kind of training or in-service they would have liked. Lack of finance appeared to be the main reason for incomplete training and lack of adequate communication (forewarning of training opportunities) appeared to be the main reason the in-service that was available was not taken up.

The teachers listed factors they believed would contribute to a high quality pre-school programme. They wished for more opportunities for trips for the children and wanted to provide a good working environment involving children, parents and the teachers. They recognised the need to have the parents included in the whole pre-school picture

as a factor in enhancing the quality of the programme that was offered. Once again however there was some discrepancy between what was said and what was actually happening. The teachers believed that having a good relationship between the parents and the operation of the pre-school was of benefit to the programme, yet based on the observational data from individual teachers, children and the overall programme, there was very little evidence of parents being involved in the day-to-day life and activities of the pre-school programme. Thus the theory and practice appeared to be separate issues.

Another aspect of quality these teachers mentioned was the need for a safe and clean environment. In a country like Samoa, where the water was not always safe to consume, the need to provide clean drinking water and clean facilities for the children assumed greater importance in contributing to the overall quality of the pre-school than it would have in New Zealand, where such issues are taken for granted.

Parents, too, valued the importance of a clean and healthy environment for their children, with safe water to drink. These considerations, while they are probably valued in a more westernised society were articulated here because of the developing awareness of the importance of clean water to drink for the health of their child. While in the reviewed literature on parents perceptions of what constitutes a high quality pre-school (Farquhar, 1991; Te One, 1998; Williams & Ainley, 1994), the importance of the child being safe, well looked after and having positive experiences are all ranked as very important. In this pre-school in Samoa the most important factor that contributed towards a high quality pre-school for the parents was the level of teacher education. Possible reasons for this were the lack of consistency in early childhood teacher education and the number of teachers in early childhood with incomplete or no qualifications at all in the field. While there were no official statistics on the number of fully qualified early childhood teachers in Samoa, both the study and the pilot pre-school in this research had teachers whose qualifications ranged from primary training to untrained with varied levels of experience working in the early childhood field. Parents also mentioned other factors as important such as good facilities, better salaries, more operating money and good health care and the socialisation of children. However the level of teacher education was more commonly articulated. The level of teacher education was possibly regarded as an important factor here because of the desire to have their child well prepared for school at an early stage. The parents wanted to know

that the teacher was capable of giving their child a good start at school. Because there was no one curriculum guideline for pre-school education such as there is in New Zealand with Te Whariki (Ministry of Education, 1996), and no universal set of standards for providers of teacher education, Samoan parents may have had a higher level of awareness of the quality and variability of teacher education as it impacted on the kind of education their child received. One parent's perception regarding the importance of pre-school summed this up nicely, "children should be encouraged to read and write, they need to identify differences between letters and words and work independently. For these aims to succeed you need to have well trained teachers". This pre-school valued the accomplishment of these aims. In these terms as well, Aganoa was a good quality pre-school.

Actions of teachers that reflect their views on quality

The teachers at this pre-school believed in the value of pre-school education. They believed that the factors that contributed towards a high quality pre-school were the provision of a programme that met the behavioural needs of the children as the teachers perceived them. The teachers believed that it was important to have a variety of resources, good teachers and a positive environment. Teachers, children and their parents needed to work together to develop a good quality pre-school and the importance of cleanliness was also stressed. Teachers needed to deal with the three main aspects of the child, the soul, the mind and the body.

The behavioural needs of the child were not clearly specified by any of the teachers at this pre-school, in spite of my attempts in informal conversations with the teachers to clarify exactly what was meant by behavioural needs. This would suggest that the teachers had some knowledge of theoretical aspects of early childhood education from their training but this knowledge was of terminology rather than how to implement this in practice. This highlights the difference between the teachers' practice of teaching and their stated beliefs about teaching, the difference between what they say and what they do. This difference is also found in the Bell study (1990). This finding is in contrast to the study by Stipek and Byler (1997) in which they found that there was a significant relationship between pre-school teachers beliefs and their practices. Some inconsistencies were found between education policies and pre-school teachers' beliefs on those policies that led to some teachers implementing programmes that they did not

fully support. In this study in Samoa the teachers had beliefs about the philosophy of education, meeting the behavioural needs of the children but their actual practice evolved from the unspoken theory of knowledge they appeared to hold. Children needed to be taught basic skills in order to succeed at school. Children learned through repetition and rote learning. Looked at from this perspective the teachers did in fact have a positive relationship between their practice and their unspoken beliefs about how children learned.

There was a high level of cleanliness at the pre-school. Teachers spent time after school cleaning their environment and each day after morning tea one teacher swept and cleaned the eating areas. The children were encouraged to drink bottled water and all the children washed and dried their hands before eating and after using the toilet. The toilet area was spotlessly clean which was a tribute to the beliefs and practices of these teachers. In this respect the teachers' stated beliefs about cleanliness match their actual practice consistently. Over the period of time of the observation sessions at least one hour per week was devoted to health and hygiene lessons and all positive health practices were positively reinforced. Children's nails were checked daily and children were encouraged to bring a handkerchief every day.

The programme that was followed by this pre-school was based on the units of training supplied by the University of the South Pacific. These were theme-based units that had been adapted by the pre-school so that they were more relevant to Samoa. For instance, in the unit of study relating to coconuts, all the weaving, cooking and other uses of the coconut plant happened around the children in their daily life. The teachers believed that it was important to teach to the children's needs and listen to them and give the children an opportunity to make their own decisions and choices. In practice however, each teacher followed the guidelines and one lesson fits all. There was no evidence to suggest that lessons were tailored to meet individual needs other than the age grouping of the children. Each age group was taught as a collective unit. The activities were the same for each child and there were no choices of activity in the formal lesson time. The only choices the children had were before 9 a.m. and sometimes after the morning tea break while they waited for the whole group to finish before commencing lessons again. In terms of the identified needs of the children, the teachers wanted to make sure that they were adequately prepared for school. This meant that alongside the theme work

the children were taught their ABC, the days of the week, numbers, writing, and to listen and sit quietly as they would be expected to do at school. Success was measured by how well the children could repeat the alphabet, their numbers, and write and chant phrases after the teacher. In the light of these objectives relating to success at school, the teachers were doing well, but in terms of meeting the individual needs of each child and listening to the children there was little evidence to suggest that they were successful.

The teachers decided how they had achieved their goals for the children by assessing the children. The assessment consisted of orally evaluating the children to see if they could answer questions about what they had just learnt or by observing the children doing an activity to see if they were able to repeat what they had been taught. Some of the teachers said that they also assessed by keeping records of the children's work and by recording some information about the child. Assessment and evaluation was definitely part of these teachers' vocabularies. They wanted to know that the children were learning. Learning occurred when the children were able to repeat back to the teacher what they had just been taught. From the observations of the teachers there was evidence that the teachers did question some of the children after a lesson about what they had just learnt but there was no evidence to suggest that this information was further recorded. Only the head teacher kept dated work samples given to her by the teachers in a file. These files showed the progression the child had made over time in their work but there were no comments on file regarding the child or their work. The file consisted of sequentially ordered and dated samples of a variety of work samples. On one occasion this file was brought out to demonstrate the progress that a child had made over the year with the comment that the head teacher had meant to give the file to the child when she left to go to school. There was no evidence seen of written records for the current year of children and the head teacher said in a casual conversation that she had not started collecting stuff yet (by this time it was already mid-way through the year). There was also no evidence to show that each child was formally assessed and that this information was recorded by the head teacher or their own group teacher. Assessment was a more casual, less systematic process than what generally occurs in New Zealand.

The teachers did, however, have regular meetings at least once or twice a week, if not more often, which served as a method of keeping track of some of the children, especially the more disruptive ones. These sessions were informal, with no written records, and served as a forum for the teachers to comment on children they were teaching and as an affirmation of what they were doing to meet their stated goals. From discussions with the teachers and observation of several of these sessions, their purpose predominantly was a means of gaining professional support for teachers and giving advice on what to do with the children who were causing concern. On several occasions ideas were also offered to teachers to give them support with children who needed further extension. This was the only form of regular staff time where the teachers got together and discussed the children - the rest of the meetings and discussions they had were on a more informal basis with only two or three teachers at any one time during the actual session. Even before the session started when the teachers were enjoying breakfast and coffee, the children were not usually discussed. This morning coffee was primarily a social chat time for the teachers discussing matters of mutual interest apart from the children.

Part of the assessment and evaluation process was informing the children of their own progress. This the teachers did well (Table 3) as twenty percent of their interactions with the children were affirmations of desired behaviour. Correct responses were always praised and the children were encouraged to feel good when they did something correctly as assessed by the teachers, whether it was a parroted response to a question about the weather or a drawing in line with instructions. These teachers gave out plenty of positive encouragement. The teachers not only felt it was important to tell the children that they were smart and recognised the importance of praising them, they also consistently followed this in practice as well. The children at this pre-school were made to feel good about themselves. There was no evidence of less than positive comments to the children, incorrect responses were in general ignored and if children were not drawing the correct picture they would be gently asked to repeat their work. If the children were not doing so well or not on task, a teacher would often sit with them and redirect their actions in order to confirm the importance of the original behavioural request. This redirection of behaviour was always quiet and relatively unobtrusive to the rest of the children. The appropriate behaviour for school, learning the alphabet, sitting still, listening and doing as they were told was consistently encouraged in almost

every aspect of this pre-school. The praise and reinforcement was non-specific, it served not only to praise good work but also to reinforce desired behaviour. Thus it was also used as a form of social control and helped support compliant, desirable behaviour. In all instances the teacher was in control and it was through the teacher that the child learned what to do and what to say. It was with pride that a teacher said, " you see, now the children they are like primary school, they learn to write their names" (Appendix 10). This suggested then that children needed to be able to write their names before they were seen to be ready to move on to primary school.

Assessment happened on an ad hoc basis, in the meeting time after pre-school or in passing to other teachers and in positive remarks to children. There were no current written records, assessment was verbal. When information such as this was not written down there was a danger that some information about children could be forgotten or erroneously attributed to another child and there was no written evidence to validate the oral recollection. The information held on each child, whether in the files or in the teacher's head did not seem to be transferred to the parents or to the child's future school so the value of the information on each child would have to be questioned.

Overall perceptions of quality in this pre-school in Samoa

In beginning to determine just what perceptions of quality were held by the different stakeholder groups in this pre-school it was important to bear in mind the beliefs each group held. Their beliefs about how children learned and what they needed to know in order to be successful at primary school form the central basis for beliefs about quality in pre-school.

McLachlan-Smith and St George (2000) and Bell (1990) in their studies on teachers' beliefs about education in New Zealand found that there were two distinct categories of beliefs - the theory held by the teacher regarding how children learn and the theory held in actual practice, the difference between developmental and practical theories. A theory of practice is the one that is in operation each day as children learn. The teachers carry out their ideas through this theory of practice. This is particularly evident in this Samoan pre-school as the teachers all had firm beliefs about planning to meet the needs of the children and listening to them and meeting their developmental needs. The beliefs the teachers held regarding children's developmental needs arose from the training the teachers had received including the predominately primary trained head

teacher. But in terms of actual practice, the teachers taught according to what they believed was necessary to equip the child for success at school and in the future. There was a discrepancy between what the teachers said they believed, teaching to meet the behavioural needs of the children, and the unspoken beliefs they held about children's needs demonstrated by their teaching practice, a basic skills approach.

Teachers at the study pre-school believed that it was a good pre-school because it had good teachers, a good playground and the children were safe and happy. These were the things they considered made it a quality pre-school. When this perception of quality is translated into theory, the things that made this a high quality pre-school for the teachers were that the children were provided with a quality environment (in the teachers' perception) in which to learn. The children had well-prepared teachers and access to a range of resources and they were safe and happy. In practice however the things that contributed towards the quality of this pre-school in Samoa was the degree to which it met the stated needs of the parents, teachers and children in terms of getting the children ready for school and the wider society in which they participated. These were the skills, knowledge and attitudes that were taught to the children. The achievement of these goals, especially getting children ready for primary school were considered to be of paramount importance.

The teachers in the study had determined ideas on what constituted quality that were in line with other studies in this area but as with other teachers, their practice differed with the theory (Bell, 1990; Farquhar, 1991). Teachers relied on practical considerations and based their classroom practice on this rather than on an operational theory basis. That is, classroom decisions were made on practical experience rather than on more formal theoretical considerations. Teachers at this pre-school did what was necessary for the children, based on working theories that met the needs of the children to succeed at school rather than on the more formal theories of learning and teaching they may have covered during their training at one of the service providers in Samoa.

The attitudes of the head teacher at this pre-school also supported this view. In theory she believed in teaching according to the needs of the individual children and listening to them. She wanted to provide a positive learning environment for the children in which all could learn and understand. She believed in the value of providing more training for the teachers as a way of increasing the quality of the programme she was

able to offer for the children. However, being a more practical person she also had a high level of admiration and respect for the practical experience of her teachers and valued their commitment towards preparing the children for school in spite of the lack of completed formal qualifications in early childhood education.

For example, in an informal conversation with Sa (May, 2000), she mentioned that it was a good thing to read to children because it allowed for their language to develop further. She had a supply of books at the pre-school which had been sent over from New Zealand, including old school journals, that were displayed on a back shelf.

However, there was only one occasion on which I observed the children being read to. This lack of oral reading to the children was an indication not only of the lack of appropriate books in this pre-school and Samoan primary schools in general but also the lack of value attached to reading aloud at primary schools in Samoa. It was more than likely that if reading aloud to children was perceived by the teachers to be of value to primary school children, it would also be valued in the pre-school. However, there was no specific evidence to judge the value attached to oral reading to children other than the fact that it was not a common occurrence in this pre-school. Likewise there is only anecdotal evidence to substantiate the claim that the primary schools in Samoa lacked suitable books to read aloud. This was a good example of the difference between theoretical knowledge held and the practical application of this. Reading aloud was considered important by the head teacher and yet because it was not seen as important for the child's success at primary school it was not an integral part of the pre-school programme at this pre-school in Samoa.

Pre-school education in Samoa was seen as an important step towards preparing the children to take a future part in their own society. It prepared them for life at school and taught them to play nicely and share with their friends and be controlled in a positive manner. The theory of learning was overridden by the more practical aspects of socialisation such as getting ready for school and learning to behave in an appropriate manner for this society. In practice, quality for these teachers was about socialisation, and fitting into school. Socialisation was about "getting rid of their fears to be with others" (Teacher A, in an informal session, June 2000), and thus get along with other people and learn how to conform to the requirements of their society. According to the teachers at the study pre-school, the pre-school was a good one when the children have

learnt to socialise according to the requirements of their community. The teachers in this pre-school in Samoa had a strong belief in themselves and their aims. They believed they were good at carrying out these primary functions of socialisation and preparation for primary school and most of the things they did in the pre-school were related to the fulfilment of these aims in spite of their articulated views in meeting the individual learning needs of the children.

The teachers in this study recognised the needs of society in that they prepared the children for school and thus for success in later life. It was important for the children to know how to behave, to be good, not to question and above all to do well at school. The parents also held these same objectives for their children. They wanted their child to do well at school and thus succeed in society. Comments from the parents related to wanting their child to be smart, to learn to share and have good manners plus learning to get used to the idea of going to school (Table 7). It is important to recognise that these parental perceptions of quality in pre-school education related predominantly to their own child and how they got on at the pre-school. This finding is consistent with other work on parental perceptions on education; parents want what is best for their child, to be safe and happy and do well (Fairburn-Dunlop, 1986; Larner and Phillips, 1994; Te One, 1998.). Basically parents of children at the study pre-school also wanted their child's education to be consistent with the particular needs of their society.

Perceptions on quality must be looked at in terms of the society in which they have been generated. Parents at this pre-school in Samoa wanted what was best for their child which meant that the child must learn to listen, obey and get on well at school in order to succeed at primary school and in their future life. Therefore, it was the view of these parents that this school was doing well because they believed that the children were taught these things, the teachers were doing their job and the children were given clean water to drink. This was a good school because the parents felt satisfied with the education of their child. There was of course, room for improvement in the parents' opinions; the teachers needed more qualifications, better pay and resources. However, on the whole these parents were sure that their child was being educated in line with the requirements of their society.

For the children, it was important to them to be able to play with their friends and be able to draw. Three quarters of the children in this study also believed that they came to

pre-school in order to be prepared for school which they expressed as knowing the ABC or learning the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. All the children spoken with knew that these things got them ready for the big school over the road. When comments were made on what could be done to improve the quality of the pre-school, they were quite specific even though only half the children responded to this question. They wanted more time to play and be with their friends, more time to draw and eat. From Huttunen's study (1992) the most important things for the children at pre-school were their relationships with their friends followed by their relationship with the primary caregivers. This finding was consistent also with this study in Samoa. The children knew they came to pre-school to get ready for primary school, the features that would improve the pre-school for these children related to their time with their friends. While the children's parents and teachers had a different perspective on quality in pre-school education, for the children the amount of time they were able to interact and play with their friends was very important, more so than learning the ABC, the days of the week and getting ready for school.

In the case of the Samoan teachers that took part in my study, they all held firm beliefs about what they did and the purpose of the pre-school. They believed that they had a role to play in preparing the child to succeed at school and the activities they did with the child were all aimed at fulfilling this goal. They did not question why they did things or think about how they did it. Their formal beliefs about teaching and learning came from the varied training they had received and then their beliefs were further influenced by the provision of a relatively prescriptive curriculum designed to get the children ready for school. Teaching practice then translated into a series of tasks that needed to be done which then reduced the need to reflect on practice (Bell, 1990). The Bell study gave a good insight into teacher beliefs and practices but it pre-supposed a certain level of training enabling teachers to be self-reflective should they wish to do so, and yet in Samoa the fragmented and often incomplete training of the pre-school teachers did not necessarily give them these skills. The teachers in this study did not even talk about their practice before they became involved in the research. These teachers were surprised with the value they gained personally when they began to talk about and discuss their practices in the pre-school classroom.

In Samoa, the teachers wished to provide a safe and happy environment in which they were able to meet the perceived needs of the children in their care; that was to equip them to do well at school. Their programme related heavily to this aim. In short the three main issues identified by Pugh (1996) in the pursuit of a high quality pre-school education, were the provision of an appropriate curriculum, the supply of well-trained staff and the positive relationships that developed between the parents and the staff were also recognised as being of value in this pre-school. The primary over-riding factor in all of these features was the necessity of ensuring that the children had access to high quality learning experiences. This particular study undertaken in Samoa whilst recognising the importance of ensuring the children have these high quality learning experiences also recognised that different communities place different value on learning experiences. So the learning experiences that the children received in this pre-school in Samoa may not be regarded as high quality learning experiences within a more Western framework but in Samoa they met the needs and the requirements of the community and need to be valued in this respect.

It was difficult to determine whether or not salaries were an important feature in the provision of a good quality pre-school education in this pre-school in Samoa. Salaries were very low throughout the whole country and the teachers considered themselves lucky to have a job at all which lends itself to a slightly different perspective. It was the possession of a job that was important to these teachers rather than the salary they received. Having a job lent status to these teachers and gave them a position in their community which was perhaps more important than the salary they received.

This study pre-school can be acknowledged as a good quality pre-school in terms of how it was perceived to meet the requirements for quality determined by the stakeholders in it. The teachers believed that it was a good quality pre-school because it had good teachers, a good playground and the children were safe, happy and well prepared for school. The parents believed that it was a good pre-school because their children were taught to listen, obey and get on well in school. The children thought it was a good pre-school because they were able to play with their friends and learn the ABC.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

From the discussion on quality in Chapter two, quality is a flexible and changing concept that has different meanings for different people depending on their perceptions, not just of education but their whole social circumstances. The nature of quality is not specifically defined but rather it is understood as a multidimensional concept that is constantly evolving depending on the circumstances. In this case then it is the process of determining quality, rather than the outcome that has more value for educators.

Quality in pre-school education has been linked to the presence of a number of factors (Farquhar, 1991) within the pre-school environment. This study focused on perceptions of quality within a Samoan pre-school. One of the critical features to bear in mind is that the factors that influenced quality in this study were determined in a culture that was different from that of the researcher's. In looking at perceptions of quality in Samoa within one pre-school it was necessary to determine what the stakeholders in that pre-school thought quality was without imposing external standards, values or guidelines. This was not an attempt to reduce the importance of researched factors that have an effect on the quality of the pre-school but rather an attempt to understand how quality issues were viewed within another society.

From the earlier discussion on quality indicators, the first major category of indicators relate to the provision of an appropriate curriculum (Pugh, 1996). In New Zealand there is a document, Te Whariki (Ministry of Education, 1996), which has guidelines for teachers to follow that will enhance the overall development of the child. In Samoa, the pre-schools used whatever guidelines they found most appropriate to meet their needs. In this pre-school the teachers followed guidelines put out by the University of the South Pacific which progressed through a series of appropriate themes, as determined by the head teacher, over the course of the year's programme. This was repeated each year and the head teacher determined the order of teaching and what should be covered. It must be kept in mind that the head teacher was primary trained, although she had been in a pre-school for a number of years, and so she was predisposed towards the needs of the primary school. But underlying this curriculum outline was the major aim of the pre-school to prepare the child for school and for their future life in society. The

parents, teachers and children at this pre-school all recognised the need for preparation for school. This aim took precedence in all teaching and learning, the children had to be ready for school. The interpretation of this aim meant that the children were drilled in their alphabet, learnt their numbers, colours and days of the week. They learnt to repeat correct responses after the teacher and to sit and listen while she talked. They learnt to conform and obey. This formal approach and success at it was the measure of a good teacher, a good student and a good pre-school. In this respect, the provision of an appropriate curriculum was very successful as it met the stated needs of the parents and teachers and most of the children.

The specific skills taught in this pre-school would not be regarded in most New Zealand pre-schools or indeed in most new entrant classes as adequate preparation for learning to read and write. There was no real evidence in the study pre-school of oral reading to children, or chances to explore and extend their language. There were no obvious examples of children being extended in their language development and their artwork was all teacher directed. It was difficult not to judge this programme as being deficient and yet it must be remembered that in spite of perceived limitations from a western perspective, in terms of the stated requirements and perceived needs of the parents and teachers, this pre-school was successful in achieving their aims. In terms of preparing children for primary school in Samoa, where there are large classes and very limited resources the teachers at this pre-school were doing a good job because the children were taught to listen and respond in unison and they were able to write their names.

In New Zealand, pre-schools are sought that offer a broad and balanced curriculum, that show evidence of children's learning and where children are fully involved in their own learning in their own manner (Farquhar, 1991). In Samoa, the teachers at the study pre-school wanted to teach the children according to behavioural guidelines. In practice the pre-school teachers in this study in Samoa were preparing the children for school, they were not directly attending to the individual needs or requirements of the children in their teaching methodology. The teachers were, in fact, preparing the children as a group to participate within their own society. The highly structured nature of Samoan society (Pasikale & Tupuola, 1999) lent itself to this teacher-centred approach that was evident in this pre-school. The teacher followed a direct instruction method where the teacher was firmly in control as the director of learning. This method was also favoured

by the elders in the Samoan society (Jones, 1991) who recognised the teacher as a bearer of knowledge and the means by which the child was given the appropriate knowledge to enable them to succeed. The teacher-directed method was highly successful within Samoan society where the aims of education incorporate a high level of repetitious and factual learning, the alphabet, the days of the week and so on. Thus if this pre-school was measured for quality of curriculum provision and meeting the needs of the individual children with regard to goals that might be set in New Zealand, it would not be providing a high quality of education. However, if quality was measured within the aims of its own cultural environment then this pre-school was highly successful. The children were being prepared for success at school and to take part in their own society. Thus this pre-school did a good job when viewed from a local perspective.

To shift the focus of this pre-school to become less teacher-directed and more in line with the declared needs of the children would require not only more specific training for teachers in early childhood education but also the provision of more adequate resourcing in order to meet these needs. The appropriate training of the teachers and resourcing of the pre-schools would need to be developed in terms of the needs of the Samoan community and not a direct application of training and resources that meet the needs of a New Zealand community and pre-school. While there are probably many aspects of training and resources originating in New Zealand that would be of considerable value in Samoa, these must be carefully considered by the community that stands to benefit from them before they are adopted. It is of no value to implement teacher-training programmes for early childhood teachers if the teachers concerned are not able to identify with and support the underlying philosophies. Likewise it is important to put resources into the pre-schools that the teachers are able to value and use. A Samoan teaching colleague of mine repeated stories about some Samoan primary schools where the new books were locked away so they wouldn't be lost and damaged. In this situation no one benefits.

The parents believed that this pre-school was doing a good job because it was getting the children ready for school and society. They valued the pre-school as a place the children could go in order to be prepared for school. The socialisation aspect of the pre-school was also important for the parents; they wanted their child to learn to get along

with and interact successfully with other children. Their children enjoyed going to this pre-school which was an indication to the parents that the pre-school was doing a good job with their child. The parents on the whole were satisfied with the overall provisions for their child. The expectations parents had of formal education (Tanielu, 1997) in Samoa included sitting still, keeping quiet, listening carefully, and speaking when asked were reinforced at this pre-school. The children were encouraged to listen carefully and repeat phrases after the teacher. The children were not expected to speak out of turn or express themselves. While this is not part of most educational practice in New Zealand, in Samoa it was an important aspect of the socialisation practices and expectations of the children held by their parents. In school, children were listening, rote learning and copying. Opportunities existed outside the formal programme for creativity and for the children to have a chance to express themselves (Tanielu, 1997) in their cultural activities. The study pre-school alongside its more formal programme of learning also taught the children many action songs and poems that allowed some individual opportunities. In the light of these expectations for education among the community the study pre-school was providing a high quality programme, which met the needs of the children to fit into school and the community.

The second category of quality indicators relate to the quality of the relationships, which developed, and were fostered within the pre-school (Pugh, 1996). In the study parents' view, the teachers at the study pre-school were good teachers and their children were happy to come to school. A measure for the parents as to the quality of the relationships their child had with the teachers was that the child was happy and the teachers were nice. From the parents' perspective then this pre-school was of good quality.

From the teachers' point of view, they wanted to listen to the children and meet their needs. They recognised the importance of providing positive reinforcement to the children and wanted the children to be happy. Teacher C summed up the teachers feelings in this regard, " Teachers need to be able to control the children in a friendly way. The teachers need to have smiling faces. If the teachers do not look happy and smiling and are unable to control the children and love them, then the children will not want to come to our school". This statement was true for all the teachers - they always looked happy and gave the children plenty of affection along with firm control. There

was no evidence of any less than positive attitudes towards the children. From casual observations at this pre-school it was obvious that the teachers really enjoyed being with the children. Some of the less formal times at this pre-school involved all the children and the teachers in singing, dancing, playing and a lot of laughing together. The teachers, however, were still in charge, directing the activities and the games and reinforcing appropriate behaviour. The teachers had all developed very positive relationships with the children. In terms then of the quality of the relationships between the teachers and the children this pre-school had good relationships.

It was difficult to assess the relationship between the teachers and the parents. Parents and teachers interacted each morning and afternoon when the children were dropped off and picked up and there was the occasional parent teacher meeting mentioned by the head teacher. However, apart from this there was little formal contact between the teachers and the parents. The teachers mentioned the need for a parent-teacher organisation but there was no evidence that this was being formed. Children's work was given individually to parents and commented on rather than the work just being stuffed into the child's bag. The added interaction of this enhanced the level of communication between the pre-school and the parents but it was difficult to assess the impact this had on the perception of quality held by any group as no one mentioned this as an important factor in quality. The teachers were still in charge of the pre-school and directed the interactions between parents and teachers. In summary, there are events that happen at pre-schools that contribute towards quality: the level of communication between the home and school, the parent teacher organisation, and the level of parent-teacher meetings. However, as yet they were not recognised in Samoa at the study pre-school as contributing towards the quality of the programme that was offered.

The third important category of quality indicators relate specifically to the pre-school staff, how well they were trained and whether or not they have had some form of on-going professional development. The teachers at this pre-school recognised the need to have trained and active early childhood teachers. They would have liked access to more professional development and finance in order to complete partial qualifications. The kind of training or in-service they wanted was never specified. The teachers did not clearly indicate what it was they wished to develop further in. The lack of financial resources was seen as a major obstacle in obtaining qualifications. There were

occasional in-service courses offered to the pre-school teachers but the head teacher pointed out that it was often hard to take advantage of these due to the lack of communication and notification about when they were going to take place. In my experience as a teacher in Samoa this was true. All communications from the Department of Education were hand delivered and had to be signed for which was a very time consuming process and meant that often the date on the letter did not correspond with the date of delivery. The hand delivery was a consequence of the lack of street addresses and post boxes. Thus on occasion there were only one or two days notice if at all of a course happening which made it more difficult for teachers to attend.

The teachers at this pre-school all had some level of tertiary qualification and all wanted more relevant education for themselves in order to raise the quality of the programmes they could offer. Parents also recognised the need for well-qualified and educated teachers. Within the constraints of finance and availability, the teachers at this pre-school were aware of the need for qualifications in early childhood education and were motivated to seek out courses if they were available. Although there was no data available to support the head teacher, she told me that the teachers at her school were much better qualified than teachers at other pre-schools, particularly in comparison to the village pre-schools.

The children's perceptions of quality do not relate to teacher qualifications; they were related to whether or not they were happy at pre-school and liked going there. The children in the study enjoyed pre-school, they liked playing with their friends and drawing. For some of them getting a good start for school was also important. The children interacted predominantly with the teachers and spent only a small portion of their time with their friends or working alone and yet it was the interaction with their friends that they valued the most. Things that would lift the quality of the programme for the children related primarily to increasing the amount of time that was available to play with their friends.

Implications for future study

The teachers who participated in this study, both in the pilot study and the actual research, independently commented on how much they had enjoyed the experience of participating. They found that answering the questionnaires encouraged them to think more about their practices and theories of education and they particularly enjoyed

having their responses written up and given back to them for comment. The head teacher of the study pre-school said that participating in this research had increased the staff level of awareness about what they thought and did and it had generated a lot of discussion among the staff. The value the teachers attached to the written feedback of their own responses was unexpectedly great. The teachers shared their own notes between themselves and compared and discussed responses. This, in fact, was the beginning of self-reflection and was a clear indication that these teachers were receptive to beginning to reflect and discuss the nature of what they were doing in the pre-school.

Judging by the response these teachers had to being involved in thinking about their practices, they would be very receptive to taking part in further research that could be more action based and provide some positive professional development. This would be valued enormously. The reaction of these teachers to taking part in this research and the interest they showed would indicate that they were positively motivated towards further teacher education in this area. The teachers in this study had never been involved in any sort of research previously and this contributed to their positive feelings and the value they personally gained from taking part.

The type of teacher education that could be offered to these teachers is of critical importance. This study looked at how different groups perceived quality in pre-school education and recognised that different groups of people have a different perspective on what constitutes quality depending of their own particular cultural and social differences. Early childhood education programmes must take the needs and requirements of the relevant communities into account. Thus, a teacher education programme for these early childhood teachers should not be directly imported from another outside community without seriously looking at the needs of the local community. The goals of early childhood education training programmes need to be compatible with the community within which they will be implemented. These teachers in Samoa were ready for more relevant education but it is critical that the education that is offered starts with the level of the teachers. These teachers were just beginning to think in a more reflective way about what they were doing so this would be a good starting point. The teachers could then be encouraged to think more specifically about what they needed and where they were going, along with considering the needs of the children. Once these factors have been considered a programme for teacher education

could be adapted and refined in order to meet the particular goals of these teachers within their community.

Play and socialisation were important features for the children at this pre-school and this was an aspect that the teachers did not regard as particularly important for the children in terms of getting them ready for school. Increasing the value that the teachers attached to play could be a good starting point in future teacher education and professional development. Free undirected play times were already in place at the study pre-school before school and it would not be difficult to set up an action research programme in this pre-school that could look at the importance of play for children's development. These teachers were beginning to reflect on their practices and this would be a natural starting point, taking an existing happening and reflecting on its' importance. The discussion and reflection generated by this would help existing practice change in line with the developing awareness of the teachers of current theories on good quality practice. This approach would also fit with the needs of the pre-school and evolve within it rather than being imposed from an outside source.

The University of the South Pacific was attempting to do this within their early childhood modules for teacher education, each Pacific community gets the modules that are then adapted in-country to meet the needs of the particular community. However, these programmes were out of the price range of many teachers, including those in this study, and thus of little immediate value to them. There was a need for more state involvement in Samoa, in promoting the development of training and educational opportunities for early childhood teachers that are consistent with the aims and objectives of the local community for the education of their children. It is important that the programmes that are used for the education of the children and the teachers are in line with the requirements of the society within which they operate. Changes in the perception of what is considered to be important, such as more recognition of the importance of play, cannot be imposed from without. A fundamental change in perception like this needs to arise from within the community and fit with their needs before it will be incorporated into the overall perceptions of education. The programmes for early childhood education and teacher development need to recognise the needs and aspirations of the community. It is important that the teachers themselves have an input into what is developed to increase the likelihood that it will be

implemented. Ownership of a programme helps ensure commitment to implementing its objectives.

An important factor to consider was that the majority of the study group teachers had some training in early childhood education and all of them had practical experience as well. The theories that they had learnt from their teacher training did not match up with the practical daily concerns they had in preparing the children for school. They were, after having taken part in this study, just at the stage where a sensitive action research study could be of major benefit to them. An action research project in Samoa that was developed with the needs of these teachers in mind could be of enormous benefit. A study that took into account the needs and perceptions of these teachers and their existing levels of training and led these teachers into thinking more deeply about their practices and why they did the things they do would be a unique starting point to ready them for more training and education in the early childhood area. The type of training and education that is provided for these teachers is critical; it needs to fit in with both their needs and the needs of the society within which they teach. A change in both practice and teaching emphasis seems very desirable when looking in for a more western view point but for any changes to be both successful and acceptable to the stakeholders it needs to arise from within the society and not be imposed from outside just because it may be perceived as better.

Samoa is a country that has access to many different forms of educational aid money especially from New Zealand, Australia and Canada and yet, as Sa pointed out, no one ever asked at the grass roots level what the teachers thought or wanted. This study gave these few teachers an opportunity to think and reflect on their practices and although this was not the original aim it was a very positive outcome of my being in the pre-school.

A limitation of this study was the focus on the formal operating time of the pre-school. There were other activities that were a part of the informal operation at the pre-school that were not included in this research as they were not recognised by the teachers as a part of the formal programme. These informal activities predominantly occurred before school, in the time between when the children were dropped off (from 7.30 am onwards) until the children had to put the toys away and get ready for the day. The teachers did not participate in this time, it was a free playtime for the children and the

children valued it for that very reason. The teachers did not think that this informal time was a learning time for the children. A study that looked at the informal aspects of learning would be of great benefit to the teachers at this pre-school in that it would lift their level of awareness of the importance of free play as part of the whole learning process for the children.

This would suggest that, as an integral part of a quality assessment of a pre-school or early childhood centre, the values and attitudes of the community within which it operates need to be considered fully as part of the whole process. This is an important consideration in New Zealand where different cultural communities have established their own early childhood centres for a variety of reasons and then have to undergo quality assurance assessments from the Education Review Office. An understanding of the values and perceptions of the community would appear to play an important role in how the pre-school operates. The beliefs of the teachers and communities need to be part of the quality assurance process. Quality assurance then is not just how a particular pre-school measures up in the light of externally defined standards but also how it measures up against the perceptions of the stakeholders in that specific pre-school or early childhood centre.

The teacher education programmes and professional development opportunities for pre-school teachers also need to be considered in the light of the findings of this research. In a multicultural society like New Zealand not every one comes with the same perceptions of quality in pre-school education. In teaching for quality these differences need to be recognised and valued in their own right. There is thus no one right way of developing quality, it is the process of thinking about it and moving along the way to a quality pre-school that is more important. Recognition of the importance of cultural diversity needs to be valued. In both Samoa and New Zealand where there are a number of teacher education service providers, the quality of the programmes is a serious consideration. Care needs to be taken to ensure that each service provider is aware of the implications both of diversity and of conformity to a particular standard. The recognition that there is more than one way to view a quality programme is crucial to the successful implementation of it.

This was a cross-cultural research study where the researcher came from a different cultural background from the study population. Although every possible effort was

made to reduce cultural bias it is probable that it was still present in this study. For a future research project of this kind it would be interesting to see if similar perceptions of quality in pre-school education were found if the research was conducted by someone from a similar background to the study group. Another possible bias in this study is that I am a primary trained teacher and if the same study were carried out by a pre-school teacher differences in perceptions of events could arise.

This present study was based on one small pre-school in Samoa and the perceptions of three groups as to the quality of the education that was offered. It cannot be taken to be widely representative of the perceptions of quality of all pre-schools in Samoa. Case studies provide a snap shot of a particular situation that may or may not be similar to other situations and thus the applicability of this study to other situations is limited. However a target case such as this one can provide a basis for generalisation to other situations by identifying similarities and differences between situations (Cresswell, 1994, Stake, 1995.). A comparison of this study on perceptions in quality within one pre-school with other research on perceptions of quality (Pugh, 1996) suggests that these views are not necessarily dissimilar although they need to be regarded in the light of the cultural expectations of the society in question.

It is important to recognise that there is a difference between a person's stated beliefs about quality in early childhood education and the translation of these beliefs into action. The discrepancy that occurs sometimes between theory and practice was explored more fully by Bell (1990) who emphasised the importance of developing a good relationship between the researcher and those studied to make the whole process more effective and accurate. Developing a relationship was also a feature of this study. A great deal of time was spent in the initial stages of the research in developing an open and trusting relationship between the researcher and the teachers and students involved. The time spent on fostering the relationship contributed significantly to the success of the research and the value of the responses obtained. Many of the discussions centred around the ethical issues involved in the cross-cultural study, and the open-ended and personal questions that were asked of the researcher all contributed to the development of a more equitable relationship between the researcher and the participants. It was the relationship developed that fostered the openness of the responses to questions and the number of informal interviews. Being accepted as part of the team carried with it

obligations and it was difficult to remember that this was not an action research study looking to support changing practice through reflection, but a case study looking at perceptions in a specific window of time. The fact that exposure to this research and opportunities to reflect on their practice may lead the teachers to change was another issue that could be followed up but it was beyond the scope of this study.

In conclusion, this study looked at perceptions of quality from three different points of view in one Samoan pre-school. In the light of the cultural expectations of the Samoan parents and teachers, this pre-school was providing a high quality programme for the children. The main expectation was to get the children ready for school and this was a dominant feature of the pre-school. From the children's point of view, they wanted to have time to be with their friends and socialise and although they wanted more of this sort of time they were genuinely happy to be at pre-school. In terms of the level of teacher qualifications and on-going professional development this pre-school was doing well in the light of what was available within Samoa and yet they recognised the need to have more development in this area.

Moss and Pence (1994) regarded quality as a construction of ideas based on the values and beliefs of the different stakeholders in the early childhood sector. They recognised the need to respect the viewpoints of those who were intimately involved within the early childhood sector and this fits in well with the ideas at this pre-school where quality was looked at in terms of how well the children were prepared for school. But in terms of looking at the more measurable indicators of quality in early childhood education as outlined by Smith (1997) this pre-school in Samoa had a long way to go. I personally would be reluctant to send my child to a pre-school with the predominant aim of preparing my child for school in the way this pre-school did and yet within the Samoan society this was a very valid and acceptable goal and one that made for a successful, good quality pre-school. Therefore this study must not be viewed in terms of measuring up to some externally determined attributes of quality that are in line with a more westernised philosophy of early childhood education but must always be considered in the situation and society within which it has evolved.

While having the opportunity to use Vaiala pre-school as a place to test questionnaires and observation techniques and become more culturally aware was extremely useful to me personally, the teachers involved made a point of saying that they had also benefited

from helping me. They collectively felt that having an opportunity to think and reflect on what was important in looking at the quality of their pre-school raised some issues that previously had not been considered to be of great importance. Looking at the quality of what they offered in their school had not been a feature of their programme as they just followed their curriculum guidelines from one day to the next. Now they felt more confident in themselves to reflect on their practice and change it if necessary according to their beliefs on providing a quality programme.

Research like this study that involves practitioners reflecting on what is happening in their pre-school and leading to an increased awareness of practice is of benefit to all the stakeholder groups. The head teacher in the study pre-school summed up her opinion of being involved " It is good to have you here. We have thought a lot about what we do. We like to know about our education. It was good that you made us talk about what is happening and write it down for us." The development of self-reflection within the teachers and the value they gained from it is in line with other studies by Smith (1997) and Farquhar (1991, 1993). This study not only benefited the researcher but also the major participants felt empowered through their involvement to a degree of which was an unexpected bonus. Quality in early childhood education is not something that can be externally defined and imposed; it is a multifaceted concept that is constantly changing in relation to the environment within which it has developed (Moss & Pence, 1994). A definition of quality in early childhood education must be seen in the light of the society in which it was developed and should not be used to judge or measure a pre-school that has developed within different boundaries and perceptions.

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Appendix 1a

INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS: Pre- school learning and teaching stories

My name is Brenda Sherley and I have been living in Samoa for the past two and a half years. I have been teaching at Vaiala Beach School and this year I have decided to study full time at Massey University in New Zealand. My study is about what is happening in one particular pre-school here in Apia. I will look at how the teachers design their programmes, how they carry out their programmes and what they hope to achieve for the children in their care. I will also talk to a small number of parents and children about what they expect to gain from attending at pre-school.

Firstly I would like to spend some time just observing and being in the pre-school (4 to 6 sessions) so that we each get used to each other and the way we do things. After this I would like to have a brief session with all of you to talk about your programmes and your ideas on planning and how you reach your goals for each child. If possible I would like to be able to see some of your written programmes and records. With your permission I would then follow each teacher round for two sessions watching how they carry out their programmes and how they interact with the children. The next part of the study would be to talk with some parents whom you can choose to discuss with them their aims for the education of their child at this level and what they want for their child. This would be followed up with observing their child during one session with their permission and talking to them about what they enjoy at this pre-school and what they like to do. This would help to build up a more complete picture of the learning and teaching that is occurring within your pre-school. Finally I would like to have a follow up session with you all to discuss what has been happening and how you felt about it. I am very interested in hearing your views on what is occurring here and how you feel that your planning and programmes meet the needs of the children. I am not comparing your pre-school with any other, either here or in New Zealand. That is not the purpose of this study. I am interested only in what is happening here for you in terms of your learning and teaching. I would like to use a tape recorder to record some of the sessions and take some photographs with your permission.

The information that is gathered will be used in writing up the story of your pre-school and you will be able to read what I write to ensure that it is correctly telling your story. If for some reason you decide that you do not want to take part in this study please let me know. Your name and the name of the pre-school, children and parents will not be included in the report. Any information that is gathered will only be used for this study and it will not be used in any other way without your permission. Every possible effort will be made to ensure that the pre-school will not be able to be identified from the information that is gathered.

Please say at any time if you do not feel comfortable with any questions or discussions, as you do not have to answer if you do not want to. Feel free to ask me any questions you like, about this work, as I am only too happy to discuss what I am doing with you.

In conclusion:

- You do not have to take part
- You may refuse to answer some questions if you want to
- You may withdraw at any time

- You may ask any questions you like about the study
- Your name will not be used unless you give permission
- You may ask for a summary of the findings when the study is finished
- You may check the information that you have given once it is written up to ensure that it is correct

Thank you for your time.

Brenda Sherley

Should you wish further information you can contact me at mobile phone 72930
Or alternatively you may contact my supervisors at Massey University, New Zealand.

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 01/22.

Mataupu 1b

Faamatalaga mo faiaoga: **Aoaoga ma tala mo aoga faataitai**

O lou igoa o Brenda Sherley, ma na ou aumau iinei i le lua ma le afa tausaga ua tuanai. I lea taimi, na ou faiaoga ai i le aoga faataitai a Vaiala Beach School, ma o le tausaga lenei ua ou filifili ai ou te toe aoga i le univesete o Massey i Niu Sila. O le a ou suesueina ia mea o loo tutupu ma le faagaoioiga o se tasi o aoga faataitai i Apia. O le a ou vaavaai i le faiga/tusiaina o polokalame a faiaoga, faagasologa o polokalame ma tulimatai atu i ni mea aoga mo le fanau o loo latou aoaoina. O le a ou talatalanoa foi i nisi o matua ma fanau i ni mea taua o loo latou fia maua mai ao faatasi atu i aoga-faataitai.

E muamua ona faaalu sou taimi ou te vaavaai ma auai atu i le aoga faataitai (4-6 ni vasega) ina ia lava se taimi matou te mafuta ai, a maea lea, ou te manao ia faia se tatou feiloaina/aoaoga puupuu e faatalatalanoaina ai a outou polokalame i luga o ni manatu faaalia i le fuafuaina ma le faataunuuina faamoemoe mo tamaiti taitasi. A talafeagai ai, ou te manao ina ia mafai ona ou vaavaai i nisi o a outou polokalame tusitusi. Pe a outou malilie iai, ou te fia vaavaai i galuega a faiaoga taitasi mo ni taimi o vasega se lua, vaavaai pe faapefea ona latou faagaoioia polokalame ma le auala latou te faasoa atu ai i tamaiti. O le isi vaega o lau suesuega o le talatalanoa atu lea i ni matua se toatolu tou te filifilia so latou faanaunauga & ni manaoga mo le aoga a latou fanau i le vaega lea. A maea lea, ou te fia auai i taimi o vasega a le fanau ma ou fia talanoa i ni mataupu o loo faatauaina ia tei latou i le aoga ma ni a latou manaoga fia faataunuuina. Ou te manao ina ia faia se vasega e toe faamanatu ai mea na aoaoina ma so outou manatu iai. Ou te fia iloa ni tou manatu i mea o loo tutupu iinei ma sou lagona i tou fuafuaga ma polokalame e talafeagai ma le manaoga o le fanau. Ou te le o faatusatusaina la outou aoga ma isi aoga iinei poo Niu Sila. E le o le mafuaaga lena o lau suesuega. Ou te fia iloaina na o mea lelei o loo tutupu iinei mo outou i mea tau suesuega ma aoaoga. Pe a tusa ai ma tou finagalo ou te manao ou te faaaogaina se laau pue leo e pueina ai nisi o mataupu, ma fia pueina ni ata.

O faamaumauga o le a maua mai o le a faaaogaina mo le tusiaina lea o se tala e faatatau i le tou aoga-faataitai, ma ia mafai ona tou faitauina ni tala o le a ou tusia ma ia tou iloaina pe moi ia tala. Ae afai i se isi itu, o le a tou filifili tou te le mananao tou te auai i lea suesuega, faamolemole faafesootai mai au. O lou suafa ma le igoa o le aoga, tamaiti ma matua o le a le tauaina i totonu o lau ripoti. O nisi faamatalaga o le a aoina mai ua na o le faaaogaina mo le suesuega ma o le a le faaaogaina i nisi lava mafuaaga sei vagana ai la outou faatanaga. O le a taumafai foi se auala ina ia aua nei mafai ona iloa gofie ata o le a pueina.

Faamolemole faafesootai mai au i soo se taimi pe afai e le mafai ona e taliina / pe le talafeagai foi nisi o fesili poo suesuega. E le tatau ona e talia pe a e le finagalo iai. Faafesili mai ia te au i soo se taimi i ni mataupu tou te mananao iai i lenei galuega, aua ou te fiafia tele e faatalatalanoaina ma outou lau galuega o loo fai iinei / ma outou.

Tala mulimuli:

- e tuu atu i lau faitalia pe ete fia auai
- e i luga lava o oe pe e te fia talia ni fesili
- e mafai ona e faamaamulu i soo se taimi
- e mafai ona e fesili i se mea o loo e fia malamalama ai
- e le faaaogaina lou igoa pe a e le finagalo iai
- e mafai ona e fesiligia se kopi o suesuega uma pe a maea nei sailiiliga
- e mafai ona e siakiina pe sao faamatalaga o le a e tuuina mai pe a maea ona tusiaina.
- e te fiafia e fetufaai ou fuafuaga ma faamaumauga.

Faafetai tele lava mo le faaavanoaina mai o la outou taimi.

Brenda Sherley

Faamolemole faafesootai mai au i le numera o le a taua i lalo mo nisi faamatalaga, telefoni feaveai (mobile) 72930, pe faafesootai lo'u pule i le Univesete o Massey i Niu Sila.

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Appendix 2a

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS: Pre-school learning and teaching stories.

My name is Brenda Sherley and I have been living in Samoa for the last two and a half years while I have been teaching at Vaiala Beach School. This year I am studying full time at Massey University in Palmerston North, New Zealand. I am looking at telling the learning and teaching story of one pre-school here in Apia and for that I need your help as well as the teachers and the children.

I will spend some time within the pre-school looking at what is happening and how the teachers work to give your child the best possible education. Your information as to what you want for your child at this level is very important to me. I would like to spend some time talking to you while a session is in progress finding out about what you want for your child and how you think attending this pre-school is of benefit to your child.

The information that is gathered from you will only be used in this study and will not be shared with anyone else without your permission. If you wish you can read what I write to check that it is exactly what you mean to say and you are able to change it if you wish so that it is more accurate. You do not have to discuss any issues that you do not want to. Your ideas are important to me. I would also like to spend some time talking with your child.

You need to know

- You do not have to take part
- You may refuse to answer some questions if you want to
- You may withdraw at any time
- You may ask any questions you like about the study
- Your name will not be used unless you give permission
- You may ask for a summary of the findings when the study is finished
- You may check the information that you have given once it is written up to ensure that it is correct

Thank you for your time and effort

Brenda Sherley

Should you wish further information you can contact me at mobile phone 72930 or alternatively you may contact my supervisors at Massey University, New Zealand.

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Mataupu 2b

Pepa faamatalaga mo matua: Tala mo aoaoga i Aoga-faataitai

O lou igoa o Brenda Sherley. Na ou aumau i Samoa i le lua ma le afa tausaga ua tuanai. I lea taimi na ou faiaoga i le aoga o Vaiala Beach School. I le tausaga lenei o loo ou aoga i le univesete o Massey i Niu Sila. O loo ou vaavaai i le suesuega ma le aoaoga o se tasi o aoga faataitai i Apia, ma o lea ou te manaomia ai la outou fesoasoani faatasi ai ma faiaoga ma le fanau.

O le a faaaluina sou taimi i totonu o le aoga, e vaavaai i mea o loo tutupu ma le auala o faaaogaina e faiaoga mo le aoaoina o le fanau. O faamatalaga o le a maua mai ia te outou mo a outou alo i le vasega lea e taua tele ia te au. Ou te fia faaaluina se taimi ou te talanoa ai ia te outou ao faia le vasega poo le a se mea aoga e te manao ai mo lau tama, ma sou manatu i le faatasi mai i o lou alo i lenei aoga.

O faamatalaga uma o le a mafai ona maua mai ia te oe, o le a faaaogaina lea i lenei suesuega ma e le faatagaina ona tuuina atu i se isi sei vagana ai ua e malie iai. Pe e te finagalo e te siakiina faamaumauga o loo ou tusitusia, e mafai ona e suiina ma faasaoina nisi o faamatalaga e le talafeagai. E leai se afaina pe a iai ni mataupu e te le finagalo e tauina mai. E faatauaina tele ia te au a outou finagalo faaalia. A talafeagai ai, ou te manao e faaalu sou taimi e faatalatalanoaina ai lou alo.

E tatau ona tou silafia:

- e le faamalosia lou auai
- e le faamalosia lou tali i nisi o fesili pe a e le manao ai
- e mafai ona e faamaamulu i soo se taimi
- e mafai ona e fesiligia le mataupu o loo talanoaina
- e le faaaogaina lou suafa seiloga e te faatagaina
- e mafai ona e tap'a se ripoti o le suesuega pe a maea ona tusia
- e mafai ona e siakiina faamatalaga uma na e tuuina maia ia mautinoa o loo sao.

Faafetai mo lou taimi na faaaluina aemaise le fesoasoani mai!

Brenda Sherley

Faamolemole faafesootai mai au i le numera o le a taua i lalo mo nisi faamatalaga, telefoni feaveai (mobile) 72930, pe faafesootai lo'u pule i le Univesete o Massey i Niu Sila.

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Appendix 3a

Pre-school learning and teaching stories
Consent form for teachers

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. The information will only be used for this research and publications arising from this research project. The information provided will include relevant planning and records for the pre-school.

I agree/do not agree to discussions being audiotaped.

I understand that I can ask for the tape to be turned off at any time.

I agree/ do not agree to photographs being taken.

I agree/ do not agree to supply written records for the researcher to look at.

I agree to participate in this study under these conditions.

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

Should you wish further information you can contact me at mobile phone 72930 or alternatively you may contact my supervisors at Massey University, New Zealand.

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Mataupu 3b

Tala mo suesuega I Aoga Faataitai
Pepa Faamaonia/faatagana mo faiaoga

Ua maea ona ou faitauina pepa o faamatalaga ma ua ou malamalama i auiliiliga uma o faamatalaga o lenei suesuega. Ua ou malie i le taliina o au fesili ma ou te malamalama e mafai ona ou fesili i soo se mataupu i taimi o lumanai.

Ou te malamalama e iai lou faitalia ou te le toe faatasi atu i ni aoaoga i soo se taimi ma le mafai ona ou taliaina nisi o fesili pe a fesiligia ai au.

Ou te malie e tuuina atu ni faamaumauga/faamatalaga mo tagata suesue i luga o lou malamalamaaga o le a le faaaogaina lou igoa e aunoa ma lou faatanaga. O nei faamaumauga uma o le a faaaogaina mo ripoti tusitusia o lenei suesuega.

Ou te malie / Ou te le malie i ni faatalatalanoaga e pueina.

E iai lou aia tatau e taofia ai le pueina o se lipine i soo se taimi.

Ou te malie / Ou te le malie i le pueina o ni ata.

Ou te malie / Ou te le malie e tuuina atu ni faamaumauga tusitusia i le tagata suesue e vaavaai iai.

Ou te malie ou te auai atu i nei aoaoga i lalo o aiaiga nei.

Sainia: .....

Suafa: .....

Aso: .....

Faamolemole faafesootai mai au i le numera o le a taua i lalo mo nisi faamatalaga, telefoni feaveai (mobile) 72930, pe faafesootai lo'u pule i le Univesete o Massey i Niu Sila.

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Appendix 4a

Pre-school learning and teaching stories
Consent form for parents

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission. The information will only be used for this research and publications arising from this research project.

I agree to participate in this study under these conditions.

Signed_____ Signed_____

Name _____ Name_____

Date _____ Date_____

Should you wish further information you can contact me at mobile phone 72930 or alternatively you may contact my supervisors at Massey University, New Zealand.

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Mataupu 4b

Tala mo suesuega I Aoga Faataitai
Pepa Faamaonia / faatagana mo matua

Ua maea ona ou faitauina pepa faamatalaga ma ua maea ona faamatala mai ia te au auiliiliga uma. Ua ou malie i le taliina o au fesili ma ou te malamalama e mafai ona ou fesili i soo se mataupu i taimi o lumanai.

Ou te malamalama e iai lou faitalia ou te le toe faatasi atu i ni aoaoga i soo se taimi ma le mafai ona ou taliaina nisi o fesili pe a fesiligia ai au.

Ou te malie e tuuina atu ni faamaumauga/faamatalaga mo tagata suesue i luga o lou malamalamaaga o le a le faaaogaina lou igoa e aunoa ma lou faatanaga. O nei faamaumauga uma o le a faaaogaina mo ripoti tusitusia o lenei suesuega.

Ua ou malie ou te auai atu i nei aoaoga i lalo o aiaiga nei.

Sainia: ..... Sainia: .....

Suafa: ..... Suafa: .....

Aso: ..... Aso: .....

Faamolemole faafesootai mai au i le numera o le a taua i lalo mo nisi faamatalaga, telefoni feaveai (mobile) 72930, pe faafesootai lo'u pule i le Univesete o Massey i Niu Sila.

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Appendix 5a

Pre-school learning and teaching stories
Consent form for parents of children interviewed

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my child from the study at any time.

I agree to the researcher observing my child during a pre-school session and talking with my child providing that the session is not disrupted. Otherwise the researcher may talk with my child after an observation session.

I agree to allow my child to participate in this study under these conditions.

Signed_____ Signed_____

Name _____ Name_____

Date _____ Date_____

Should you wish further information you can contact me at mobile phone 72930
Or alternatively you may contact my supervisors at Massey University, New Zealand.

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Mataupu 5b

Tala mo suesuega i Aoga Faataitai
Pepa Faamaonia / faatagana mo matua o tamaiti o le a tali fesili

Ua maea ona ou faitauina pepa faamatalaga ma ua maea ona faamatala mai ia te au auiliiliga uma. Ua ou malie i le taliina o au fesili ma ou te malamalama e mafai ona ou fesili i soo se mataupu i taimi o lumanai.

Ou te malamalama e iai lou faitalia/ai'a e aveesea mai ai lau tama mai nei aoaoga i soo se taimi.

Ua ou malie i le tagata suesue na te vaavaai auiliili i lau tama i taimi o le aoga ma talatalanoa iai ae ia aua nei faalavelave i le mataupu. A le o lea, e mafai ona laua talatalanoa i taimi e maea ai le vasega.

Ua ou malie i lau tama e auai atu i nei aoaoga i lalo o aiaiga nei:

Sainia: ..... Sainia: .....

Suafa: ..... Suafa: .....

Aso: ..... Aso: .....

Faamolemole faafesootai mai au i le numera o le a taua i lalo mo nisi faamatalaga, telefoni feaveai (mobile) 72930, pe faafesootai lo'u pule i le Univesete o Massey i Niu Sila.

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Appendix 6

Letter to pre-school

Copy of a letter from the Chairperson of the Samoan Council of Early Childhood Education

The originals were given to the appropriate pre-schools. The name of the pre-school has been altered to protect the pre-school.

19.02.2001

To the Principal,
Vaiala Pre-school
Vaiala.

Dear Madam,

Allow me to introduce the bearer of this note. She is Mrs Brenda Sherley and she is doing a thesis research based on Early Childhood Education in Samoa.

I would appreciate very much if you could kindly assist her.

Faafetai tele lava,

Rev. Vaiao A. Eteuati

Chairperson – ECE Council of Samoa.

Appendix 7

Teacher questionnaire

Basic information

Date:
Time:
Place:

Teacher's name:
Qualifications:

Age: 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50 or more.

In this interview I want to find out about your views on what is a good quality pre-school education in Samoa and how you try to achieve this. I am not attempting to compare what you say and believe with any other country. I wish to build up a picture of what is happening here. To do this I would like to ask you some questions about the things you do and what you believe in. If you feel unable or uncomfortable about any of the questions please let me know so that we can sort the problem out. Thank you especially for the time you have given to me. It is greatly appreciated and valued.

TRAINING: A'oa'oga

What training have you had for this job?
O a ni a'oa'oga o i ai ia te oe mo lenei galuega?

Where did you receive your training?
O fea na e maua mai ai nei a'oa'oga?

How long was your training?
O le a le umi o au a'oa'oga?

What sort of things did you cover in your training?
O a ni mea na outou aoaoina?

Did you find it useful in taking up this job?
E i ai se aoga o lenei galuega ia te oe?

Is there any more training that you would like to have?
E i ai la nisi ao'aoga e te toe fia aoga ai?

How long have you been teaching in the early childhood area?
O le a le umi na e faiaoga ai mo tamaiti laiti?

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

How do you meet the needs of the children in your care?
E faapefea ona fa'afeiloaia manaoga o tamaiti o lo'o e vaaia?

Do you have any special guidelines that you follow?
Pe i ai nisi au fa'ataitaiga fa'apitoa e tatau ona mulimuli iai?
E, i ai ni tulafono faapitoa fa'aleao'aoga o lo'ofa'aogaina?

What do you think is important for the children in your care?
O le a se mea e te iloa e taua i tamaiti o lo'o e vaaia?

What are you preparing them for?
O le a se mea olo'o e sauniunia ai i latou?

How do you decide whether you have achieved what you want them to know?
E faapefea ona e filifilia ni mea e maua ina ia tatau ona latou iloa?

Are there any things that you would like to include in your programme but you can't?
E i ai nisi mea o lo'o e manao e fai i totonu o lau polokalame, ae ete le mafaia?

Why not?
Aisea e le mafai ai?

How do you record the children's progress and achievement?
E fa'apefea ona e fa'amauina taumafaiga uma a tamaiti?

COMMUNICATION

How do you let the children know that they are achieving?
E fa'apefea ona e fa'ailoa i tamaiti o lo'o latou alualu pea i luma?

How do you inform the parents that their child is making progress or otherwise?
E faapefea ona e faailoaina i matua taumafaiga uma a o latou alo?

How do you inform the "authorities " what you are doing?
Pe faapefea ona e faailoa i se 'pulega" o se mea o e faia?

Are there any ways in which the Department of Education knows what you are doing?
E i ai nisi faiga ina ia iloa ai e le Ofisa o aoga ni mea o lo'o e faia?

How do you gather information from the parents about their child?
Pe fa'apefea ona e tu'ufa'atasia ni fa'amaumauga a matua e uiga ia latoa fanau?

QUALITY INFORMATION

What do you think makes a good pre-school?
O le a se mea o e iloaina e faaleleia atili ai aoga faataitai?

What are the important parts of providing a good quality education for young children?
O a ni vaega ta'ua e mafai ona maua ai ni mealelei aua le a'oa'oina o fanau laiti?

In your opinion what makes this one a good pre-school for children to attend?
I sou lava manatu, O le a se mea ete iloa ai ua lelei se aoga fa'ataitai?

What are some things that you think would make this an even better pre-school for the children who come here?
O a nisi faiga e te iloa e fa'amausaliina le lelei o se aoga fa'ataitai mo ni si tamaiti o le a omai iinei?

Are there any suggestions you have that you think would help you do your job better? (for example: better child teacher ratios, more resources, more training for teachers and what kind, more parent education...)
E i ai ni au fautuaga mo le fa'alelei atiliina o lau galuega?

Why do you think that?
Aisea, ua e mafaufau ai fa'apena?

Why do you think that it is important for a child to have some form of pre-school education?
O le a se mea e taua ai ona ao'oga tamaiti a'o laiti?

Is there anything else that you would like to mention about your ideas on education or about what you are doing here that you feel is important?
E lai se isi mea o lo'o e mana'o e faailoa e uiga i nisi fuafuaga tau i le ao'aoga, o lo'o e faia e te iloa e i ai sona taua?

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and ideas with me. When I have written them out neatly I will bring them back to you so that you can check that I have recorded your views correctly and add to them if you want.

Appendix 8

Parent questionnaire

Basic information

Date:
Time:
Place:

Parent's name:

Age: 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, 50 or more.
Number of children:

Thank you for agreeing to answer questions about your views and ideas on pre-school education. I am interested in finding out your beliefs about education and what you consider to be important in the education of your child. If you feel uncomfortable about answering any of these questions please let me know. If I take a photograph of your child I will bring you a copy and check with you again before I use it in my study. The questions that I ask your child will be simple questions about what they like and don't like at pre-school. Please feel free to ask me any questions you like about this study and let me know if you think I am missing some information that you consider to be important.

Questions

Why do you send your child to a pre-school?
Aisea, ua e aveina ai lou alo i le aoga fa'ataitai?

What do you believe is important for your child to gain from attending pre-school?
O le a se mea ta ua, ua e talitonu o lo'o maua e lou alo mai lona i ai i totonu o aoga fa'ataitai?

Why did you choose this pre-school?
Aisea, ua e filifilia ai lenei aoga fa'ataitai?

What do you like about your child coming here?
O le a se mea o lo'oe fiafia ai i le sau o lou alo iinei?

What do you think this pre-school does well?
O le a se mea ua e iloa o lo'o lelei ona fai e lenei aoga fa'ataitai?

How do you think it could be further improved?
O a nisi mea olo'o manaomia e fa'aleleia?

What do you think are the important aspects of a good quality pre-school (teachers, resources, money, facilities, programmes, discipline, achievement, morals etc.)?
O le a se mea ua e iloa e taua ona itu mole fa'aleleia atili o aoga fa'ataitai (faiaoga, alaga'oa, tupe, amioga)?

Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about pre-school education in general?
E i ai ni si fautuaga o lo'o e mana'o e fai mo aoga fa'ataitai aua le agai i luma?

Thank you for taking part in this study. I really appreciate the time and effort you have taken to answer my questions. Please remember that the information you have given me is confidential and your name will not be used in any reports or findings unless you wish it. Thank you for your time.

Brenda Sherley

Appendix 9

Questions the children were asked

1 What do you like about coming here?
2 What are the good things about coming here?
3 What would you like to do more of?
4 What don't you like doing?
5 If you could make this pre-school better what would you do?
6 Do you think this pre-school helps you to get ready for school?
7 Do you have anything more to say about this pre-school?

Appendix 10

Data from Teacher D

Observation data from Teacher D from one observation session

The day is Tuesday and Teacher D is the teacher responsible for greeting the children at the door this week. The transcript follows her for three hours and records what she is doing at five-minute intervals. Comments on the morning follow the transcript of the morning.

9.00 a.m. D is positioned at the door. She greets each child by name as their parents bring them in. She takes the child from the parent and encourages them to go and hang up their own bag and join the children on the mat.

9.05 a.m. D moves to sit in a small chair between the door and the circle of children on the mat and joins in all the mat activities while keeping an eye out to greet the late arrivals.

9.10 a.m. D has a restless child on her knee and is modelling the actions to the song "My God is so good" so the child can follow her lead. She nudges two boys next to her who are fiddling with the strands of the mat.

9.15 a.m. D moves down to the mat to sit next to the two boys who are still fiddling. She gives them a verbal reprimand. She stands with the children in response to an instruction from the lead teacher and marches round in the circle with the children modelling the appropriate actions.

9.20 a.m. The second time round in the circle, D has a chat to the lead teacher and both laugh while the children continue round and round.

9.25 a.m. D moves round the circle, checking the children's nails and handkerchiefs as she goes. Children with clean nails are reinforced. A clean handkerchief is praised and shown to children without one. The conversation is strictly limited to the task at hand.

9.30 a.m. The lead teacher has been discussing sores and how to treat them. D goes around the circle again checking the children for sores and reinforcing the use of gentian violet to treat them. She demonstrates to the individual children how to dab the stuff on the sore and explains how that will keep the germs out. D is distracted from this task with the late arrival of a crying child whom she takes from the mother and brings into the pre-school to settle.

9.35 a.m. D sits down on a chair next to the upset child and listens while health matters are reinforced again by the lead teacher. She then moves off with her group to her space and settles them down with a quick word.

9.40 a.m. D is modelling patterns of language with her group. " Repeat after me...what is the weather today? The weather is sunny today." She gives positive reinforcement, to the children as they respond. One child in her group, Sean, is not behaving. She asks him to move next to her four times until he marginally inches forward.

9.45 a.m. The health lesson continues. D discusses the use of a thermometer and where it is put while the children stay seated. She moves on to a poem about health, which they recite in unison. Sean continues to wriggle but he is ignored.

9.50 a.m. The lesson continues in the same format. D states something and the children repeat it. She asks a question, children call out a one-word answer, she rephrases it and the children all repeat what she has said.

9.55 a.m. D moves the children on to reciting the alphabet in both languages. First she asks all the children to recite it then she gets first the girls and then the boys to recite it and compares their performance. The children ask to repeat their turn and she agrees. There is plenty of laughing with the task.

10.00 a.m. D gives the children a piece of chalk each and directs them to find their own mini blackboard and practice writing their name and the alphabet on it. She sits and watches while they begin. Once the children have completed this task, D wipes their board clean and allows them to free draw.

10.05 a.m. A child finishes their picture and brings it up to D who asks them all about it. As the child tells her about their picture she composes a sentence about it and writes it on the chalkboard for the child. D then asks the child to go off and copy the sentence underneath. The child gives one or two words about the picture to write, D makes up a sentence, tells it to the child who nods and then D writes it down.

10.10 a.m.- 10.30 a.m. The only change during this time is the child coming up to D for a story. She sits in the same place watching the children working, and reinforcing and writing stories for those children who come up to her. Interaction is on a one to one basis when the children come up.

10.30 a.m. The children are told to tidy up and come down to their mat space to get ready for their lunchtime. D stays in the same place and directs them. Once the children are sitting down she choses them one at a time to go out to the hand basin and wash their hands under the supervision of Teacher C. D's group is the last to get ready for morning tea this morning.

10.35 a.m. D tells the children to get their lunch when they return to her space and sit down and eat. She watches them until they sit down and then moves off and talks with the other teachers for 15 minutes. She does not get a drink.

10.50 a.m. D moves over to her group and as they finish their food she asks them to tidy up their mess and move down to the mat to look at a book until every one is finished.

10.55 a.m. Sean and Samita are still eating so D stands over them encouraging them to eat quickly. D keeps an eye on the rest of her group on the mat and although they are not looking at books she leaves them alone and concentrates on encouraging the last two to finish.

11.00 a.m. All of the group are on the mat so D now is free to tidy up her area, this involves sweeping and wiping down the tables as necessary.

11.05 a.m. D has a chat with Sa and then gathers up her group into two lines, boys and girls so she can make use of her playground time. She leads the group out to the play area.

11.10 a.m. – 11.30 a.m. D is standing in the shade while the children play on the swings and run around. The children do not come up to her, they are too busy playing. D tells me that she stands in the shade because it is too hot and the children enjoy playing without her interfering. During this time the only remarks she addresses to the children relate to directions or behaviour.

11.30 a.m. D calls to the children who all promptly line up and leads them back to their class space. She gives each of them a crayon and a piece of paper and directs them to draw about the health topics they have discussed. She allows them to use more than one colour. She tells them to come up for a story on their picture when they finish.

11.35 a.m. D sits in one place as the children come up with their picture. She reinforces their efforts and elaborates on their phrasing. Once she has composed the story, she asks the child for approval and writes it down. Then the child is told they are free to move down to the mat to look at a book.

11.40 a.m. The children are restless so D moves down to the mat leaving four or five who haven't quite finished their drawing. She starts to sing an action song with the mat children to settle them down.

11.45 a.m. D reaches to the shelf behind her and gets out a book on ducks. She introduces the book and discusses the cover carefully. The children are absorbed. She begins to read the story, elaborating and expanding the ideas. The children are completely still as she reads.

11.50 a.m. The story finishes, the children sigh. D asks if they want the story again. Yes they do. The children finishing pictures were also totally absorbed in the story and forgot to draw.

11.55 a.m. D stops the story before the end and asks the children to gather their bags and come back to the mat to wait for their parents. D stands up and moves to the door and watches out for cars. She calls out the name of the child as their car arrives to pick them up. If she has time she calls out a comment to the parent as the child moves towards the car.

12.00 noon. End of the formal school day. D is still calling out children's names as their cars arrive. One of the other teachers moves to help her and they both chat as they wait for cars to arrive.

Comments from the day's observation

Although Sa did not appear to be involved with the daily programme, all the teachers went to see her at least twice during the morning session. Even after some discussions with the teachers it is still not entirely clear why they went to see her. It would appear to be in regard to planning consultation and approval and yet at no time did the teachers spend more than five minutes with her. Teacher D saw her twice during the observation session, not at a timed observation slot, for very short times. D said the first time that it was about her work plan and the second time was confirming her week as lead teacher but the comments were not clear.

The teachers only seem to communicate with one another before school and at the morning tea break, otherwise the routines of the pre-school just flow. The teachers said that in these brief times they do not talk about organisation. Instead they discuss what is happening and what the children are up to.

The comments directed towards the children from teacher D are predominantly related to organisational matters, directions, instructions or keeping the children on task. There is regular positive reinforcement handed out and the children are also told firmly if they are not conforming to expectations. Activities are directed.

Quite often during this observation session teacher D reinforced positive values such as sharing, taking turns and putting up hands to respond and yet on the occasions when a child did put up a hand, all the children called out and so the child was not individually reinforced.

It does not seem to matter whom the lead teacher is, the programme format is the same every morning except Friday, the only difference appears to be the theme used. The essential pattern observed on this day is the same as the previous ten observations.

At no time during the morning did teacher D refer to her work plan or make a written comment about any child although the crayon drawings with a dictated sentence on them were dated, named and collected in.

Transcript of Questionnaire from Teacher D

The teacher's story

Teacher D

Age 30-40
Qualifications: Pre-school certificate, Disabilities study certificate

Training

For this job I did the pre-school training course at the University of the South Pacific. It was a two-year training course. The course covered how children developed their minds and other things like their physical and emotional well being. I learnt about having a centre of interest for the children and how to plan different activities. I learnt

how to make a short story and how to plan a daily and a weekly programme for the children. I learnt about the stages of child development. It was very useful for me to know how to build up ideas for my own children and all the other children in the school. (Referring here to the particular group of children she teaches). I would like to take the diploma course for pre-school and disability training. (The cost of the course here is a limiting factor.) I have been teaching in this area for 7 years.

Planning and Preparation

I try to make them happy and prepare interesting games and activities for them. I like to do more of what the children enjoy. I follow behavioural guidelines, the children are not allowed to hit each other or take any toys home. I encourage them to share. I think it is important to ensure that the children are able to obey simple instructions. I teach them how to have a better understanding of themselves. I make sure that they are safe. I am preparing them to be able to complete some work such as puzzles, matching, counting, painting, drawing and enjoying books. I like to develop their language. I know when I have achieved this by observing them and collecting different materials to teach them with. I teach a variety of simple songs and poems. I would like to be able to teach the children to cook but I can't because we have no stove here.
In my plan book I write down the names of every child. Then I record who is good at the activities I teach them and who is able to answer questions well. I can then divide them into groups so I know who is able to do everything.

Communication

I let the children know that they are achieving well by praising them and giving them rewards like stamps on their work or on their hands. I inform the parents about their child's progress by giving them their child's work or talking to them on parents' day. We have a special day we plan for when the Department of Education comes to observe our work. We also have workshops to help us. We gather information about the children from the parents on the enrolment form. We keep this form in the office so that we can use it to help us understand more about that child.

Quality information.

A good pre-school has many features. It needs to have active teachers and good facilities and resources. All the teachers should be trained as pre-school teachers. A good playground for the children and a nice school building is also important. A parent-teacher association that works together for the benefit of the children is also important. In providing a good quality education for the children I believe their needs to be more practical work like songs and poems. The children need to have experience in playing simple games, in role-playing and story telling. They need to have opportunities for visits, observations and field trips. This is a good pre-school because of the good teachers, the playground, and a nice school building with many good resources and facilities. The children are active and happy and we keep them safe. This would be even better if we have more resources and teaching materials. We need to be kind and good to the children. It would be easier to do my job better if the children were always on time for school. It would be good if we had more preparation that is more training for the good of the children. This is important for the good of the children. When they grow up they will have had a good start in learning the things that they need to know for their future life. It is important for children to have a pre-school education to let them learn everything when they grow up and to help them learn to look after

themselves. It is important to start developing their minds. It is important that the children learn good manners and are polite to one. It will help them in the future to take a part in their own country.

Informal interview with Teacher D

The following notes arise from a series of brief discussions over a period of time with teacher D. She was aware that what she said would be written down. The transcriptions are verbatim records of what she said. If the discussion turned in to a question answer type session, all the comments and questions are recorded.

"Parents don't respect the work we do in the pre-schools. In Apia a lot of parents use the pre-school as a childcare place. They don't respect the work that we do with their children. Sometimes they leave their child to after two o'clock in the afternoon."

" You see, now the children they are like primary school, they learn to write their names."

" I had training at the University in Fiji."
Brenda – Why didn't you finish that training?
" I wanted to but you know it cost so much money. I can't afford that, I have two children in New Zealand to look after."
Brenda – Does the school help you with training or finishing it?
"No, you know we have not much money, we use our money for the things for the children. The children are happy here. It is a good pre-school. I like to finish my training but not now, it is not possible."
Brenda – I can see that for but what about later?
"I don't know, you know I just hope that we find a sponsor and I can finish. You know the Department (of Education) sometimes they give us money.

D talks about how important pre-schools are. They are much more important than they used to be. Children need to know many things for school; they need to know the alphabet, their name, the colours and some sentences in two languages. It is important to know both English and Samoan for the future. They need to know how to pack their bags and be independent for the future. She wants the children in her group to be able to read and recognise their own names before they go to school. It is very important that they know the alphabet and can sit still and hold their pencil correctly. She reiterates again how important these things are for school

Appendix 11

Observation and interview data from Samita

Observation for a half-hour session in one day

The observations are carried out at five-minute intervals over a half-hour period. This session occurred from 9.00 a.m. until 9.35 a.m. on a regular Tuesday morning with no unusual interruptions to the daily timetable.

Samita arrived for the day at 8.30 a.m. and hung her bag up straight away and moved onto the main mat and joined a group of four girls playing with the telephones. She immediately began to organise the group while checking the location of the teacher nearest her. Once she had established the closest teacher, she turned to face the teacher and regularly glanced up at her to see if she had gained the teacher's attention. Samita comes from a village where her father is the Minister. She appears to like being the centre of attention and her behaviour in the group supports this view. She directs the other girls to use the phones in much the same way that she is directed to do things by her teachers. Each time she passes on an instruction or direction to one of the other children she eyes the teacher to see if it has any effect. The other children do not appear to mind her moving in and taking over the game. This goes on for about ten minutes until a teacher goes and puts some music on for the children to listen to before the session. Samita deserts her group and moves to the CD player and sings and dances to the music as close to the teacher as she can reasonably get. Another child joins her and they jostle for position in front of the teacher and player. When the children are told to begin to tidy up and the blocks are used to indicate this, Samita ignores these instructions. She continues to move and sing to the music until she is directed twice by name to tidy up. She then moves slowly to the mat and sits down next to a teacher.

9.00 a.m. Samita sits next to Renee and Teacher C. She makes eye contact with the teacher before she looks at Renee. Sean moves to sit behind her; she pushes him away and frowns at him.

9.05 a.m. Teacher A is leading a song. Samita is singing loudly and mimicking all the movements of the teacher. Sean is watching her closely and she is looking at him out of the corner of her eye.

9.10 a.m. The song has changed to "With Christ in my vessel, I can smile at the storm". Samita joins in this with great enthusiasm but when Sean starts to wriggle next to her she joins with him in wriggling and distracting other children.

9.15 a.m. Samita looks to the lead teacher and begins to sing loudly until the teacher looks her way. She wriggles closer to the teacher next to her. Teacher A begins to talk about the theme for the week in preparation for a farm visit next week. Samita makes pig noises until she is told to be quiet.

9.20 a.m. Samita is listening as the teacher talks. Teacher A asks questions about animals and Samita stands and shouts out the answers. She is reinforced for the correct answer and then she models some more farm noises still standing until she is told to sit down.

9.25 a.m. Samita still calling out responses over the top of the other children. She has moved round the circle to position herself directly in front of the lead teacher. She begins to talk to a friend ignoring the lesson going on around her.

9.30 a.m. Samita volunteers first to sing the song about where is thumbkin. She does all the actions carefully and sings clearly. She is reinforced for this and glows with pleasure. She stays directly in front of the lead teacher and begins to comment on the other children as they are also chosen one by one to sing the same song.

Interviews with Samita

Monday 10.05 a.m. Duration 5 minutes

Samita is building a boat near me and slowly she begins to communicate in response to questions. At first she merely nods in response to questions about what she is building and then she begins to respond with one or two words and points to the appropriate parts of the boat. We move on to the plastic telephones and I pretend to ring her up. She talks happily to me about the weather and how happy she is to be at school using all the patterned responses she has been taught. She enjoys this so much that when we finish one conversation she rings me up again and has another conversation with all her friends listening.

Tuesday 11.45 a.m. Duration 5 minutes

Samita is sent over to me by her teacher with a picture to show. She talked at great length about her picture of a little girl climbing a tree and then falling down. She did not respond verbally to any questions about her likes and dislikes, she just nodded her head. She likes playing, drawing and her friends. She does not like sitting at a desk.

Thursday 10.55 a.m. Duration 6 minutes

During this interview, again with the same questions she responded fully. Only the answers she gave are recorded here.

I like play and I like to sit and listen.
I like to learn about stories.
I like to read books.
I like to draw the pictures.
Best thing I like is playing outside. This is a good school.
I like to write a story for the teacher.
To make it better, well, painting and more writing would be better.

Samita left at this point and five minutes later she returned and told me the things she likes again. She comes to school because her mum and dad work and are busy. She learns how to play games, write pictures, play with the blocks and play with her friends. These are the things that she considers to be important at school.

Appendix 12

Interviews with Va'alotu

Tuesday 11.30 a.m. Duration 5 minutes.

Va'alotu came and sat next to me uninvited and asked to draw in my book. While she was busy drawing me a picture I began to ask her some questions and recorded her answers on another piece of paper. Only her responses are transcribed.

I like the pictures and to play with my friends.
I like this school.
Good school, I like to listen.
I like to play with my brother. I have toys at home and I play with them. I like it at home and I play with blocks and make houses.
Painting is the best, and learning the songs and painting the pictures.
Painting pictures is the best and play.
I like more play.
To make it better, I think I like more play and painting.

Monday 9.45 a.m. Duration 5 minutes.

Va'alotu came back and asked to draw another picture in my book while she talked to me.

I like blocks best with my friend.
I eat and then we play and do our work and write our names.
I can do all the names of my friends.
When I am big I will go to that school. (She points out over the road at the local school.)
I talk to my friends.
My mum, she teaches me numbers.
We should learn our writing here.

Appendix 13

Questionnaire data from a parent

Parent 12

Age range 20-30 years
Number of children in the family – 3

I send my boy to pre-school to establish his educational development process. I like him to become familiar with some learning activities in order to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes.

I think it is important that he learns to work together with the other children and become less dependent. He has to establish the beginning of his educational life and individual skills.

I chose this pre-school because it is close to my place, less expensive than the others and has good security.

I like my child coming here because he is learning and generally achieving some goals for the future.

I think they use good materials for teaching and they have good security. They also run meetings to raise money and inform the parents about what is going on.

The teaching methods could be improved and the level of teacher education needs to be raised. Teachers' salaries should be improved and they also need to improve the materials they use for teaching. There also needs to be better co-operation with parents.

There are many things that will improve the quality of pre-school education but these are some of the priorities: improved teacher education, improved salaries, better resources and better programmes.

In general:
Improve teachers' learning
Improve programmes
Improve resources
Provide more learning opportunities for teachers
Identify problems to get solutions
Try to achieve rational objectives and programme objectives
Increase salaries
Improve co-operation with parents