

**CULTURAL RIGHTS IN THE PACIFIC – WHAT THEY  
MEAN FOR CHILDREN**

**By**

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# **Cultural Rights in the Pacific – What they mean for Children<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

This monograph examines the relationship between cultural rights and children in the Pacific. It begins by attempting to define cultural rights and relating how they have evolved internationally and regionally. Part 2 of the paper focuses specifically on cultural rights and children in the region and, in particular, explores children's place in contemporary culture in the Pacific. Part 3 examines the current status of culture in education, especially through an examination of use of vernacular languages in schools.<sup>2</sup> Part 4 describes some of the problems with establishing cultural policies in the region. The last section provides discussion questions to move the debate forward on how to enhance the cultural rights of children in the Pacific.

## **I Cultural rights: What are they and according to whom?**

### **i) Defining cultural rights**

Definitions of cultural rights have evolved over time. At present there is no single, definitive interpretation of what cultural rights imply, largely because there is no agreement about 1) the scope of culture,<sup>3</sup> and its role in society, and 2) the application and enforceability of cultural rights. However, based on international conventions, including the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and on collective, individual, academic, as well as 'official'<sup>4</sup> interpretations, cultural rights could be said to contain the following rights:<sup>5</sup> the right of access to cultural life; the right to participate in cultural life; the right to cultural identity; the right to cultural survival; the right to use one's language, as well as to access and establish media in one's own language;<sup>6</sup> the right to be educated in one's own language and in culturally appropriate ways;<sup>7</sup> the right to protection of cultural heritage, and the right to forms of development which are consistent with culture.<sup>8</sup> The importance accorded to each category of rights depends on who is discussing or promoting them, and in what context.

### **ii) Cultural rights in international conventions**

**“Of the rights enshrined in the International Bill of Rights, cultural rights are among the most neglected and least understood”.**  
**(Paul Hunt: 2000: 25)**

According to the 1993 Vienna Declaration, all human rights are “indivisible, and interdependent and interrelated” (Article 5). Yet most observers concur that cultural rights are still the least developed and least well articulated set of rights within the UN system.<sup>9</sup> Part of the difficulty in affirming cultural rights has been the fact that they are

not only individual but also collective, and therefore at odds with the origins of international or ‘universal’ human rights.<sup>10</sup> Cultural rights are seen as more complicated and less easily definable than other rights. In addition they can be considered not only as a set of specific rights but also as underpinning all other human rights<sup>11</sup> (Meyer-Bisch, 2002). Finally, definitions of what constitutes culture have changed over time but there is still no final agreement: definitions of culture continue to depend on context and on intellectual/philosophical orientation.

Cultural rights have nonetheless been a consistent if evolving part of international human rights and they are recognised in the International Bill of Rights.<sup>12</sup> The 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights addresses cultural rights in Articles 22 and 27: the focus is on the right of the individual to participate in the cultural life of the community and to benefit from his own cultural production.<sup>13</sup> This is the case also in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which obligates State Parties to “recognize the right of everyone” to “take part in cultural life” as well as benefit from scientific progress and from the right to (individual) intellectual property.<sup>14</sup> The 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) seeks to protect the cultural rights of minorities, “in community with the other members of the group”, and extends this to the right “to use their own language”. ICCPR therefore represents a shift away from a focus purely on the individual to that of persons who belong to minority groups within States. As Hunt (2000: 35) notes “it represents a step – but not a very large one – towards the idea of cultural rights of a collective”.

Cultural rights are also upheld in later conventions such the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CERD) (Article 5 (e)) and in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Article 13 (c)). In both cases the conventions protect against discrimination with respect to the right to participate in cultural activities and cultural life (David 2005: 5). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which we will come back later, affirms cultural rights specifically for children.

### **Towards collective rights**

Over the past two decades, there has been a gradual shift towards an understanding of cultural rights as a collective right, in addition to an individual right. There are three main reasons for this: 1) the progressive global acknowledgement of cultural diversity and difference,<sup>15</sup> especially through UNESCO; 2) the ‘regionalisation’ of human rights, and 3) the recognition of rights of indigenous peoples. This shift has helped give more prominence to cultural rights within the UN system and internationally.

1) The importance of preserving cultural diversity is enshrined in UNESCO’s Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted in November 2001 and in the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which is a binding instrument which has yet to come into effect. The former as a declaration “lays down not instruction but general guidelines”, but it recognizes the importance of cultural diversity for the “survival of humanity”.<sup>16</sup> It also “reaffirm[s] that culture should be

regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (Preamble). It thereby defines culture as a feature which belongs to humanity, and to individuals as well as to groups and societies. Nonetheless there is an admission that what constitutes cultural rights is not entirely clear: in its Action Plan for the implementation of the declaration, UNESCO advocates “making further headway in understanding and clarifying the content of cultural rights as an integral part of human rights”

The Action Plan also lists as one of its objectives the encouragement of linguistic diversity and respect for the mother tongue, “at all levels of education, wherever possible, and fostering the learning of several languages from the earliest age” (Objective 6). It also advocates the incorporation of “traditional pedagogies into the education process” so as to preserve and “make full use of culturally appropriate methods of communication and transmission of knowledge” (Objective 8). These are features which are important when it comes to discussing the cultural rights of children in the Pacific.

The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions encourages State Parties to promote and protect cultural expressions which it defines as “those expressions that result from the creativity of individuals, groups and societies, and that have cultural content”(Article 4.3); thereby affirming that cultural rights are collective as well as individual.<sup>17</sup>

2) The regionalization of human rights through instruments such as the African Charter of Human and Peoples’ Rights (1981) has also contributed to a changing understanding of cultural rights. The African Charter in particular emphasizes the notion of balance between rights and duties, and between the individual and the group. It advocates respect for identity and for the right to choose appropriate development (Rouland, 2003: 148), and affirms that the “promotion and protection of ... traditional values recognized by the community shall be the duty of the State” (Article 17 (3)). It therefore recognizes the importance of cultural values in the African context and the responsibility of the State and the individual to enhance these.<sup>18</sup> The Organisation of the American States (which adopted its own American Convention on Human Rights in 1969)<sup>19</sup>, began the process of developing an instrument on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>20</sup> This came on the heels of the 1989 ILO Convention 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples.<sup>21</sup>

3) The road to international recognition for indigenous rights began in 1982. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has recently been adopted (June 29 2006) by the Human Rights Council which has recommended its adoption by the General Assembly.<sup>22</sup> The Declaration is the most far reaching within the UN system in terms of advancing both collective and cultural rights. By virtue of recognizing rights of indigenous peoples as a group, it makes a radical shift towards the recognition of collective rights. At the same time, it recognizes indigenous peoples as a cultural category whose survival and well-being depend specifically on the protection of their cultural rights. It notably asserts their rights to cultural identity, cultural survival and

development; and specifically recognizes their spiritual links with the land and the sea (Articles 25-28). In addition, it asserts the right of indigenous peoples to, *inter alia*:

- maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions (Article 4)
- practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs (Article 12)
- maintain, protect and develop... manifestations of their cultures (Article 12)
- establish and control their education systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (Article 15)
- the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspiration which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information (Article 16)
- establish their own media in their own languages... (Article 17)
- maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions... [and] their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions (Article 29)

Although indigenous rights have internationally been associated mainly with minorities struggling to assert their rights in larger states, they have strong resonance in the Pacific context. They have particularly been referred to by political activists in the Fijian, New Caledonian, French Polynesian and West Papuan contexts. They also inform prominent Pacific scholars' views when it comes to examining cultural rights.<sup>23</sup>

### iii) Cultural rights in the Pacific

**“Cultural rights in the Pacific are more than a discrete category of human rights. As culture pervades the entire way of life of all Pacific peoples... cultural rights are inseparable from and therefore inherent in the way all other human rights are interpreted, asserted and exercised”.**

**Caren Wickliffe (2000:129)**

Defining, or “exploring” cultural rights in the Pacific was the object of a colloquium organized in October 1998 by UNESCO (Pacific office), with the Centre for New Zealand Jurisprudence of the School of Law of the University of Waikato (Wilson and Hunt, 2000). This colloquium came on the heels of an August 1998 Collective Human Rights of Pacific Peoples Conference held at the University of Auckland (Tomas 1998). Both meetings were held during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR<sup>24</sup> and both meetings sought to understand and define human rights in a Pacific context, and to examine the interaction between culture, cultural rights and human rights. Prior to and since these meetings there has been a lack of concerted reflection on cultural rights and the relationship between cultural and human rights in the Pacific. The exception has been work carried out by the legal community, and particularly the recent workshop held by the New Zealand Law Commission as part of its study on ‘Custom and Human Rights in the Pacific’.<sup>25</sup>

Discussions about human rights in the region have often been a ‘dialogue of the deaf’ between the advocates of human rights and the proponents of culture. It has been difficult to find common ground.<sup>26</sup> Many among the latter consider human rights an imposition that 1) emphasizes individual rights to the detriment of collective rights and duties and obligations, and, 2) seeks to undermine culture. And because internationally there has been a lack of emphasis on cultural rights, most people in the Pacific are not aware of the benefits which a stronger focus on cultural rights, in all their dimensions, collective as well as individual, could provide.

“Custom and human rights both concern rights. Human rights are understood to be the rights that are innate and inherent to each of us as individuals. Customary, traditional and cultural rights relate to our social mores as a distinct people of community. They include the ownership of land and natural resources, folklore, traditional knowledge and social systems. Both these species of rights belong to us by virtue of who and what we are. It follows that we will need to balance them with each other, if we wish to derive benefit from both....”

His Excellency, Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, 2006

Pacific countries have had little interest in ratifying international conventions, particularly the first generation ones,<sup>27</sup> for political, economic and cultural reasons.<sup>28</sup> Only Solomon Islands (1982) has acceded to (but not ratified) the CESC. And although all Pacific countries have ratified the CRC, all are behind in their reporting.<sup>29</sup> It is possible, however, that the eventual adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly will change the general perception about rights in the Pacific.

There is therefore no single definition of cultural rights in the Pacific but they are generally understood as the right to cultural identity; that is the “right to maintain and develop [a group’s] specific culture” (Stavenhagen, 1998: 7). This view derives from an understanding of culture as a “total way of life”<sup>30</sup> or as Konai Thaman (2000: 1) puts it: “as a shared way of living of a group of people, which includes their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values, and which is perceived by them to be unique and meaningful”. In this sense cultural rights are the “collective rights of a (cultural) group” (Thaman, 2000: 3).

This view is concordant with the Conference Statement issued by the aforementioned Conference on the Collective Human Rights of Pacific Peoples (1998) which affirmed the “following collective rights”, all of which could be considered cultural as well as political, economic and social rights:

- 1) the promotion and enhancement of indigenous Pacific cultures including language and customs;
- 2) forms of sustainable development which are consistent with the interests, cultures and economies of Indigenous Pacific Peoples themselves;

- 3) the sustainable management of the land, fisheries and other resources of Indigenous Pacific Peoples; and
- 4) the protection and conservation of the environment of the Pacific.<sup>31</sup>

How to advance and promote cultural rights in the Pacific is the objective of the UNESCO Colloquium Agreed Statement (October 1998). The Statement lists six categories through which UNESCO can help achieve this objective: language; cultural values; education; media; international instruments and institutions, and family and community relationships. Although none of the proposed measures seem to have been (systematically) taken up since then (and one should ask why this is the case), the document makes some useful suggestions under each of these categories, particularly:

the establishment of a Pacific Language Commission;

“a research programme to identify, develop and document the underlying values, knowledge beliefs and laws of the cultures of the Pacific region” which would serve to affirm these in policy making and in the “development of a Pacific instrument for the promotion and protection of Pacific cultures, laws, rights and duties...”;

the reaffirmation of the 1992 Rarotonga Declaration on education and cultural rights (see below for more details);

a more active role in the media in promoting Pacific cultures;

that UNESCO “engage... with the UN human rights system” to “ensure that the critical relationship between culture and rights is better understood, and that cultural rights receive the attention they deserve”, and,

that the possibility of building on relationships in family and community in the Pacific be explored in order to deal with poverty.

The document also seeks to ensure a process for the “promotion of the rights of Pacific cultures” and the elaboration of “a mechanism for continuity” to pursue discussions about “cultural rights and the relationship between culture and rights in the context of the Pacific”. Again, unfortunately most of these proposals do not seem to have been pursued in the region, which is a setback for the clarification of cultural rights in the Pacific.

#### **iv) Cultural rights and Children**

At the international level, the cultural rights of children are specifically recognized in the CRC. As stated, all Pacific Islands Countries have ratified the CRC, (the only convention to boast this record in the region). Children are highly valued in Pacific societies and PIC governments generally found that there was little in the treaty to object to and nothing that was culturally offensive or inappropriate. This is in spite of the fact that the **idea** of the rights of the child is not always well accepted in the region.<sup>32</sup>

Within CRC the right to culture is upheld in four main areas: 1) access to information; 2) education; 3) identity, and 4) participation in cultural life.

1) Article 17 seeks to ensure that the child has access to information and material of “social and cultural benefit”, from a “diversity of cultural sources”; and calls on State Parties to “encourage the mass media to have particular regard to the linguistic needs of the child who... is indigenous”. It also requires State Parties “to encourage the dissemination and production of children’s books”.

2) Article 29 affirms that education should be directed towards, *inter alia*, “the development of respect for the child’s... own cultural identity, language and values”.

3) Article 30 states that a “child... who is indigenous shall not be denied the right... to enjoy his or her own culture... or to use his or her own language”.

4) Article 31, *inter alia*,<sup>33</sup> engages State Parties to “recognize the right of the child to... participate freely in cultural life and the arts”; and “to respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life”, and to provide “opportunities for cultural [and] artistic... activity”.

The Convention (Article 4) states that for economic, social and cultural rights, State Parties are only expected to “undertake... measures to the maximum extent of their available resources” which would indicate that these rights are not justiciable and therefore not on par with civil rights. However, David (2005:7) argues that the CRC Committee “believes that economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights should be regarded as justiciable”.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, even though the CRC Committee has argued that the Convention has a “holistic perspective on children’s rights” and that the latter are “indivisible and interrelated, and that equal importance should be attached to each and every right”, David (2005: 10) also concludes that Article 31 has not received a great deal of attention.<sup>35</sup>

In the Pacific, the focus in the implementation of the CRC has not generally been on cultural rights, possibly, as David (2005) states because cultural rights are seen as a “luxury” rather than an essential right.<sup>36</sup> The agencies and organisations working for child welfare in Pacific have mostly focused on child protection and on economic and social rights rather than cultural rights.<sup>37</sup> As for Pacific States, they have often considered culture to be the realm of the community and have therefore put little emphasis on deliberately and actively promoting cultural rights for children.

#### **v) Rights and Children in the Pacific**

In the Pacific people do not generally associate children with rights but rather with cultural entitlements – the most basic of which is ‘belonging’. In other words, children are heirs to the values and “treasures” which society transmits by virtue of being born into a family and community. They belong to and in the community. The very word and idea of rights is not easily translated in Pacific languages and tends to cause unease and discomfort.<sup>38</sup> For instance, in the Samoan context, the word for rights (*aia tatau*) is associated with *pule* or authority. As such it is not associated with children who, even though they are greatly loved and honoured in many ways, are not seen as holders of authority. If anything, parents could be deemed to have rights over children. But even this

would not be an accurate understanding of the dynamics between parents and children, or between society and children in the Pacific, which are more responsibility oriented.

Pacific societies do not generally put a high premium on civil equality (as opposed to economic equality and social balance which have traditionally been valued). Hence placing children on an equal plane with adults as civil actors (which is how many in the region interpret the message of children's rights) is often seen as going against culture, and disrupting the bond between elders and children/youth.

Because of the difficulty of translating the idea of rights, there is a good deal of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of rights. Parents in Samoa, for instance, have questioned why they are being told about children's rights to protection, education, health, participation etc when they already view those same 'rights' as their responsibilities. Children and youth are also often confused about what rights imply as illustrated by the results of the 2001 National Forum for Children in Samoa: when the young participants were asked what they understood to be their rights, their answers included the "right to take their own life, to drink, to smoke, to do drugs, to not go to school" and so on, to the dismay of their elders.<sup>39</sup>

Taking a cultural approach to children's rights, as Save the Children Australia - Vanuatu (SCA - Vanuatu) has done, seems to be a positive way of reconciling parents and children and communities with the idea of rights in contemporary Pacific society. In implementing the Pacific Children's Program (a child protection program),<sup>40</sup> SCA - Vanuatu strives to encourage communities to remember and reinvigorate past practices which have given a special place to children and particular responsibilities to different members of the extended family, especially in terms of protecting the child and fostering his/her development. SCA - Vanuatu emphasises the need to renew relationships and re-instill mutual respect between children and adults, and helps communities think about their past methods and practices to protect children from birth to adulthood. The communities appreciate this approach which draws on their strengths and encourages them to engage children in cultural activities such as afternoon story telling and the playing of custom games.<sup>41</sup>

Pacific cultures accord children a particular place and recognize their entitlements to be loved, nurtured and protected, and to be the future holders of culture. These are the 'rights' which communities are struggling to uphold today.

## **II Culture and children in the Pacific**

### **i) The place of children**

Children are highly valued in Pacific cultures where they are not only often seen as a gift from God<sup>42</sup> but are also strongly associated with the continuity of culture and customs.<sup>43</sup> Families and communities are understood to thrive through the bearing of children. Not having children is generally considered a shame, literally and figuratively, which, in part,<sup>44</sup> explains the widespread practice of adoption within extended families, and the

emphasis on the importance of raising children. Families have traditionally been expected to treat all children, adopted or biological with care.<sup>45</sup>

As both a blessing and a resource for the future of families, communities and countries (Plange et al, 2003), children occupy an important place in the Pacific. They are recognized as a social grouping or category unto themselves<sup>46</sup> and within village settings they are often seen playing together, with older children often looking after younger ones. In this setting, all children are considered brothers and sisters regardless of actual kin relations. Village adults continue today to practice 'community parenting' (Otto, 1998: 61) and children can generally enter different homes to eat and rest when the need arises.<sup>47</sup> In addition, where extended family settings continue to exist, they allow children to navigate between relatives who have a duty to make sure that children both are protected and behave themselves.<sup>48</sup>

The community and family play an important role in making sure children become socially responsible and productive members for the future. Traditionally, from a young age, children are groomed to learn who they are, how they are related to others and how they should behave. This is learned through elders recounting genealogies and telling stories and legends (Ama, 2003), as well as through the repetition of daily activities, including chores. Nowadays, in areas where television and videos are the main form of entertainment, and particularly in urban settings, children are less exposed to this kind of cultural immersion even if many parents and grandparents still try to teach their children about their social and natural environment and family relationships. The latter remain very important in the Pacific, and children are still expected to gradually understand how they fit into kinship networks. But as the Situation Analysis on Palau (Otto, 1998: 61) reminds us, linkages with community have to be deliberately cultivated: "Contemporary Palauan life tends to isolate children from their parents and kin. At every level of society, an effort must be made to elicit greater levels of participation by children in all aspects of community life...."

Children's place and roles in culture vary according to their age and gender. Infants and toddlers are generally cherished and coddled, and hold a privileged place in society. For instance in Samoa, there is a "magical" time when children are free and allowed to eat with their parents, even if one of them (usually the father) is a *matai*. But as they grow older, children are expected to learn accepted behaviour and pay close attention to what their parents and elders say and do, and to become more independent. In Samoa they are expected to begin to *tautua* (serve) by learning how to prepare food, host guests, run errands, pick up the rubbish and so on.

Throughout the region in rural settings, children's participation within their same-age group<sup>49</sup> remains relatively care-free and playful, but in the home they are expected to demonstrate their respect for, and belonging within, their family and community (Otto, 1998). In urban settings children's movements and games within their peer group are more constrained and they are less able to engage in foundational cultural activities with parents and elders such as planting, fishing, collecting shell fish, preparing fresh food, climbing for coconuts, weaving, carving, canoe building and sailing, caring for other

children and elders, dancing and singing, and so on. They have less access to a range of adult ‘teachers’ and storytellers compared to children in rural areas (although this depends on how urban the urban setting is). The greater availability of non-traditional forms of leisure also reduces the children’s immersion into culture.

As a result of urban migration and social and economic change, the place of children in culture is also changing. As they learn fewer traditional skills and are distanced or isolated from the extended family, children and parents know less about their families and communities.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, communities begin to forget or ignore their own cultural child rearing practices, thereby neglecting their duties and responsibilities towards children. As a result children become acculturated, to the extent of not learning their native language, and often, consequently, uncultured. As a result children’s behaviour is less consistent with cultural expectations. This causes frustration and misunderstanding within the family, community and even school context, which may lead to a certain ‘de-sacralization’ of the child and to ensuing abuses and neglect.<sup>51</sup> When children become disconnected from their cultural heritage this also affects their identity construction and cultural fluency, and confusion as to their status within the family and community.

## **ii) Entitlements of children**

Children in the Pacific are not spontaneously associated with rights (see above) but they certainly have inherited entitlements, often even before they are born. The first of these entitlements is the child’s name. As a new family member each child is entitled to a particular place in the family and the community. This is symbolized by the name he or she is given. As Konai Thaman reminds us, “There is a story behind every person’s name in my [Tongan] culture. Furthermore it is believed that one must name one’s children after an ancestor because this will ensure the continuation of the spiritual tie between past, present and future generations” (1992). Names (whether first names, titles or surnames) not only determine the child’s belonging within the family and community, (and serve to cement relationships) but they also affect his/her other entitlements such as access to land, to certain kinds of knowledge and skills and/or to claims over other family members and branches.<sup>52</sup>

In Samoa, every child is a *suli* or an heir to the family name and title, and by extension to the family land. This applies to children throughout the Pacific, whether the connection to land is through the mother’s or the father’s line (or sometimes through both), and requires that the child be taught how s/he fits in within her/his extended family. However, with the increasing pressure on land in some islands of the region, children’s entitlements are being eroded.<sup>53</sup>

Children are also entitled to protection, love, food, shelter, clothing and education. This has traditionally been deemed to be primarily the responsibility of the parents, extended family and community. A telling example of how protection for children is understood in the Marshall Islands are the rituals women go through as soon they know they are pregnant, which “guard the child in the womb through five or six years of age”. Once the

baby is born, relatives administer various medicines which are “meant to protect the baby spiritually, physically and psychologically” (Joash, 2004: 51).<sup>54</sup>

“RiMajel adore the firstborn, to the extent that even parents cannot step on its *jaki* (sleeping mat). We love children generally though, and we believe that they will weaken if we do not take care of them properly. As children grow up, we give special care to them and their belongings. They eat in a clean place, separate from the rest of the family and use different dishes and utensils. They have separate washtubs or buckets, towels and washcloths, soap, powder and oil”.

(Bernice Joash, 2004: 55)

*Alofa* (love, caring) is a fundamental part of the *va tapuia*<sup>55</sup> between parents and children in Samoa. Even though this relationship implies a certain reserve and respect demonstrated through language use, actions and deportment, it is a solid bond and implies security<sup>56</sup> and mutuality. In exchange for obedience towards her/his parents, and watching what s/he does and says, a child is entitled to dignified, caring and responsible behaviour from the parents.<sup>57</sup>

Education, which Konai Thaman defines as worthwhile learning, is a big part of children’s entitlements in Pacific cultures. Great emphasis is placed on children learning to become useful, sharing, caring and constructive members of society. Some children will be singled out to become the holders of specialized and privileged knowledge and will be groomed for that purpose from a young age if they show extraordinary ability. In Palau, traditionally, certain youths would be “apprenticed to a clan elder” to learn particular skills and crafts such as house building (Otto, 1998: 21). Education is an important component of identity construction.

### iii) Identity construction

Children learn who they are and how they fit in through interaction with parents, extended family, same age groups, community, church and increasingly, schooling.<sup>58</sup>

Absorption of fundamental values such as respect, love, caring for others, humility and service are firstly learnt within the family and community through daily interaction and the carrying out of simple tasks. Children learn to be mainly through doing and observing. For instance, when child goes to collect shell fish with his/her mother, (biological or other), it is an activity which has both pedagogical and practical value: the child learns about the environment and different species as well as about the richness of language, about the importance of feeding other family members, and about the joy, closeness and rules associated with being with an older family member.

Identity is also constructed through participation in family and village cultural activities. In most countries these occur frequently and are an opportunity for children to not only watch and learn but to also participate in singing, dancing and the preparation of exchange ceremonies. This is also a time where, through everyone’s engagement,

emphasis on hierarchy and distance is reduced, and the focus is on participation of the whole community. For instance in Samoa when village dancing groups are invited to perform at Independence Day celebrations, the *matai* and untitled dance together, and the *matai* pay close attention to the children as they know that they will be the ones carrying on the tradition in the future. Togetherness is also emphasized in celebrations such as White Sunday, where the usual hierarchical order is reversed and children are allowed to lead, eat the best food, and are dressed in their finest. Many custom dances in Vanuatu involve children as well as adults, and some are specifically reserved for children.

Rituals such as circumcisions for boys and celebrations of the first menses for girls remain important in countries such as Vanuatu. It is a time where extended families renew and strengthen relationships and children's entry into a new phase of their life is celebrated.<sup>59</sup> It also reinforces the bonds between same-age children, instilling values of togetherness and solidarity.

Participation in church is another important component in identity construction and is considered part and parcel of cultural immersion in many parts of the Pacific.<sup>60</sup> At evening prayer in Samoa children are reminded of what is expected of them and how they should behave. The *aoga faifeau* (pastor's school), now in decline, was instrumental in teaching Samoan language to children.<sup>61</sup> Sunday school throughout the region is another socializing institution in which children learn spiritual and academic skills often in their mother tongue.

As government's role has increased in society, formal schooling has to a large extent supplanted family and community education which allowed for greater cultural immersion. With children spending less time with their parents and elders, and more time in school,<sup>62</sup> their access to cultural identity and participation in cultural life has declined considerably. As a result many communities across the region are experiencing cultural loss, and are realizing the need for culture to be better integrated in formal education, as well as in vocational training. Pacific governments are beginning to rethink educational policy so that it is more relevant to the cultural context, and to prevent further cultural loss.

### III Culture and Education in the Pacific

**“Most of the things I learned about Tongan culture, I learned outside school. The school was seen as the place where things foreign were taught – things which, it was popularly believed, would make you clever (*poto*) and thus were more appropriate for the kinds of new, western-style jobs that were to be performed, most of which would pay you well, so that you, in turn, would be able to meet your obligations to your family, your church and your country. Hence the notion of a school's function as “transmission of culture” was present, but it was to be the transmission of a foreign culture, the culture of, in the early days of schooling, the missionaries/teachers, and later, during my schooldays, of the manifest curriculum.”**

### Konai Helu Thaman (1992: 25)

Konai Thaman's experience with schooling would not be unlike that of many Pacific school children today. There are still schools in the region that punish children for speaking a language other than French or English within their premises, and schools, for the most part, remain separate from communities.<sup>63</sup>

Recently, a young Fijian student addressed her Fijian school teacher in Bauan in the school yard. She was reprimanded: "You are in Form 3 and you are **still** speaking

Pacific educators at USP,<sup>64</sup> along with other regional scholars,<sup>65</sup> have long been advocating for more culturally appropriate curricula and methods of teaching and learning, as well as the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. They base their arguments for change on 1) the increasing alienation of Pacific children from their communities and cultural backgrounds and values (known as the "cultural gap"),<sup>66</sup> 2) the high 'failure' rate of indigenous children in schools throughout the region, and 3) the cognitive argument, which confirms that the use of the mother tongue, particularly in early education, leads to better cognitive literacy and learning.

The cultural rights argument, although less frequently used as justification for better integration of culture and vernacular languages in formal education (mainly because of a general lack of awareness, in the Pacific, of cultural and language rights) has been used by Pacific scholars. It also underpins the Recommendations of the Rarotonga Seminar on 'Education for Cultural Development' sponsored by UNESCO in 1992.

In a paper prepared for the Forum Education Ministers Meeting in 2004 on language and culture in which Dr Taufe'ulungaki, former Director of the Institute of Education at USP, lists cultural rights as one of the rationales for mother tongue education. She notably refers to Article 15 of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which provides for the right of indigenous peoples to: "establish and control the educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning..." (Taufe'ulungaki, 2004: 8).

Irene Taafaki, the USP Marshall Islands campus director also appeals to cultural rights for children when she states that "Children must, *as a right*, have access to the resources and acquire the skills to become fully knowledgeable of their own culture". She goes on to affirm that educational programmes should reflect the cultural context in which they are offered and demonstrate respect for the "knowledge system and aspirations of those they serve".

The General Recommendations of the 1992 Rarotonga UNESCO Seminar affirm the cultural right for everyone to "knowledge of, participation in and enrichment by her or his own culture". The recommendations also state that "cultural groups" must be in charge of cultural development and that "the elders identified by each group must be

recognized as cultural and national ‘treasures’ and be accorded all the rights and respect their wisdom deserves” (in Teasdale and Teasdale, 1992).

In spite of the above work and recommendations, culture and language rights in education remain underdeveloped.

#### **i) Culture and language loss, and education**

**“While several constitutions call for respect for traditional culture, including language (Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea), and others provide for the right of their citizens to access services besides legal ones in an official language other than English (Fiji, Vanuatu), none has specific provisions to ensure perhaps the most important language right of its young citizens, the right of access to education in their mother tongue”.**

**(France Mugler, forthcoming)**

In her 2004 paper, Taufe’ulungaki sums up the present educational situation in the region with respect to language and culture in the following terms:

“Although Pacific countries recognize the importance of using mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools, in reality, a variety of policies and practices are found, and in almost all cases, the mother tongue is used only as a medium of instruction in the first six years of primary education, if that. Pacific students are therefore required to learn a second language as the medium of instruction in schools. There are several difficulties that could arise in this situation. If the mother tongue is not strong, students will have difficulty in acquiring the second language, which will have negative impacts on their learning and educational achievement. A language also is not learned in isolation. It comes with the cultural values, beliefs, rules and conventions of its home culture. The student is required not only to be literate in the language but in the culture of that language also. In addition, the schools are often modeled on western-forms of education, which originate from different value systems and have different rules of communication, and promote different teaching and learning strategies, which are different from the socio-cultural home contexts of most Pacific students. The results are weakened Pacific languages and communities that could suffer extinction and high failures rates in education for Pacific students”.

Loss of language is indeed occurring throughout the Pacific.<sup>67</sup> In Vanuatu, where there are approximately 80 existing vernacular languages (down from 115 or more),<sup>68</sup> only a few primary schools are currently teaching some vernacular in their culture classes, in addition to the 14 pilot primary schools where classes 1 and 2 are seemingly being taught in the vernacular.<sup>69</sup> In Tanna, parents and teachers have noticed that children are unable to speak their mother tongue fluently and frequently mix in English, French and bislama words to express themselves. Vernacular vocabulary is disappearing through lack of use and being replaced by bislama terms or expressions. Even in Fiji, many urban Fijian children are not completely fluent in Bauan, let alone in their dialect or language of origin. Loss of mother tongue is less prevalent in Samoa<sup>70</sup> and Tonga where the mother

tongue is taught in primary schools but fluency in high language is suffering. In the Marshall Islands, where the mother tongue is partly used as the medium of instruction (MOI) in the early grades, only 50 percent of students passed a test in Marshallese recently given to all fourth graders.<sup>71</sup>

There is no doubt that culture loss is precipitated through the current schooling system. Children spend most of their day in school where they learn in a ‘foreign’ language and foreign ways about subjects and values which are often unrelated to their home, village or community life. Because a very large proportion of teaching occurs in the classroom, with only rare field trips, excursions or direct contact with the community, the emphasis is on abstract learning. In addition few texts and materials are contextualised. When children return home it is often too late for them to spend time with their parents or elders to learn time consuming cultural skills. This is one of the reasons for which parents in Vanuatu in certain places have refused to send their children to school.<sup>72</sup> They want their children to grow up culturally competent in their own culture, not in a ‘foreign’ culture which they have little (or less) use for.

## **ii) Evolving Educational Policy**

Policy makers and educators in the Pacific have nonetheless realized the need to address language and cultural loss. Two regional initiatives are prompting a re-designing of educational policy throughout the Pacific: 1) the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI)<sup>73</sup> and 2) the Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE).<sup>74</sup> The RPEI is seeking to promote, *inter alia*, a “new vision for Pacific education by Pacific communities” and a greater congruence between the formal education system and the values held by Pacific peoples. It notably sees culture as the foundation for education. Through the RPEI, Vanuatu held a Rethinking Education in Vanuatu conference (2002) in which participants discussed the need to integrate culture and vernacular languages in the schools. The Ministry of Education is in the process of developing a vernacular policy in which the mother tongue would be the medium of instruction (MOI) in kindergarten and in the first two years of primary school, and taught as a subject from year 3 onwards. A Rethinking Education in Micronesia conference was also held in 2004 to address similar issues in the Micronesian countries and has led to the launching of a Commission for Education for Micronesia which will reevaluate educational policy throughout Micronesia.

The PRIDE project, which has been assisting Pacific countries develop national strategic plans for education, has as its first benchmark: “pride in cultural and national identity”. Each national plan is to be built “on a strong foundation of local cultures and languages, thus enabling students to develop a deep pride in their own values, traditions and wisdoms, and a clear sense of their own local cultural identity, as well as their identity as citizens of the nation”.<sup>75</sup> Countries, through their master plans, are therefore expected to develop language policies and to integrate cultural activities in their curriculum.

## **From policy to action**

In spite of the guidance provided by these regional initiatives, individual Pacific countries are struggling with how best to implement language and culture policies in schools according to their own political, socio-cultural, historical and linguistic contexts as well their goals and their economic means. In Vanuatu, 14 primary schools, in areas where the local language has been written, have been piloting the use of vernacular teaching in

“The teaching of Maori language and culture is compulsory in schools up to the end of Form 5. For some schools this becomes a commitment to passing on our language, dance, games, weaving, legends and exploring our heritage. In others it is included only because it has to be. Students then complain of boredom and are turned off by the very activity that was put there to inspire them- more often than not by a teacher who has had little training and has few resources”.

Vai'imene, 2003:175

years 1 and 2 for the past three years.<sup>76</sup> In Tuvalu the mother tongue is the MOI for the first two years of primary school. In Fiji, the policy is for vernacular language to be used as the MOI in years 1-3 but many schools, particularly in the urban areas do not follow it, and use English instead. Papua New Guinea, which has close to 900 languages, has

decided to use the mother tongue as the MOI for the first six years of school (Taufe'ulungaki, 2004:11). Tonga uses Tongan as the MOI during the primary years; Tongan Studies is taught thereafter as a subject. In Kiribati, the vernacular is used as the MOI up until Year 3, and Kiribatese culture and language is taught as a subject thereafter. In the Cook Islands, the mother tongue is used as the MOI until Years 3 or 4 with introduction of English reading and writing introduced at that time and increasingly taught with English used to teach other subjects through to the end of primary school. Cook Island Maori is taught as a subject in secondary school.<sup>77</sup> In Nauru there is no teaching in the vernacular while in Solomon Islands vernacular languages may be used in primary school up to Year 3 (but rarely are).<sup>78</sup> In New Caledonia six vernacular languages are taught in junior secondary schools and four in high school<sup>79</sup> in selected schools throughout the island group, all as subjects. In primary school, five hours a week are supposed to be dedicated to the teaching of vernacular languages but this is not enforced (Sam, 2005).

In Samoa, transitional bilingualism has been practiced for a number of years but the role of and importance accorded to Samoan in schools remains problematic. As Lameta (forthcoming) asks, is it acceptable for Samoan to be phased out as a medium of instruction (MOI) at secondary school where it is only taught as a subject? As in the case of all languages, it takes a lifetime to master Samoan, particularly to learn high or oratory language. Lameta notably argues that replacing Samoan with English as the MOI at secondary level sends the message that full fluency in Samoan is not as important as

“There are Marshallese language skills one learns in upper grades that are related to Marshallese skills like fishing. If use of Marshallese is not emphasized in upper grades, the language will be lost – what needs to be learned in Marshallese will be lost.”

Comment by the Public Service Commissioner, in Marilyn Low, Destin Penland and Hilda Heine, 2005: 6

learning English. This conforms with the conclusions of a 1994 World Bank commissioned paper drafted to assist Pacific countries determine language policy based on international experience, that “children require at least 12 years to learn the first language”.<sup>80</sup>

The issues with respect to language policy are firstly political. In some countries, leaders, including officials responsible for educational policy, are unaware of both the benefits of mother tongue learning, and the cultural rights of children to learn about their own culture and language. Many of the elite have gone through the educational system in English/French, and although they may promote culture in discourse, they are reluctant to further advance mother tongue education, and want their own children to be educated in English/French.<sup>81</sup> They view language learning as an either/or situation, rather than seeking to find the best way to offer children competency in multiple languages.<sup>82</sup> One observation raised by linguists working in the Pacific is that educational policy has been traditionally influenced by donors, whose own background and culture are monolingual.<sup>83</sup> Educational consultants and advisors from these donor countries have therefore not promoted multilingual educational policy. As a result many decision-makers and parents have come to believe that it is more important for their children to learn English/French in school rather than their own language which they assume children can learn in the home or “in the neighborhood”.<sup>84</sup> English is viewed as the language which will enable children to go on to further education, find jobs and participate in the market economy.<sup>85</sup> The vernacular is often seen as an impediment to this, even though in a country like Nauru where there is no teaching at all in the vernacular, one observer has stated that many Nauruans are illiterate in English.<sup>86</sup>

In addition redesigning language policy for schools is costly, takes time and requires competence and hard work.<sup>87</sup> It means agreeing on changing curricula, and acting on the changes, producing new materials and training teachers. Vanuatu, for instance, is in the process of rethinking its curriculum, even though the primary curriculum was reviewed in the early 1990s (with little follow up in terms of new materials), and the secondary curriculum was reviewed in 2003 (with equally little change to content implemented). There are disagreements within the Ministry of Education between those who are advocating simply augmenting the curriculum with language and culture, thereby lengthening children’s and teachers’ days, and those who wish to redesign the curriculum so that it is more culture friendly and holistic in approach.<sup>88</sup>

In most Pacific countries there are very few materials in vernacular languages. Because little emphasis has been placed on mother tongue literacy, there is a dearth of books for young children. Even in the countries such as Samoa where the mother tongue has been the main MOI in primary school for close to 10 years, there are not many attractive, well made books for small children in Samoan.<sup>89</sup> A small publisher, New Leaf Publications has published a small number of well illustrated and imaginative bilingual books, mainly through donor funding, and is hoping to gain greater support from the MOE so that it can continue to publish.<sup>90</sup>

In Kiribati, even though the mother tongue is used as the MOI for the first three years of primary school, there are no vernacular readers, no teachers' guides and no training of teachers to teach in Kiribatese. Vernacular literacy is learnt solely through the use of the blackboard. In Nauru there are no materials in the vernacular other than the Nauruan Bible and hymnbook.<sup>91</sup> In the multilingual countries of Melanesia, orthographies still need to be developed for many languages. In Vanuatu it is mainly through the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) that vernacular books for children have been produced.

### **The Leftemap Literacy Program**

One of the components of the Leftemap Literacy Program being developed by the Vanuatu MOE (with the assistance of Peace Corps Volunteers) is the planned production of vernacular resource kits for schools throughout Vanuatu to teach vernacular literacy skills. The program will produce pre-primers and primers to be designed by communities and provide a teacher's guide to be used to assist teachers in teaching vernacular literacy skills. This will fill an important gap as one of the biggest difficulties encountered by teachers and schools at present is not only the lack of vernacular materials but teachers' guides for teaching in the vernacular.

Many of the Zone Curriculum Advisers in Tanna (Vanuatu) interviewed in September 2006 were of the view that vernacular literacy was important and that the mother tongue should be the MOI in early primary school but were at a loss as to how to introduce it. They lamented the lack of a teacher's guide and the lack of training. This was patent at Loukatai Primary School (Tanna) where the Head Teacher, a proponent of integrating culture in the curriculum, had hired a culture teacher for classes 1 and 2 to develop vernacular literacy. The teacher, a cultural specialist, was instead mainly teaching the class 1 and 2 children to write and read in English. He was, however, responsible for teaching culture to all the other classes, something from which the teachers were also benefiting.

“English is my second language and I am still learning it. I worry about my pronunciation and grammar. I wonder if I can teach it well enough to my students. That's why I follow the textbook [basal reader] closely”.  
Teacher interviewed in

Not all teachers across the region are fully fluent in their mother tongue, and if they are, they are generally not trained to teach it. Often they are not either fully competent in English either.<sup>92</sup> As Taufe'ulungaki (2004) notes, “The most immediate [priority] is the training of teachers to be at least bilingually and biculturally competent in their own languages and cultures and those of their students”. In Vanuatu, the vast majority of current teachers left their home when they were young to further their education and have received all their schooling in English/French in primary, secondary and tertiary, and as a result, often have restricted knowledge of their mother tongue.<sup>93</sup>

Furthermore teachers' training colleges and universities throughout the Pacific have thus

far put little emphasis on training teachers on how to teach languages, particularly vernacular languages.<sup>94</sup>

Learning how to teach culture is another challenge for teachers. According to a senior teacher trainer in Samoa, many teachers presently view culture as separate from education and are unwilling to bridge the two. This poses problems in the classroom because young children entering the system are unable to make use of the cultural rules and behaviour patterns learnt in the home to progress quickly in the school environment (Taufe'ulungaki, forthcoming). It is ironic that, in Samoa for instance, in the degree program offered for teachers at the National University of Samoa, only two courses out of 16 are in Samoan. This is in spite of the fact that the lecturers are for the most part Samoan, the teacher students are all Samoan and they will be teaching Samoan students when they graduate.

Another factor preventing greater cultural content in schools is the distance between schools and communities. Largely because of the 'modernisation' project of education,<sup>95</sup> communities have not been closely involved with teaching and learning in the formal context. As a result many parents have come to view (so-called) formal education as something they are not a part of and which should be left to teachers. This has resulted in contrasting situations in Tanna, for instance, where some parents and teachers think that school is a place where English is (and should be) learnt while other parents refuse to even send their children to school due to paucity of cultural content.

Recent research carried out in Tonga and Cook Islands indicate that many parents would welcome a more relevant curriculum and for their children to be better equipped for life in the community.<sup>96</sup> Many are disenchanted with their children's lack of practical knowledge and their inability to secure employment in spite of schooling. This is leading to a rethinking of the relationship between communities and schools, and an effort to have parents participate more in schools. Bringing parents and culture experts into schools under present arrangements – where there is a distance between parents and teachers – is proving difficult, even where there is good will of parents and teachers. In addition, parents and cultural experts may expect some compensation or motivation for coming to schools. At present, the arrangements where parents and experts contribute to teaching in schools depends on the school principal and teachers, and their integration in the community where their school is situated. Countries are looking for solutions: in Kiribati there is talk of a possible return of primary schools to the churches with government support.<sup>97</sup> Vanuatu is envisaging creating community schools for kindergarten and Years 1 and 2 which would be managed by the communities. This is seen as a way of breaching the 'cultural gap' and benefiting from the richness of the '*vanua* library'.<sup>98</sup>

To conclude, ensuring children's cultural rights (even if the concerns are not framed in a rights' language) in schools is increasingly a preoccupation of governments, communities and parents. But it will be a long process.

## **VI Cultural Policy**

Although most Pacific constitutions make some reference to the importance of culture, or customs and usages, and/or customary law,<sup>99</sup> culture in the Pacific has traditionally been the domain of families and communities rather than the state. As a result, it has been assumed that culture would continue to develop and thrive without requiring government support or promotion. Countries have consequently not been active in developing coherent national cultural policies, and generally, governments have focused on material and infrastructural ‘progress’, often to the neglect (if not detriment) of culture.<sup>100</sup>

“ ‘Development’ talk puts a good face on the consumerist fantasies that have been sweeping the Pacific for decades but is seen as in conflict with “culture”. Politicians usually try to keep the two terms separate. Both are “good” words which need

Ron Crocombe (1994: 26) outlines three reasons for the lack of emphasis on cultural policy and integrating culture and development. One is the ambivalence of the public towards culture due to aspirations to a ‘modern’ life. Another is the role of “foreign aid agencies, business interests, and international media” which have a powerful influence over local policies and “undermine that which is indigenous”.<sup>101</sup> A third is that “people are not quite sure what to do” and finding this out requires political will: “Cultural influences are so pervasive and difficult to measure that very detailed planning is required to evolve workable policies, along with strong political will to implement them”.

The marginalization of culture in policy circles occurs both nationally<sup>102</sup> and regionally. Within Pacific governments, the culture portfolio is considered unimportant and given few resources. In Fiji, the Department of Culture and Heritage was only established in 2000 and has moved ministries no less than three times since then. In most countries departments responsible for culture are under resourced and policy development has been difficult.<sup>103</sup> Efforts are underway in certain countries to develop national policies: Kiribati has earmarked the development of a cultural policy in its draft National Sustainable Development Strategy and Tuvalu has requested regional assistance to develop its cultural policy. Samoa is currently developing a policy which should be completed in 2007.<sup>104</sup>

At the regional level, the Ministers of Culture have met only once, in 2002, in contrast to the annual meeting of the Forum Economic Ministers. In their Declaration, the Ministers highlighted the lack of government support for culture, stating: “We urge governments of the Pacific Island countries and territories to place a central focus on traditional knowledge and culture, rather than pushing it to the periphery”, arguing that: “Traditional knowledge and culture support social cohesion and economic development”, and that government support in this area was essential.<sup>105</sup> The Pacific Plan, which is the blueprint for regional development in the next 10 to 15 years, puts little emphasis on culture in spite of Forum Leaders’ strong (and frequent) rhetoric about the value of Pacific cultures.<sup>106</sup> The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the foremost regional policy body, considers that cultural development is not its responsibility but rather that of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).<sup>107</sup> However, the SPC Cultural Affairs Program (CAP) has a sole cultural adviser, with a shared project assistant and technical

support officer, and a budget equivalent to 1.78 percent of SPC's total budget.<sup>108</sup> The role of donors cannot be underestimated either: for instance, while Australia's contribution to SPC is of the order of AUS\$ 6 million annually, its direct contribution to cultural affairs has been nil since 1999.

The Festival of Pacific Arts, organized by the Council of Pacific Arts every four years, is the premier regional cultural event. Children's participation in this event has generally been important in the hosting countries through their role in assisting with preparations and taking part in performances. However, children are not part of traveling delegations. But the future of the Festival has been questioned due to its (high) costs even though it provides substantial revenue to the host country and to the artists taking part. The more recent Festival of Melanesian Arts (the first one took place in 1996) also takes place every four years with the third one held in Suva in October 2006.

There are many important issues which cultural policy needs to deal with in order to preserve, protect, defend and promote Pacific cultures (e.g. the legal protection of traditional knowledge and expressions of culture, including collective intellectual property; and the promotion of handicrafts and other cultural industries). But it also needs to recognize and enhance the important contribution of culture to the economy and political and social well-being. There is a paucity of quantitative and qualitative data on these areas but existing figures indicates that in Solomon Islands, for instance, the cultural sector contribute 30 percent to the national net product (Griffiths, 2006: 2). More work is required in this area.

Cultural policy should also address the future cultural competence and development of children and youth in the region, and provide avenues for a variety of forms of cultural expression. This can only be done if the state invests resources in creative expression as well as in language and culture maintenance, inside and outside schools.

At present, there is little direct governmental focus on children's access to and participation in cultural activity beyond the area of educational policy (with its present deficiencies). Specific attention to children is absent in current (draft) cultural policies (where they exist),<sup>109</sup> and most cultural institutions such as museums and cultural centres (which are often underfinanced) are generally not geared towards advancing children's access to and participation in culture. As SPC's CAP points out, "Cultural institutions must increase their relevance to enhance community participation, for example, by involving young people, because they offer opportunities for adapting traditions to new realities" (SPC, 2006: 3).

Countries have yet to define what they see as culture and what they want to do about it. Developing a coherent policy is one way to address this issue. In the process of developing its draft cultural policy, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Samoa has been carrying out meetings with its stakeholders to define what they understand by culture so that it can base its policy on these discussions. One area that it is deliberately avoiding, for instance, is *agaifanua* (ie matters belonging to particular villages and

families). This sort of process enables governments to carefully consider the role the state should play and the parts that communities should have.

Despite not having a single cultural policy, all countries of the region have developed cultural initiatives and/or institutions which are working hard, in spite of their financial limitations, to enhance cultural activities, with a concern to pass on knowledge and skills to the younger generations. A few brief selected examples follow:

In Samoa, the state is involved in the promotion of culture in different ways including: the annual Teuila festival which is oriented towards promoting cultural activities and practices such as traditional sports and dancing, and comes under the tourism portfolio; the revival of the weaving of fine mats initiated by programmes geared to young women no longer in school; the encouragement of traditional goods exchanges in *fa'alavelave* (life events) rather than the exchange of money and canned foods; through preparations for the Festival of Pacific Arts.

In Fiji, the “Living Human Treasures” program run by the Department of Culture and Heritage and the Fiji Arts Council (and sponsored by UNESCO) is engaged in recording all the experts in fields of indigenous knowledge and skills with the objective that they will then train young people whether in the formal educational system or through apprenticeships. This is an emanation of UNESCO’s Living Human Treasures programs and concords with UNESCO’s 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.<sup>110</sup>

The Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC) sees the transmission of culture to children as one of its central objectives. The VCC has been proactive in recording custom in a number of domains throughout Vanuatu through its extensive network of fieldworkers. One of the areas recorded are child rearing practices. The women fieldworkers encourage mothers to spend time telling custom stories to their children and to revive useful customary practices, and they work with schools and teachers to promote cultural activities such as custom games and dances and teaching in vernacular languages. On Epi, one of the VCC fieldworkers is scheduled into the weekly school program to teach about weaving, songs, arts and crafts and the naming of surrounding flora and fauna. The women fieldworkers have also documented the traditional calendar which is now one of the primary tools for teaching culture in schools. In addition, through its network, the VCC has encouraged different islands to hold their own cultural festivals in addition to the National Cultural festival which focuses on a particular theme.

The VCC has been assisting the Ministry of Education through the production of a set of Vanuatu national history textbooks (three volumes and a teacher’s guide) which have been completed and are aimed at Year 10 and 11 children. It has also been involved in the LINKS project with UNESCO for the strengthening of indigenous knowledge and resource management, with a focus on developing a science curriculum which focuses equally on indigenous and western science in the early years of primary school. The VCC has also been piloting the teaching of traditional arts in three primary schools in Port Vila with two of its cultural animators. They hold three 90 minute workshops in classes 3-6

and bring in community resources to teach specialized activities such as weaving. This is done partly to encourage the MOE to help teachers become facilitators and work more closely with communities, and to make full use of the latter's knowledge and skills.<sup>111</sup>

The Waan Aelõñ in Majõl (WAM –Canoes of the Marshall Islands) NGO in the Marshall Islands has developed a programme to teach young people and children, boys and girls about canoe building, maintenance, repair and sailing. The program is aimed at maintaining an important part of Marshallese heritage while at the same time teaching young people skills, pride in their work and who they are, and economic skills by combining traditional canoe building with modern boat building. The trainees who learn about all aspects of navigation in Marshallese culture and make presentations in schools.<sup>112</sup>

As these initiatives demonstrate, there is a great deal of scope in the Pacific to further develop cultural policy and make it an integral part of political, economic and social development and well-being.

## **V. Mapping the way forward – promoting the cultural rights of children**

At present, it is difficult to assert that cultural rights of children, particularly as they are contained in CRC, are being met by Pacific Islands states.<sup>113</sup> Implementation with respect to Articles 17, 29 and 30 is weak. Children do not, on the whole have access to information and material of “social and cultural benefit” and from a “diversity of cultural sources” and children's books, particularly in the vernacular, are in short supply. The production and dissemination of children's books does not appear to be a high priority. In the educational sector, little is done to “develop respect” for children's cultural identities, languages and values. Although indigenous children are not “denied the right” to “use [their] own language” in most contexts, this is still happening in schools.

Enhancing cultural rights, particularly as they apply to children in the Pacific, should be a goal of Pacific peoples and governments. This would mean encouraging greater awareness of cultural rights in the Pacific for all and for children specifically; facilitating and supporting the changes in educational policy which are beginning to occur; assisting local, national and regional organizations which are producing bilingual and vernacular literacy materials; assisting the media to produce more locally-based programs with exciting cultural content targeted at children; and encouraging the production of national and regional documentaries and films which value local and regional cultures.

- 1) How can awareness on cultural rights be better promoted in the Pacific? How can this be done specifically for children? How can CRC be used to raise this kind of awareness?
- 2) How can moves to make curricula and schools more culturally inclusive be encouraged? How can efforts to bring communities and schools closer be

- encouraged? How can arts and creative expression be furthered in school curricula?
- 3) How can countries be assisted to promote language policies that encourage multilingualism and diversity?
  - 4) What is preventing governments and donors from supporting cultural policy making at the national and regional level? Why is culture not considered part and parcel of economic and social development and an important component of political wellbeing?
  - 5) How can the region address the furthering of cultural policy?

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, due to a concern for brevity, the paper does not discuss vocational education and only briefly alludes to pre-school education. Another area that has been neglected in this paper is the role of the media and dissemination of information to enhance cultural rights of children.

<sup>3</sup> The more encompassing the definition of culture, the greater the possible range of rights. As one moves away from a definition of culture as restricted to “arts and letters” to a more holistic understanding of culture as a way of life of a particular group or society, the greater the “range of matters to which one has a right”. See Wilson (2000: 17),

<sup>4</sup> By official, we mean definitions elaborated or suggested at a various times by organizations such as UNESCO, the Council of Europe (eg its document “‘Reflections on Cultural Rights Synthesis Report’ in which a group of experts proposes to identify the content of the right to participate in cultural life” – and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. For details, see Niec, 1998:182-187.

<sup>5</sup> This is a ‘catalogue’ based on a personal interpretation of some of the literature on cultural rights and a cursory perusal of international conventions. Sources used include Wilson and Hunt, 2000; Goonasekera, Hamelink and Iyer, 2003; Tomas and Haruru, 1998; David 2005; Niec 1998

<sup>6</sup> See, notably Article 17 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which states: “Indigenous Peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages...”.

<sup>7</sup> See notably Article 15 of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

<sup>8</sup> A more “comprehensive” listing developed by a researcher in a paper prepared for UNESCO in 1996, outlines 50 cultural rights categorised into eleven areas: “Rights to physical and cultural survival, Rights to association and identification with cultural community, Rights to and respect for cultural identity, Rights to physical and intangible heritages, Rights to religious belief and practice, Rights to freedom of opinion, expression and information, Rights to choice of education and training, Rights to participate in the elaboration of cultural policies, Rights to participate in cultural life and create, Rights to choice of endogenous development, and Rights to people’s own physical and cultural environment”, cited in Niec, 1998: 184. Culture and development are also linked in the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, notably in Article 13 on “Integration of culture in sustainable development” and in Article 14 entitled “Cooperation for development”.

<sup>9</sup> See Cultural Rights in a Global World, edited by Anura Goonasekera, Cees Hamelink and Venkat Iyer, 2003: Eastern Universities Press. Paul Hunt writes: “The UN human rights system has been slow to examine the conception of culture underpinning cultural rights, making it difficult to have a fruitful discussion of the issues.” (Hunt: 2000: 26).

<sup>10</sup> The collective aspect of cultural rights remains contested (see for instance, Andrau 2004) and is part of the cultural relativism versus universalism debate.

<sup>11</sup> This is the view put forward by the Interdisciplinary Institute of Ethics and Human Rights at Fribourg, which in 2004 established the Observatory for Diversity and Cultural Rights. See Meyer-Bisch, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> The International Bill of Rights is comprised of the UDHR (1948), ICESCR (1966) and ICCPR.

<sup>13</sup> Article 27 affirms:

- 1) Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- 2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

For further detail on the UDHR treatment of cultural rights, see Hunt 2000, Rouland 2003, David 2005.

<sup>14</sup> ICESCR therefore gave treaty-binding character to cultural rights. See Karan, 2003: 162.

<sup>15</sup> Including the recognition of ethnic and other minorities, e.g. the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities adopted by the UN General Assembly.

<sup>16</sup> See “The cultural wealth of the world is its diversity in dialogue”, introduction to the Declaration by Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127160m.pdf#search=‘Universal%20Declaration%20on%20Cultural%20Diversity’>

<sup>17</sup> The Convention also refers to “social groups” and to “persons belonging to minorities”, namely in its Article 7 which deals with “measures to promote cultural expressions”.

<sup>18</sup> Article 29 states, *inter alia*, that the individual has the duty “to preserve and strengthen positive African cultural values in his relations with other members of the society...”. See African [Banjul] Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, adopted 1981, entered into force 1986.

<sup>19</sup> Neither the US nor Canada have ratified this convention.

<sup>20</sup> The process is ongoing but a Proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was approved by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 1997. Section 3 deals entirely with “Cultural Development”. See <http://www.cidh.oas.org/Indigenous.htm>. See also [http://scm.oas.org/doc\\_public/ENGLISH/HIST\\_06/CP16241E07.doc](http://scm.oas.org/doc_public/ENGLISH/HIST_06/CP16241E07.doc) for an update on the process.

<sup>21</sup> The Convention came into force in September 1991. It has a strong cultural emphasis. For details see <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/62.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/docs/declaration.doc>

<sup>23</sup> See for instance Taufa Vakatale’s (2000) chapter entitled “Multiculturalism vs Indigenous Cultural Rights”.

<sup>24</sup> The Collective Human Rights of the Pacific Peoples Conference also served to mark the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples.

<sup>25</sup> The New Zealand Law Commission’s study paper on Custom and Human Rights in the Pacific can be downloaded from: <http://www.lawcom.govt.nz/ProjectStudyPapers.aspx?ProjectID=120> (accessed 20 October 2006). Legal scholars and lawyers in the Pacific have been active in trying to reconcile differences between customary law and common law. See, for instance, the separate sections on Customary Law and Human Rights in Jowitz and Newton Cain, 2003, and the recent Vanuatu Judiciary Conference 2006: The Relationship between Kastom and State Justice Systems. A report prepared by Miranda Forsyth is available at: [http://paclii.org.vu/vu/2006\\_jud\\_conf\\_report.html](http://paclii.org.vu/vu/2006_jud_conf_report.html)

<sup>26</sup> There are, of course, exceptions to this, particularly in the awareness work carried out in different countries in the context of the implementation of CEDAW and CRC. Konai Thaman (2000) also proposes some ways in which human rights and cultural perspectives can be bridged.

<sup>27</sup> All the countries of the Pacific were colonies when the UDHR, ICCPR and ICESCR were adopted. This excerpt from Fiji’s report to CERD outlines the kind of view prevalent in the region towards the early conventions:

<sup>28</sup> For details see Huffer, 2003. For an update on reporting, see:

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/sessions.htm>

<sup>29</sup> Those that have are the Federated States of Micronesia (1998), Fiji (1998), the Marshall Islands (2000), Palau (1998), Papua New Guinea (2002), Solomon Islands (2003), Vanuatu (1999) and Samoa (2006). Most should by now have presented a periodical report.

<sup>30</sup> Stavenhagen (1998: 4-7) proposes three views of culture: 1) “culture as capital”, i.e. as the “accumulated materials heritage of humankind”; 2) “culture as creativity” which is the “process of artistic and scientific creation”, and 3) “culture as a total way of life” which “takes culture to mean the sum total of the material and spiritual activities and products of a given social group which distinguishes it from other similar groups” and sees culture “as a coherent self-contained system of values, and symbols as well as a set of practices that a specific cultural group reproduces over time and which provides individuals with the required signposts and meanings for behaviors and social relationships in everyday life”. Stavenhagen matches different types of cultural rights to each of these understandings of culture. For category 1, the corresponding cultural right would be the “equal rights of access by individuals to this accumulated cultural capital” as well as the “right to cultural development”; for category 2 the corresponding right would be “the right of individuals to create...” and to enjoy “access to these creations...”, and, for category 3, the corresponding right is to “cultural identity” which he defines as the right of a “cultural group... to maintain and develop its own specific culture, no matter how it is inserted or how it relates to other cultures in the wider context”.

<sup>31</sup> See Tomas 1998.

<sup>32</sup> As human rights observers have pointed out, people in the Pacific do not usually object to specific rights once they are unpackaged and explained, but rather to the idea or “ideology” of human rights. In the African context, see Makau Mutua, 2000.

<sup>33</sup> In addition to the right to participate in cultural life, Article 31 also deals with the right to rest; the right to play and the right to leisure.

<sup>34</sup> David (2005:7) notably argues that the Committee expects State Parties “to explicitly recognize in domestic legislation the requirement of Article 31” and that it views “the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights [as] inextricably intertwined with enjoyment of civil and political rights”. This is despite Article 4’s distinction between economic, social and cultural rights with the other rights contained in the Convention.

<sup>35</sup> He writes, “Article 31 of the CRC is sometimes referred to as the ‘forgotten right’ in the same way some authors consider the right to take part in cultural life under Article 15 of the CDESCR as a right to which ‘scant attention has been paid’. It would be useful to further examine how articles 17, 29 and 30 have been interpreted and applied.

<sup>36</sup> This is not an attitude specific to the Pacific. David (2005: 10) writes that “The rights recognized under Article 31 – rest, play, leisure and culture – are often perceived as a luxury in comparison to other rights whose violations bear more cruel, visible and spectacular consequences”.

<sup>37</sup> Some, like Save the Children Australia - Vanuatu, have used an approach which seeks to blend cultural and social, economic and civil rights.

<sup>38</sup> In Pacific languages there is generally no original word for rights. The idea has had to be translated but this has not always proven successful. Finding terms other than rights might be a better approach as is suggested by Sir Paul Reeves in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context: “Does the concept of ‘rights’ really express what we want to protect? For Maori, ‘tika’ in the sense of ‘ture, correct or upright’ may be a better concept to work with” (1998: 15). In Fijian, the word used to translate right is *dodonu* which means ‘correct’ or ‘straight’. For a translation of the idea of children’s rights in Palau, see Otto, 1998: 31.

<sup>39</sup> Personal communication, Ministry for Women, Community and Social Development.

<sup>40</sup> The Pacific Children’s Program is a community-based program, funded by AusAID and managed by UNICEF Pacific, that seeks to prevent child abuse and neglect in Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu,. It is currently being redesigned, renamed and extended into the Solomon Islands and Kiribati.

<sup>41</sup> Pers. Comm. Save the Children - Australia-Vanuatu, September 2006. Similar positive feedback was received from communities in Fiji and Samoa (Pacific Children’s Program 2005: 23, 34-35).

<sup>42</sup> This is for instance symbolized by the Samoan proverb “O tamaiti o meaalofa mai te Atua”.

<sup>43</sup> “Children... are more than just the object of our affection as parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. Children are also the future of our clans, our culture, our religion, our community, and our nation” (Otto, 1998: vii).

<sup>44</sup> There are other reasons for adoption as Jorban (2004:58) explains in the Marshall Islands context: “Adoption was an acceptable method to re-distribute people within the extended clan relative to available resources and of incorporating outsiders into relationships for the purpose of exchanging resources into the future”. He adds that the birth parents generally maintained a continuing connection with their child and that adoption was seen as positive for the child’s welfare: “The child was shared by more than two parents, which was considered advantageous to the child”. This is also the case in many other parts of the Pacific. See, for instance, Otto 1998: 58.

<sup>45</sup> This is beginning to change under the pressure of difficult socio-economic conditions, particularly in urban areas. In addition, many children today are looked after by relatives in towns so that they can pursue their education. There are indications that these children are not always treated on par with biological children and are (in some cases) mistreated by being forced to do most of the housework and look after the other children.

For an informative discussion of various types of customary adoption in Palau, see Otto 1998: 29.

<sup>46</sup> Referring to the Cook Islands context, Chung (2005: 37) writes, “Children... are respected as full members of their society and are openly treated with affection”.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, it is said that “a whole village may look after a child.... And if children miss a meal then there is usually someone around to feed them...” (in Plange et al, 2003:30).

<sup>48</sup> For example, Konai Thaman (1992: 28) says about her great-aunt’s husband: “... he was not a blood relative; still he was a kui, a term used for all kinsmen of one’s grandparents’ generation”.

<sup>49</sup> In Samoan villages, the children constitute a formal, structured group known as the *tamaiti* which allow children to socialize among themselves through games, sports and participation in village activities. As they grow up, the children will join the young untitled men’s group (*aumaga*) or the daughters’ of the village group (*au’aluma*).

<sup>50</sup> Vaimene (2003:175), writing about the Cook Islands, and particularly the Rarotonga situation, states, “In the days when most people lived in extended families, the grandparents educated the grandchildren about the traditions and customs of their culture, about their roles and responsibilities as children and as adults. They taught genealogies and the history of land entitlements. They taught legends, songs and changes, weaving techniques, carving and the protocols associated with being a Cook Island. Now that time is taken up by television and video and by the tremendous surge in sport since commercial sport led professional sportsmen to become the models of work and wealth and status for the young”.

<sup>51</sup> The Situation Analysis of Children and Women in the Federated States of Micronesia 1996, in its discussion of young women bearing children that they are not prepared for, states: “In the past, if young mothers were unmarried, their babies would be cared for by the extended family. Today, this system is clearly not as supportive. There is an increased incidence of child neglect and some degree of abuse as a result of the breakdown in this traditional social support system. Skills such as carpentry, canoe building, agriculture, handicraft weaving and fishing techniques which were traditionally learned though the extended family are fading from youths’ experience” (Govt of FSM, 1996: 4). The author attributes this situation to youths not learning traditional skills and to young women not learning

<sup>52</sup> In Samoa names and titles are what connect members of extended families who may grow up in different countries and would not know how they relate to each other without these markers. They become particularly important when it comes to cases before the Land and Titles Court. Pers. Com. MWCSD.

<sup>53</sup> It is important to note that in many countries of the region such as Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu and Kiribati female children have fewer rights than male children to inherit land and titles.

<sup>54</sup> Other Pacific cultures similarly have particular practices designed to protect children. See, for instance, Otto 1998:19.

<sup>55</sup> *Va tapuia* are “social relationships which are sanctioned by customs and traditions and protected by social taboos” (Schmidt, 2003).

<sup>56</sup> This sort of relationship enables parents to maintain authority over children and guarantee the

<sup>57</sup> In Samoa it was uncommon until recently for children to address their parents as ‘mum and dad’. First names and titles were used as a form of respect.

<sup>58</sup> “While enjoying unprecedented opportunities for schooling, today’s children [in Palau] have fewer opportunities to learn the fundamental values and life-skills which underpin traditional Palauan society” (Otto, 1998: 6).

<sup>59</sup> Thanks is due to Helen Tamtam of USP Emalus Campus for relating her recent experience with her son’s circumcision in an urban setting.

<sup>60</sup> “The churches in Vanuatu take great responsibility for the development of children, perhaps more than most private or government organisations. Church leaders are greatly respected in the community, and encourage children’s spiritual development and welfare” (UNICEF, 2005: 13).

<sup>61</sup> There is no longer a national coverage of *aoga faifeau*, and the role, skills and concept of the *faifeau* have been changing. As pre-schools run by the Council for Early Education, become more important much of the past benefit of the *aoga faifeau* (such as training and vernacular materials produced by the Church) is disappearing, along with the language skills of children.

<sup>62</sup> Increasingly children are also attending pre-school which further removes them from the home environment. However, most pre-schools, at least in rural areas, use the mother tongue and they are usually run by the community thereby ensuring community engagement with the schooling process. Many urban pre-schools, on the other hand, do not teach in the mother tongue and are separate from the community. The situation varies in different countries.

<sup>63</sup> Most adults of 25 and over from throughout the region experienced being forbidden from speaking their mother tongue(s) in school. This is gradually beginning to change but depends on the attitude of school principals and teachers. For instance, two Zone Curriculum Advisers in Tanna reported that “their school had a policy of ‘English only’ at all times while children were inside the school compound.... In terms of enforcement, they weren’t strict until the last term in Class 2 and punishments included detention, weeding, writing lines, cleaning and corporal punishment”, (Louise Pounder, Cultural Rights in The Pacific- What this Means for Children – Tanna Meeting Notes September 2006).

<sup>64</sup> Particularly Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, Teweiariki Teaero, Seu’ula Johansson, Henry Elder, and of course Konai Thaman and ‘Ana Taufe’ulungaki.

<sup>65</sup> In particular Kabini Sanga.

<sup>66</sup> Puamau (2005: 13) writes that “Because formal schooling is largely derived from foreign value systems, there is a serious cultural gap between the lived experiences of most Pacific Island students and what is offered in schools, including the way schooling is organized and structured, the culture and ethos of schooling, its pedagogical practices and the assessment of learning. And because the outcomes of schooling continue to be measured in terms of examination passes, many Pacific Islanders fail to succeed.”

<sup>67</sup> Contributing factors besides school include increased urbanization, intermarriages, decreased family and community time, and exposure to non-contextualised media.

<sup>68</sup> In the 1970s it was

- <sup>69</sup> This MOE pilot project began in 2003 but no evaluation and monitoring has been carried out. Pers. Comm. MOE, September 2006.
- <sup>70</sup> Funding for a National Language Commission will be available in Samoa in 2007 allowing for its *de facto* establishment.
- <sup>71</sup> Pac News, Tuesday 19 September 2006.
- <sup>72</sup> In Vanuatu education is not yet free and compulsory so parents, particularly in rural areas which are strongly steeped in ‘kastom’ can legally prevent their children from attending school.
- <sup>73</sup> The RPEI began with a Rethinking Education Colloquium held in Suva, Fiji in 2001 which questioned why education throughout the region was not producing “quality human resources needed to achieve national development goals” (Puamau, 2005).
- <sup>74</sup> The PRIDE Project serves Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. It was initially a proposal developed by the Forum Ministers of Education and is managed by the University of the South Pacific on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), and funded by the EU and NZAID.
- <sup>75</sup> The associated indicators require the development of a national language policy which includes vernacular language(s) and promotion of the teaching of local languages and cultural activities in the school curriculum. See The PRIDE Project, Benchmarks for National Strategic Plans, Second edition, September 2005, The University of the South Pacific.
- <sup>76</sup> The author was informed that no monitoring or evaluation of these pilot schools has been carried out as yet. Pers. Comm. Director of Primary Education, Port-Vila, September 2006.
- <sup>77</sup> See Herrman, forthcoming.
- <sup>78</sup> For further details on Nauru, see Kephass, forthcoming.
- <sup>79</sup> This was legislated for in 1992 and since then those four languages have been included in the baccalaureate exam as an option.
- <sup>80</sup> Dutcher, Nadine and G. Richard Tucker, 1994. *The Use of First and Second Languages in Education: A Review of International Experience*. Draft for Review. Population and Human Resources Division, East Asia and Pacific Regional Office. Cited in Taufe’ulungaki, 2004: 9. The problems with transitional bilingualism are also discussed in Low, Pentland and Heine, 2005: 8)
- <sup>81</sup> Ron Crocombe (1994: 28) puts this practice more bluntly: “Almost all Pacific leaders assert culture’s need and value in principle, but most avoid it in practice, at least for their own children, whom they send overseas or to foreign schools at home”.
- <sup>82</sup> As Ron Crocombe (1994:28) states, with respect to culture: “Part of the problem is that most people see only two options: either their ancient customs and those of the former colonial power.”
- <sup>83</sup> This goes against what UNESCO advocates, namely “encouraging linguistic diversity – while respecting the mother tongue – at all levels of education... and fostering the learning of several languages from the earliest age”. See UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Action Plan.
- <sup>84</sup> For the influence of colonization and of donors post-independence on educational policy, see, for the Micronesia context, Low, Pentland and Heine, 2005; and for the Pacific more widely, Sanga, Chu, Hall and Crowl, 2005. Low, Pentland and Heine (2005: 6) quote an official they interviewed: “I know the school should be teaching English, but I don’t think they do a good job. I speak only English to my kids at home. I want them to learn English. They’ll pick up Marshallese in the neighborhood”.
- <sup>85</sup> The reality in Pacific schools is that code switching is frequent, ie going back and forth between the mother tongue and English.
- <sup>86</sup> See Kephass, forthcoming.
- <sup>87</sup> For an instructive account of the difficulties encountered in the RMI, see Low, Pentland and Heine, 2005.
- <sup>88</sup> Pers. Comm. MOE, Port-Vila, September 2006.
- <sup>89</sup> However, primary class materials years 1-6 for children in Samoan are available and of high quality.
- <sup>90</sup> Pers. Comm. Niu Leaf Publications, August 2006.
- <sup>91</sup> See Kephass, forthcoming.
- <sup>92</sup> At NUS, the School of Education has noticed that the quality of students is also declining and that their fluency in English and Samoan is declining.
- <sup>93</sup> Many of these teachers would find it difficult to teach in their mother tongue, and their language and cultural fluency would be much lower than their peers who stayed in their original home place. Some

teachers may even feel misplaced when their return to their own village. Robert Early and Helen Tamtam, Pers. Comm. September 2006.

<sup>94</sup> This is slowly beginning to change.

<sup>95</sup> For a full account of the ‘modernisation’ emphasis of educational policy, see Coxon and Tolley 2005.

<sup>96</sup> Pers. Comm. Seu’ula Johansson, Institute of Education, September 2006. See notably the reports on the Values Evaluation Study carried out in Cook Islands, November-December 2005 and the ongoing Sustainable Livelihoods and Education in the Pacific project, 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Susan Ba ereleo, Pers. Comm. September 2006.

<sup>98</sup> This expression is Pio Manoa’s.

<sup>99</sup> See Wickliffe, 2000; Malifa 1998, and the Paclii site for Pacific Constitutions: <http://paclii.org.vu/>

<sup>100</sup> Pers. Comm. UNESCO, Apia, Samoa, August 2006.

<sup>101</sup> One notable exception to this was the Whitlam government in Australia, described by Mali Voi as “very much arts oriented” which in 1973 passed Papua New Guinea’s Cultural Development Act which led to the creation of a National Cultural Council charged with preserving and developing culture and the arts in PNG. See Voi (1994).

<sup>102</sup> “Little priority is given to cultural issues by national governments and administrations” (SPC, 2006: 2)

<sup>103</sup> For examples in other countries in the 1990s, see Lindstom and White 1994.

<sup>104</sup> Ministry of Education and Culture, Apia, August 2006.

<sup>105</sup> See Declaration of the Pacific Islands Ministers of Culture, available at

<sup>106</sup> For possible reasons why this is the case, see Huffer, 2006.

<sup>107</sup> See Huffer, forthcoming. It has been suggested that for culture, as in the case of gender, the Forum could be responsible for setting policy and SPC for carrying out technical training, research and programmes, as per its mandate.

<sup>108</sup> SPC’s CAP’s budget is of the order of A\$322,000 (2006) compared to the Fisheries Program budget of close to A\$ 3 million and the Public Health Program budget of over A\$5million. The only other agency in the Pacific which deals directly with culture is UNESCO, based in Apia. It has one officer in charge of cultural affairs.

<sup>109</sup> Samoa has a draft cultural policy which will be completed in 2007.

<sup>110</sup> See

<sup>111</sup> Pers. Comm. Ralph Regenvanu and Jean Tariseisei, September 2006.

<sup>112</sup> For full details, see Alessio and Kelen 2004.

<sup>113</sup> This was highlighted in the CRC Committee’s response to the Vanuatu report in the area of education (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1999).