

**Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands:  
Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability**

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the children of Kahua, Makira-Ulawa Province, Solomon Islands. While at present they embody a vibrancy that is fundamental to Kahua communities, their greatest contributions have yet to be realized, as undoubtedly they will grow to be the next generation of great Kahua leaders.

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I end these acknowledgements with what became our “research team song” during a two-month phase of the fieldwork, hiking across the Kahua region with Loise, Betty, and Paul. This song epitomizes the compassion I have developed for the Kahua people and the immense confidence I have for their self-driven future developments:

*Our journey has been so tough  
So many things, we have been through  
We struggle for so long, oh Kahua  
To live in peace and harmony.*

*[Chorus] Arise Kahua, spread your wings fly like an Eagle  
Unity and harmony, with a glory of G-d  
One heart, one people  
One big happy family  
G-d bless our land these days.*

*Just like a morning star  
We can still shine, though it seems dark  
Our G-d, our King, will carry us through  
To live in peace and harmony.*

*[Chorus]  
It’s never too late for us  
To make a stand in true harmony  
United, Kahua, return to the Lord  
To live in peace and unity.*

## ABSTRACT

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### Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands: Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability

The Solomon Islands (SI), a small developing nation in the South Pacific, demonstrates an emergent community-based kindergarten model with the potential to promote context and culture relevant early learning and development. SI early childhood education (ECE) particularly rose in prominence with a 2008 national policy enactment requiring all children to attend three years of kindergarten as prerequisite for primary school entry. However, these ECE programs remain severely challenged by faltering community support.

Internationally, many ECE programs dramatically resemble a universalized Western-based model, with a decidedly specific discourse for “high quality” programs and practices for children ages 0-8. Often these uncritical international transfers of Euro-American ideologies promote restricted policies and practices. This has resulted in a self-perpetuating set of practices and values, which arguably prevent recognition of, and efforts to reinvent, more culturally-relevant, sustainable programs for the Majority World.

Based on the Kahua region (est. pop. 4,500) of Makira-Ulawa Province, this collaborative, ethnographically-inspired, case study explores how community characteristics have affected the cultural and contextual sustainability of community-based ECE in remote villages. The study traces historical and cultural influences to present-day SI ECE. Subsequently, it explores the re-imagined SI approach to formal ECE program design, remaining challenges preventing these programs from being sustained by communities, and potential community-wide transformations arising from these initiatives. To achieve this, the study collaborated with stakeholders from all levels of SI society through extensive participant-observations, interviews, and participatory focus groups.

Findings aspire to enlighten regional sustainable developments and resilient behaviors relating to ECE. Key research findings suggest five overarching principles influencing kindergarten sustainability: presence of “*champion*” for the ECE vision; community ownership-taking, awareness-building, and cooperation-maintenance; and program cultural/contextual sensitivity and relevance. These elements were found to be strongly linked with an intergenerational cultural decay in the Kahua region, as conceptualized through a model of Cyclically-Sustained Kindergarten Mediocrity.

## GLOSSARY

|                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) | Inclusive of prenatal to age eight, which reflects early life physical and psychological <i>development</i> stages, and includes the first years of primary school due to their significance as a transitional period. <i>Care</i> , as opposed to the term “education” and solely referring to preschool, reflects young children’s need for affection and nurturance. Comprehensive ECCD refers to holistic child development, including health, nutrition, physical, cognitive, psycho-social-emotional, and moral/spiritual development, as well as parental/community education.                                                                        |
| Early Childhood Education (ECE)             | Any formal, informal, or nonformal educational endeavor for children from birth through transition into early primary school (i.e. Pre-Class/Class 1). For the purposes of this study, this term is used more specifically to focus on children from approximately age three through eight: entry into kindergarten through Class 1, yet inclusive of learning throughout community contexts, not limited to formal schooling. Terms such as <i>initiative</i> and <i>program</i> are used interchangeably when referring to community-based kindergartens.                                                                                                  |
| Community / Village                         | Terms <i>community</i> and <i>village</i> used interchangeably to refer to groups of people living together in one area, inclusive of smaller “satellite communities” that have branched off from main living areas. This is in line with local Kahuan terms for divisions of land. Typically a community/village is centered around a community-church building, thus denoting the religious denomination for the community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Developmental Niche                         | Framework, developed by Super and Harkness (1986), for examining how cultures structure children’s microenvironments. Three subsystems form the overall larger system of the Developmental Niche: physical/social settings of the child, culturally regulated customs of child care/rearing, and the psychology of caregivers.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Field-Based Training (FBT)                  | A one-year, five-module early childhood education teacher-training program. It consists of twenty hours class work, twenty hours written assignments, and a fieldwork monitoring/assessment component. It is conducted by provincial educational officers throughout the Solomon Islands, catering to unqualified and untrained teachers working in kindergartens. An Introductory Certificate is awarded to trainees upon successful completion. As of 2010, these teachers have begun receiving a small “monthly allowance,” solely within Makira-Ulawa Province, whilst communities are expected to provide predominant support, financially, or in kind. |
| G-d                                         | Deliberate incomplete spelling of the name G-d, in congruence with Jewish belief (as is the faith of the researcher), in order to avoid risk of the sin of erasing or defacing the Name.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| “Indigenous Peoples” / “Natives”            | The term “indigenous peoples” is used to refer to descendents of original inhabitants of a land, and for the purposes of this document is used interchangeably with “natives.” Global advocacy movements often use the former of these terms, as opposed to “aboriginal peoples,” as that term has stronger colonial derivation. These terms are capitalized when used as proper nouns for specific indigenous groups.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kahua Association (KA)      | Grassroots organization, registered as a charitable organization in 2005, consisting of 48 communities in political wards 12 and 13 of Makira-Ulawa Province, serving a population of approximately 4500. Aims at providing sustainable development to its communities, while reinvigorating local principles in rural participatory development. The KA is unique to the Solomon Islands due to its flat-hierarchical structure, where all subordinate bodies, including the Councils of Chiefs and Women, share a similar status. Additionally, it has a development arm, the Kahua Development Corporation, which aspires to raise funds to maintain and sustain the Association.                                                                                                                                         |
| Kahua Principles            | Comprised of four overarching local Kahua cultural principles, these provide the basis for how the Kahua people should behave and interact on a daily basis (i.e. hemoti: sharing together, herongogi: asking, hemakuani: care, and hekarigi: discussion). Underlying these unwritten principles are deeply rooted obligatory Kahua practices of respect, love, and compassion for others. Additionally, the Kahua Principles give rise to <i>ramata</i> , which are the unwritten specific operational rules for how the Kahua people must lead their lives.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Kahua / Wainoni Region      | Region located in the North-Eastern portion of Makira-Ulawa Province, political wards 12 and 13. Consists of approximately 50 rural/remote communities, comprised of upwards of 4500 islanders. The names Kahua and Wainoni are used interchangeably, with the former additionally referring to the local regional spoken language.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Kastom / Custom             | Pidgin word used for <i>custom</i> throughout Melanesia, predominantly to refer to long-established local practices and/or behaviors. Within the Kahua region, this term is most significantly associated with behaviors of <i>respect</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Kindergarten / Kindy        | Term used within the Solomon Islands for the educational program, and facilities, developed and provided for children aged 3-5 years. The term <i>kindy</i> , as opposed to kindergarten, is most commonly used throughout the islands.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP) | Makira-Ulawa Province, also known as San Cristobal/Cristoval and nicknamed “Banana Land” for its abundance of banana species, is often referred to as the Eastern Solomons due to its location in the Solomon Island archipelago. The main island of Makira, on which the provincial capital Kirakira (Station) is located, is predominantly composed of rugged mountainous terrain, on which inhabitants are largely dependent on subsistence livelihoods. The approximately 31,000 people living in the province mainly reside in rural communities, without access to electricity, transportation infrastructure (e.g. roads, wharfs), or telecommunication services. Main income generation is through small-scale copra (i.e. dried-coconut) and cocoa farming, as well as commercial forestry ventures (i.e. logging). |

|                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (The) Solomon Islands (SI)                                           | <p>Independent island nation since 1978. Double chain archipelago of nearly 1000 tropical, reef-fringed islands and coral atolls, lying northeast of Australia in the South-West Pacific Ocean, spanning approximately 28,000 sq. km. With a population of approximately half a million, the majority of islanders (85%) live in rural communities. Ninety-two indigenous languages spoken throughout 9 provinces, with the national language English, but Pidgin English most widely used. Despite high unemployment rates and limited education achievement, extreme poverty is not widespread due to traditional “wantok” practices (safety net of kinship ties) and predominantly subsistence-farming lifestyles (supplemented by small-scale income generating activities). In referring to the island nation, the term “the Solomon Islands” is used, while referring to the individual islands within the archipelago, the term “Solomon Islands” is used.</p> |
| Sustainability (a.k.a. sustainable development)                      | <p>Capacity of a program/culture/idea to continuously respond to ever-evolving issues/contexts while maintaining focus on original objectives. Research on sustainable early childhood initiatives frequently refers to financial or environmental foci, yet in this study, in addition to these, the term is largely used to explore cultural elements for sustainable early childhood provisions. Cultural sustainability in particular is used to refer to program content and teaching methods. This is reflective of the local contexts’ knowledge and practices of child development, socialization, and learning, for supporting long-term maintenance of provisions, even once outside assistance ceases.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| World Vision Makira Girl Child Reading and Rescue Project (WV GCRRP) | <p>Non-governmental organization World Vision’s partnership program with the Makira Provincial Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, aimed to support children’s holistic development and equip them with the basic literacy and numeracy skills to facilitate their entry into the formal school system. Program involved in all aspects of kindergarten development from classroom infrastructure, to community awareness, and teacher trainings. Began in 2005 as a three year project in East Makira, where some of the province’s most remote communities and lowest literacy rates were found, but has since been extended twice, for a total of six additional years, expanding to other regions of Makira. Despite its name, the project is fully gender inclusive of children from three to six years old.</p>                                                                                                                              |

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

|        |                                                                   |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AIDS   | Acquired immune deficiency syndrome                               |
| AusAID | Australian Agency for International Development                   |
| CUREC  | (Oxford) Central University Research Ethics Committee             |
| DAP    | Developmentally appropriate practice                              |
| EC     | Early childhood                                                   |
| ECCD   | Early childhood care and development                              |
| ECCE   | Early childhood care and education                                |
| ECD    | Early childhood development                                       |
| ECE    | Early childhood education                                         |
| EFA    | Education for All                                                 |
| FBT    | Field-Based Training                                              |
| GCRRP  | Girl Child Reading and Rescue Project                             |
| GDP    | Gross domestic product                                            |
| HIV    | Human immunodeficiency virus                                      |
| KA     | Kahua Association                                                 |
| LPP    | Legitimate peripheral participation                               |
| MEHRD  | Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development             |
| MO     | Modeling-observation                                              |
| MoE    | Minister of Education                                             |
| MUP    | Makira-Ulawa Province                                             |
| NGO    | Non-governmental organization                                     |
| NZ     | New Zealand                                                       |
| NZAID  | New Zealand Agency for International Development                  |
| PC     | Personal computer                                                 |
| PICs   | Pacific Island Countries                                          |
| PNG    | Papua New Guinea                                                  |
| PRA    | Participatory Rural/Rapid Appraisal                               |
| PRIDE  | Pacific Region Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education    |
| RA     | Research Assistant                                                |
| RQ     | Research Question                                                 |
| SBD    | Solomon Island Dollars                                            |
| SDA    | Seventh-Day Adventist                                             |
| SERVOL | Service Volunteered for All                                       |
| SI     | Solomon Islands                                                   |
| SICHE  | Solomon Islands College of Higher Education                       |
| SSEC   | South Seas Evangelical Church                                     |
| UK     | United Kingdom                                                    |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Program                                |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund                                    |
| US(A)  | United States (of America)                                        |
| WCED   | World Commission on Environment and Development                   |
| WHO    | World Health Organization                                         |
| WV     | World Vision                                                      |

## CHAPTER 1: Introduction – Researching the “Hapi Isles”

### 1.1 Introduction to the Study

International literature and research agendas have increasingly universalized conceptions of early childhood education (ECE), which have subsequently been uncritically transferred globally. Contrasting this, many small state<sup>1</sup> indigenous efforts have arisen to counter the continuation of colonization now under the guise of education. Situated at the forefront of this intersection is the small South Pacific nation of the Solomon Islands<sup>2</sup> (SI [a.k.a. “Hapi Isles”]) and their recent developments in community-based ECE (i.e. kindergarten / “kindy”).

A large gap exists in rigorous research about community-based ECE initiatives in the developing world, particularly relating to context and culture sensitive programs. Current international agendas are dictating globally that provisions be made for ECE, yet many governments lack the human and financial capacity to support such services nationwide. Therefore, it is essential to better understand how communities can support and sustain ECE provisions that are fitting for their context-specific needs and available resources. This is of great significance in rural communities of small developing nations, which are often most overlooked or externally imposed upon by governments and foreign aid bodies. Therefore, taking into account these issues, this study was framed around the overarching research question:

*What factors have influenced the cultural and contextual sustainable development of community-based ECE in the Kahua region of the SI?*

Accordingly, this study is situated in Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP), SI, with particular emphasis on the remote Kahua region. To explore this research question, an

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<sup>1</sup> Nations with populations under 1.5 million.

<sup>2</sup> “The SI” is used to refer to the Pacific Island nation, while “SI” refers to the independent entities (islands) that form the nation.

ethnographically-inspired collaborative research approach was implemented. This emphasized the significance of context-sensitive research for addressing culturally-relevant community-based ECE programs. This is based on the notion that to create a sustainable and context/culture appropriate education, parents and communities must be involved in the consultation process to design such a program (extended here to research), reflecting the skills, values, and perspectives at a grassroots level (Thaman 1998, Ball and Pence 2006). Thaman (1998:53) writes that involving parents and communities in basic education programs empowers and engages them, which supports the idea that “sustainability in education means control and direction by the stakeholders of the process.” This is further supported by a Pacific regional view of the purpose of education as the “survival, transformation, and sustainability of Pacific people and societies, with its outcomes measured in terms of performance and appropriate behavior in the multiple contexts in which they have to live” (Pene, Taufe’ulungaki, and Benson 2002:3). In identifying that a generic education alone will not spur development or empowerment of a group of people to support an ECE initiative, it becomes imperative to understand what specific aspects of that education system can be culturally responsive and adaptive to the local context. Consequently, this study has both significant practical and theoretical implications for rural SI community-based education, as well as relevance to the growing literature and practice of context-sensitive collaborative research.

In introducing the reader to the study, this chapter firstly presents an overview of the inquiry through an exploration of the researcher’s rationales: general, theoretical, contextual, and personal. Following this, key terms of significance throughout the thesis

are defined, supplementary research questions are identified, and subsequent thesis chapters are outlined.

## **1.2 Rationale: General**

The model of ECE that the international development community has promoted is of a Euro-American culture, which only represents a minority of young children's worlds internationally. This in turn has had a strong impact on international policy development, such as the first Education for All (EFA) goal,<sup>3</sup> thus purporting an *institutional universalism* that often does not translate into non-Western cultures (Nsamenang 2006). However, it is recognized that all children arrive at formal education with informal learning systems they have developed within their local cultures, comprised of learning strategies and contexts that have fostered their early learning (Ninnes 1995). The significance of children's culture on their learning has been well established (e.g. Spindler 1963, Harris 1990, Little 1990, Rogoff and Chavajay 1995, Rogoff 2003, Weisner 2005). Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that different cultures provide different settings, and different experiences within those settings, thus encouraging/discouraging children's engagement in various experiences based on the culture's particular beliefs and values (Gauvain 2001, Tudge et al. 2006). Despite this knowledge, Majority World cultures are often deprived from developing programs in line with local cultural knowledge systems and practices while striving to align with universalistic claims of truth rooted in Eurocentric culture (Moss 2005).

Crossley (2008:248) writes that, in particular, "[R]esearch in small states can help to highlight the limitations of generic global agendas and the dangers of the uncritical

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<sup>3</sup> EFA Goal 1: "Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children" (UNESCO 2000:15).

international transfer of policies and practices.” Such international influences have significantly affected the development of ECE in the small state of the SI, which as of 2008 enacted a national ECE policy requiring all children’s attendance for three years of kindergarten before entry into primary school (MEHRD 2008). However, from the grassroots level, challenging these internationally-inspired and nationally-mandated ECE programs are communities largely unable to sustain their ongoing functioning, which at this time are predominantly only feasible as “community-based” endeavors (i.e. established, run, and maintained). This, therefore, forms the foundation of the present study.

Initially, the research focus for this thesis arose out of an exploratory pilot study<sup>4</sup> (Burton 2008). This pilot illuminated that despite increasing knowledge of comprehensive early childhood care and development (ECCD) among the rural Kahua people, many challenges remain in the way of these communities supporting local children to reach their, locally defined, maximum developmental potential. Of greatest relevance to the present study, the pilot revealed faltering support for the development of kindergartens by communities, yet local interest for increasing knowledge and efforts to support such issues at the community level, dedication of provincial government and NGO employees, and (at the time) pending ECE policies at the national level. This all indicated a commitment throughout the SI in the beginning phases of developing formal ECE. In extension of these findings, the present study maintains a focus on ECE in the Kahua region, but expands this understanding through the exploration of local cultural wisdom and educational goals against the backdrop of national and international education

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<sup>4</sup> Pilot study dually served as M.Sc. in Education Research Methodology dissertation.

policies and practices, in an overarching effort to understand kindergarten cultural and contextual sustainability.

### **1.3 Rationale: Theoretical**

Sociocultural theorists recognize that early learning and development are not individual constructions, nor are they universal, but instead acknowledge that they are highly mediated by one's context and culture. In light of this, the second rationale for this study pertains to its theoretical foundations. The researcher adopted a sociocultural-ecological perspective, largely influenced by the works of Rogoff (1990, 2003), Bronfenbrenner (1979), and Super and Harkness (1986). This perspective recognizes the holistic nature of ECE: a process defined through the social and cultural practices, beliefs, and experiences in a particular context, which also incorporates biological and environmental factors. Subsequently, the interrelated methodological foundations to the study are rooted in a social-constructivist epistemology, based on the belief in the social nature in which humans construct knowledge. This is then linked with the researcher's ontological beliefs in line with the philosophical stance of interpretive-hermeneutics, emphasizing understanding arising out of contextual meaning and interaction/participation. Consequently, these theoretical assumptions guided a methodologically synergistic approach: *ethnographically-inspired collaborative research*. From all of these theoretical influences, there is a strong unifying assumption about the social world as being co-constructed, context-bound, relational, and situated (Susman and Evered 1978). This is in recognition that human existence, as we know it, is fluid, contextual, and relational (Jardine 1990).

#### 1.4 Rationale: Contextual

The contextual rationale for this study was of preeminent significance, from dictating the general and theoretical rationales explored above to guiding the practical implementation of fieldwork and recommendations drawn from the research findings. Throughout the study, recognition and emphasis were placed on the unique small island developing nation context of the SI. This raised numerous connotations, both for the research itself and its influence on local development, including that of ECE. Context specific issues included smallness of scale, remoteness of location, diversity of cultural and linguistic groups, colonial history, limited human capacity, and potential for local ownership amidst a highly active foreign aid and political interest arena. Crossley (1984, 1990, 1999, 2008) has consistently argued about the dangers of uncritical international transfers of educational policies and practices, which he later additionally expanded to uncritical transfers of “research agendas, research methodologies, and research paradigms” (Holmes and Crossley 2004:198, Crossley and Holmes 2001). Based on these significant notions related to context specificity, the rationale was formulated for this study’s collaborative approach, which facilitated building local capacity and alignment with local priorities, all the while addressing international imperatives regarding ECE. Further drawing on the work of Crossley, with regard to the other fundamental component to this study - *sustainability*, he writes,

*Sustainability* thus emerges as a further connected theme that we suggest warrants increased attention in the future...It is a dilemma faced by policy makers and practitioners in both the North and the South, and it is an issue that has *both practical and theoretical implications*...this is an example that demands increased attention to the importance of cultural and contextual sensitivities in both educational research and educational development. Studies of sustainable education reform or sustainable national development – perhaps focused upon successful practice – could benefit greatly from more in-depth cross-cultural analyses, enhanced reflexivity, and a more critical and culturally informed consideration of time as both a concept and a resource.

(Crossley and Watson 2003:81, emphasis added)

In light of this emphasis on sustainable education reform and the particular research context, the subsections below provide nested contexts of influence to this study of kindy program sustainability in SI.

#### *1.4.1 Pacific Regional Context*

To explore issues of sustainability (cultural and contextual) and the processes and structures of education systems at the local village level in the SI, one must begin by understanding how these grassroots issues situate themselves in the wider social, physical, and historical context of the Pacific island region.<sup>5</sup> This region is one of the least populated (approximate population of 8 million, predominantly indigenous peoples<sup>6</sup>); most linguistically complex (speaking more than 1000 languages: one-fifth of the world's languages); and contains education systems heavily shaped by colonial legacies through contexts of historical, sociocultural, political, and economic influences (Puamau 2006). Furthermore, the region faces particular vulnerability challenges due to its isolation and sprawling geography; predominantly agricultural, fishery, and tourism based economy; and natural disasters (i.e. cyclones, hurricanes, and tsunamis). Growing challenges facing these small developing nations include increasing migration to urban centers causing overpopulation; corruption, nepotism, and cultural practices that some locals are increasingly deeming as outdated (particularly with regard to women's empowerment movements); exploitation of natural resources by foreign companies; financial and technical dependency on developed nations and foreign aid; and colonial legacies that continue to dominate many local mindsets.

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<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, the Pacific region refers to the fifteen independent [Forum] small nations in the South Pacific Ocean, categorized as: Melanesia (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu), Micronesia (Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, and Palau), and Polynesia (Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, and Tuvalu). While it is noted that these categorical distinctions are associated with colonization, they are merely used here to delineate regional distinctions recognizable by an international audience.

<sup>6</sup> The term "indigenous peoples" is used here to refer to descendants of original inhabitants of a land.

The legacy of colonization in the Pacific region by Western nations (e.g. Britain, France, New Zealand, and United States) over the past three centuries, with the exception of Tonga, remains highly evident today, particularly in education systems. Many postcolonial theories have arisen in recent decades, and although highly varied and debated, for this thesis Gandhi's (1998:4) conceptualization will suffice: "A theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering, and crucially interrogating the colonial past." In recognition that using largely Western conceptualizations of postcolonial theory may merely perpetuate knowledge and power imbalances, theorizing about historical influences will not be emphasized in this thesis, but instead a focus will be placed on the practical outcomes and implications within the Pacific region today. Furthermore, in an attempt to decrease imbalances between dominant Western theorizations and Majority World viewpoints and realities, this thesis incorporates conceptualizations from a growing literature on indigenous methodologies and research coming from Pacific Island scholars.

#### *1.4.2 Solomon Islands National Context*

The SI is a double chain archipelago of nearly 1000 tropical, fertile, reef-fringed islands and coral atolls, lying northeast of Australia in the South-West Pacific Ocean. With a population of approximately 506,967 (2.3% annual growth rate), the majority of islanders (85%) live in rural communities and predominantly practice subsistence lifestyles, supplemented by small scale income generating activities (World Bank 2011). The SI is a "medium human development" country, according to the Human Development Index (UNDP 2010), based on three dimensions of well-being: life

expectancy (67 years), education (literacy level – 76.6%<sup>7</sup> and enrollment in primary, secondary, and tertiary levels – 47.6%), and living standards based on GDP per capita (US\$2,172). With regard to education, 64.5% of rural SI children aged 6-12 are reported to attend non-compulsory fee free primary school, the majority of whom begin after age 7 and by age 13 most noticeably begin to dropout (SI National Statistics Office 2007). These factors, coupled with recent ethnic conflicts beginning in 1999 (Moore 2004) and increasing investments in ECE (MEHRD 2008), formed a significant basis for selecting the research context of SI. As explored below, the research focus was located predominantly within MUP, with the most extensive focus on the Kahua region.

#### *1.4.3 Makira-Ulawa Provincial and Kahua Regional Contexts*

MUP, also known as San Cristobal/Cristoval and nicknamed “Banana Land” for its abundance of banana species, is located in the far eastern portion of the SI archipelago. The main island, Makira, on which the provincial capital Kirakira and the Kahua region are located, has a steep mountainous ridge running down its spine spreading outwards to its reef-fringed coasts. The majority of families are predominantly dependent on subsistence livelihoods and live in rural communities, largely without access to electricity, infrastructure (e.g. roads), or telecommunication services. Main income generation is through small-scale copra (dried coconut) and cocoa farming, as well as commercial forestry ventures (i.e. logging), the latter of which are often quick sources of income but are creating long-term negative environmental impacts as they are being carried out at unsustainable rates (Hviding 2003). This is particularly concerning in light of increasing population pressures for resources (Bourke 2006) based on the most recent

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<sup>7</sup> Literacy rate for percent of population aged 15 and over based on self-report (UNDP 2008). However, compared with the 2004 percent of pupils attaining literacy standard (pupils reaching standard four of primary schooling: mastering set of basic learning competencies) at only 43.9% (MEHRD 2005), and anecdotal accounts of the majority of children completing primary education without functional literacy abilities, furthered by observations of secondary English teachers still unable to fluently speak and write in English, these literacy percentages offer a very limited view of the situation (Burton 2008).

published census, where the MUP population is estimated at 31,006 and is growing at an annual rate of 2.7% (SI Government 1999).

Located in the northeastern portion of Makira Island is the Kahua region, named after the local Kahua language, but also known as East and West Wainoni (political wards 12 and 13). This region consists of approximately fifty rural/remote, predominantly coastal, communities, comprising upwards of 4,500 people (Fazey, Latham, Hagasua, and Wagatora 2007). Fundamental to this study was its collaborative working relationship through the local regional grassroots Kahua Association (KA) (representing 38 communities). The KA was registered in November 2005 in response to little external support for their development, thus demonstrating local communities' commitment to promoting sustainable development and more effective resource management.<sup>8</sup> Having been established by the Kahua people for the Kahua people, the Association is deeply embedded with cultural and societal understandings, as is evident in their Constitution Preamble (Hagasua 2005):

WHEREAS we the people of Kahua acknowledge G-d as the almighty and everlasting Lord and the giver of all good things;

And WHEREAS we humbly place ourselves under the protection of his unquestionable hands and seek his blessings upon ourselves and our lives;

And WHEREAS we are proud of the wisdom and the worthy customs of our ancestors;

And WHEREAS we are mindful of our common and diverse heritage and conscious of our common destiny;

And WHEREAS we standing firm for our rights under the guiding hand of G-d we establish the Kahua Association.

Not only does the KA represent local desires for taking greater responsibility of their own development, but it also symbolizes a unifying effort of the Kahua people as a cultural group, with desires to reassert the importance of their traditional cultural

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<sup>8</sup> Notably, at this point in time, the KA predominantly serves as a unifying agent in name yet in practice has not been extensively actively successful.

practices and beliefs. Accordingly, the KA is based on democratic principles, upholding equality and social justice for all Kahua people. Moreover, much of their work is also rooted in the *Kahua Principles*, which are embedded in all aspects of Kahua people's daily lives. The following principles provide guidance on how to live one's life and interact with others for all people in Kahua:

*Hemoti* – one must share everything (e.g. resources, property, time, etc.)

*Herongogi* – mutual agreement must be made before doing/taking something

*Hemakuani* – respect and responsibility must be taken when using/looking after others' property

*Hekarigi* – discussion and dialogue must precede action

These four overarching ideas, or “principles,” are supported by *ramata*: the specific operational rules for the principles (expanded description - Chapter 6). Underlying the Kahua Principles are the foundations of respect, love, and compassion for others.

Although local knowledge of specific vernacular words for these guiding principles to Kahuan society are rapidly declining, their practice in daily life remains markedly overt. Therefore, with regard to the present study, the Kahua Principles significantly influenced the research design and fieldwork, and accordingly are presented as a thread throughout this thesis.

Taking into account the above factors specific to Kahua, this region was chosen as primary focus of the research for the following reasons:

- Local communities' high degree of commitment to promoting sustainable development and taking ownership over their own future (including research initiatives), as is evident in their creation of, and support for, the KA. Therefore, strong community networks, of motivated people, to further their education and actively be involved in improving the future for their families, communities, and Kahua, provided an eager and willing participant-base.
- The region encompasses four diverse geographic areas, allowing for comparisons of issues among similar people from varying contexts.

- The region is relatively isolated, enabling the study of a relatively “closed” system.
- Communities in the region are beginning to undergo transition from a subsistence- to monetary-based economy, with implications for education.
- Historically, Kahua has had some of the lowest literacy and education levels in MUP. Consequently, an international non-governmental organization, World Vision, has been assisting the region (mainly financial support and training) in the development of adult literacy and ECE programs, making Kahua one of the most “advanced” provincial regions with regard to ECE exposure.
- Communities throughout the region are tightly bound together through the KA, allowing for easier facilitation and support of research, such as through strong human communication networks, in the absence of widespread transportation and telecommunication services.
- Intense population growth, in addition to the 2008 enacted ECE policy mandating kindergarten, have begun to peak communities’ realization in the importance of addressing issues related to their young children, as awareness is raised by joint efforts of the Provincial Ministry of Education and World Vision SI.

### **1.5 Rationale: Researcher**

Finally, of significant influence on the thesis was the researcher herself. The researcher is a non-native of the SI, and thus accepted that underlying all of her work would be the Indigenous epistemologies true to the Midwestern-Jewish-American culture in which she was raised. As a researcher in a context dramatically different from her “norms,” it was essential that she strived to comprehend local perspectives of epistemology, ontology, indigeneity, culture, kastom, place, and space. Therefore, instead of drawing on understandings of these concepts through postmodern Western orientations, efforts were made to define them and understand them from local perspectives. Traditionally, such an approach would be that of an ethnographer, in the sense of attempting to “go native”

and become as similar to the locals as humanly possible. However, in recognizing her limitations to understanding indigenous epistemologies, she sought to more directly understand local knowledges/philosophies underlying everyday life through working collaboratively with locals. Notably, this was further supplemented with ethnographic methods. Correspondingly, by working collaboratively with locals, and most in-depth with locals as research assistants, the researcher sought to enhance her outsider interpretations with local perspectives during the fieldwork and initial stages of research analysis.

A distinction must be made here between participation and collaboration. *Collaboration* conveys a deeper experience of mutually consciousness-raising interactions and involvement in the research process, in comparison to *participation* merely implying peripheral involvement in researcher-designed activities (Trist 1986; Crossley, Herriot, Waudo, Mwiroti, Holmes, and Juma 2005). Further diverging from full-blown traditional participatory (and feminist research), the researcher in this study did not view her position as “empowering” locals. Merely giving a voice to things that are already intuitively known generally offers little to participants, but through mutual consciousness-raising and capacity building, there were potential benefits to working collaboratively. This required trying to understand “local underlying assumptions, motivations, and values which inform research practices,” from the stance where research *on* indigenous peoples is not just judged on the ends, but rather, the means to the ends (Smith 1999:20). Nevertheless, in highly valuing local knowledge, this is not to imply a rejection of research and literature from other contexts. Wider international literature provided the essential background understanding of this field of knowledge and

was used jointly with locals' scholarly work to provide a more comprehensive multi-perspective understanding upon final documentation of this thesis.

Additionally, it is important to recognize the researcher's background in approaching this study. Professionally, she came from the context of teaching in early childhood settings, where she developed personal pedagogical beliefs of supporting children's optimal development through inquiry-based child-centered holistic approaches. Although these teaching beliefs were developed in the Western-world context of American ECE, and thus were not directly applicable to the educational context of SI kindergartens, they did profoundly relate to, and drive, the development of the researcher's theoretical foundations. Notably, in no sense does this bind the study to the field of action research, or consciously impose ECE ideologies upon research participants. In no form was the researcher examining a context in which she was deliberately leading the educational interactions/experiences of the children or communities involved. Nonetheless, identifying these underlying assumptions to her methodological development highlights a remarkable connection between an understanding of high quality ECE practices with those of collaborative research practices in similar settings.

Much of what constitutes the theoretical foundation to the researcher's ethnographically-inspired collaborative research approach in this study, as well as the dominant trends in Western child-centered ECE, forms strong parallels with democratic participatory research practices. This includes the "leader's" role as facilitator, significance of environments created, valuing of participants/children as capable influences, immense significance of valued-collaboration and rapport building between all levels of stakeholders, emergent approach guided by extensive ongoing documentation, and

significance of context and culture. These shared values are not surprising, based on their theoretical foundations in sociocultural perspectives, as dominant ECE trends and participatory approaches are derived from theorists such as Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, and Gardner. Despite their contrasting origins and applications, both of these approaches have developed understandings of educational importance for the community and free inquiry as primary values. Overarching and long-lasting in these shared objectives between approaches is a spirit of cooperation that each approach engenders as they endeavor to sustain a sense of community and solidarity. These can then be extended to the research context of this study, which similarly shares the same values as expressed in the Kahua Principles. In Kahua, of utmost cultural importance is maintaining connections in the community, which emphasizes the strong sense of Natives and their cooperative work. Moreover, as stated by the KA, “Participatory development is not foreign to our shores but an art of living that we are losing” (KA 2009:1). Based on the preceding research rationales, the following section explores their relation to the research questions.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

As a result of rapid population growth, limited natural resources, and increasing influences from Western societies, the Kahua region is beginning to change from a subsistence- to monetary-based economy, and as such, increasingly values the importance of education to improve the potential of their future generations. Although kindergartens are the most recent development in early learning initiatives for Kahua, in order to identify features that relate to the sustainability of community-based kindies, it was deemed necessary that the research begin with exploring the wider range of formal, informal, and nonformal early learning provisions available in Kahua communities (e.g.

church, peer-to-peer, chiefly cultural teachings, etc.). This was based on the assumption that by observing other forms of early learning and historical cultural changes, then correlations could be drawn to illuminate understandings of discrepancies between current institutionalized learning and traditional culturally-relevant exchanges of knowledge through shared experiences. With such an understanding of traditional teaching methods and types of information shared, implications could then be drawn for application in enhancing culturally relevant and more sustainable community-based institutionalized early learning. This logic resulted in the following overarching research question, and progressively-building supplementary research questions. Notably, the supplementary research questions expand outwards from the immediate environments of community-based ECE to the provincial, national, and international contexts, in accordance with a Bronfenbrennerian (1979) perspective.

*Overarching research question:*

What factors have influenced the cultural and contextual sustainable development of Kahua community-based ECE?

*Supplementary research questions:*

1. What formal, nonformal, and informal microenvironments of early childhood learning are present in Kahua communities?<sup>9</sup>  
*(For each microenvironment)*
  - a. Who are the *participants* involved?
  - b. What *method(s)*, *materials*, and *local kastoms* are involved?
  - c. What are the overt *beliefs* and underlying cultural *values and practices* about early childhood learning of those involved?
  - d. How are early learning experiences in these microenvironments used to convey local cultural values, beliefs, and practices?
2. How are Kahua community-based kindergartens influenced, and shaped, by local cultural approaches to early learning?

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<sup>9</sup> Although learning has been separated into three typologies here, these terms are used with caution in recognition of how they may restrict understandings of different learning situations. Therefore, they are used to merely signify the all-inclusive nature of learning environments researched. Lave (1982) classified learning into two dichotomous categories of informal and formal, yet recognized that such separations are insufficient for the variety of learning situations. Together, Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that it makes no difference which education form learning takes place in, nor if it is intentionally educational, as is rooted in their theorization of *legitimate peripheral participation*. This is a prominent learning perspective taken throughout the study.

3. How do stakeholders' beliefs in the nature of knowledge and learning in early childhood influence their involvement in community-based kindergartens, and thus ultimately program sustainability (whilst only feasible as a community-based endeavor)?
4. What community characteristics have affected the cultural and contextual sustainability of Kahua community-based kindergartens?
5. How have governmental and non-governmental initiatives influenced rural community-based kindergartens in MUP?
6. How have historical developmental legacies, post-colonization, influenced the present development of ECE in SI?
7. How has the uncritical international transfer of Western-dominant ECE research, policy, and programming influenced SI ECE?

In order to understand the ensuing chapters, which enlighten the above research questions, the following section explores a few key terms to the study.

## **1.7 Defining Key Terms in Context**

The research approach of working collaboratively with locals and striving to gain an understanding of their local epistemologies emphasized the researcher's desire, as a non-indigenous outsider, to support local holistic decolonization. Recognizably, this was not completely achievable. Indigenous scholar Gegeo (2001:504) writes, with particular significance given to the Pacific Islands' small state context, "Outsiders have ignored or made light of the idea that Pacific Islands' cultures have philosophies, in part because our knowledge was oral rather than written until very lately – yet philosophy predates literacy." This he claims impacts research in that it is "highly unlikely an outsider could ever elicit a philosophical level of knowledge from villagers, because of the way outside researchers go about questioning villagers when collecting data" (ibid). In recognizing this, such became a substantial aspiration of the research design in striving to overcome this perceived barrier, through collaborative efforts. Supplementary to this was a redefining of concepts in locally appropriate understandings. As opposed to basing

aspects of the research on conceptualizations and definitions purely from the dominant Western-world literature/academia, an effort was made to situate these ideas in local understandings, as explored below.

### *Context and Culture*

An overarching view of *context* is used in this study to refer to the environment surrounding a society and the essential knowledge learned by individuals to adequately function within that particular society (Spodek and Saracho 1996). In this study, *culture* is used in the Taylorean (1920:1) all-inclusive sense:

Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Culture *is* human nature, which includes people's ability to classify experiences, encode them symbolically (in language), and teach these abstractions to others through the learning process of socialization. Therefore, the holistic view of context and culture taken in this thesis goes beyond Geertz's (1973) concept of *thick description* by incorporating participants into what Watson-Gegeo (1992, Lewis and Watson-Gegeo 2004:8) describes as *thick explanation*: "takes into account all relevant and theoretically salient micro- and macrocontextual influences that stand in a *systematic relationship* to the behavior or events that one is trying to explain." This emphasizes the importance of moving beyond Western perspectives and positivistic underpinnings to developmental research, and instead, a move towards a broader ontology so as not to marginalize or conceal the research's ability to comprehensively explore (in this instance) ECE. Thus, in line with Nsamenang's (2008) stance, instead of continuing the debate over defining context and culture, this study aspires to address them not merely as variables of human development, but as integral to human ontogenesis.

### *Kastom*

Despite the multitude of complex international theoretical and analytical work on concepts of culture and tradition, within the SI these terms are encompassed in a SI Pidgin word, used throughout Melanesia: *kastom*. Moore (2004) defines *kastom* as the ideologies and activities that empower traditions and practices, both within communities and as a unified stance against outside entities. This is directly related to the *wantok* system of kinship ties, literally meaning “one talk” or those of a shared language/blood line, to which one shares their origins and is obliged to support (Kwa’ioloa and Burt 1997). For the *wantoks* of Kahua, *kastom* is locally used to encompass culture, traditions, and other long-established practices/behaviors/activities/crafts/materials/etc. Most significantly, with reference to the Kahua Principles stated earlier, *kastom* is associated with behaviors of *respect*. Although it is recognized that extensive developments have been made in the study of *kastom*, for the purposes of the thesis, reference will be made to this overt locally defined perspective. However, in Chapter 7, this term will be more critically analyzed, drawing on external research findings, in contrast to these locally adopted understandings.

### *Early Childhood Education*

Also notable, the term *early childhood education* is used throughout this thesis to refer to formal, nonformal, and informal learning experiences of young children of kindergarten age (approximately 3-6 years old). Although it is recognized that *learning* can encompass many aspects of comprehensive early childhood care, development, and education, spanning the international age definition of prenatal through entry into the first years of primary education, for the purpose of this thesis, these limited bounds were necessary.

*Sustainability* (of context/culture-sensitive ECE programs)

Finally, of significant terminology fundamental to the thesis is the concept of program sustainability. Throughout documents written by those invested in designing and implementing ECE in SI, the concept of sustainability has periodically been referenced. For example, Foote (2004:5, emphasis added) states,

The agency and autonomy of the Solomon Islander to direct the progress of the project [SI ECE] ensured ownership and lead [sic] to the commitment which contributed to sustainability. [...] A commitment to accountability helped sustainability. [...] The shared vision to provide quality early childhood education from a Solomon Islands' perspective was crucial to the success of this program. This vision sustained early childhood through trying times.

Yet, contrary to these unsubstantiated claims of program sustainability, as will be contradicted throughout this thesis, a dramatically different reality exists in present-day remote SI villages. Notably, this Western-based English term, *sustainability*, was specifically selected for this study based on its use and understanding across all (adult) levels of SI ECE stakeholders. This includes those in remote island villages, who have been heavily influenced by the language of, and their involvement with, international development organizations. Therefore, in light of the SI emphasis on establishing an ECE program appropriate for the local culture and context (Daiwo and Foote 1999), and common local terminology used, this study has focused on the cultural and contextual sustainability of ECE. Accordingly, in this thesis, sustainable program development is defined by accounting for program responsiveness to ever-evolving local needs, demands, and limitations, while maintaining focus on original program objectives (i.e. culturally-sensitive, appropriate, and meaningful ECE for specific context) and populations served (i.e. children 3-6 years old) (Daiwo 2001, Kirpal 2002, Mancini and Marek 2004). Subsequently, this study provides a more critical examination of SI community-based ECE, contrasting existing reports on such programs. Exemplifying this contrast, for example, is Bennett's (1999:2) claim, which now over a decade later continues not to be reflected in MUP,

In Solomon Islands the Early Childhood Education programs may be in line with current international education theories and practices yet look very different in operation, but this reflects its own cultural context which has started to prepare its people to face the outcome of the twenty first century.

Notably, this present research is not a study of indigenous education programs, per se, but instead examines the integration of traditional and Western influences on ECE.

## **1.8 Thesis Outline**

Below is a summary of each subsequent chapter of this thesis, through which the reader is taken from scholarly underpinnings in the literature review, to the methodological and design elements of the study, then presentation of findings, and finally discussion and conclusions of the researcher.

Chapter 2: This literature review chapter explores predominantly the scholarly work, supplemented with limited gray literature, pertaining to context and cognition in research on children. Increasingly, emphasis is shifted from this international literature review to that of ECE in the developing world and indigenous populations. Based on these foundations, the chapter then hones in on small island developing nation contexts with their distinctive efforts to reclaim ownership over their educational systems, in culturally reinvigorating ways, amidst colonial legacies. Finally, these issues arising from the literature reviewed are applied to a theoretical level, most notably addressing concepts of sustainability, social capital, and the Developmental Niche framework, with their direct influences on the present study.

Chapter 3: In entering the presentation of the empirical research to this thesis, this chapter addresses the theoretical methodological foundations to the study, which employs an ethnographically-inspired collaborative research approach. Following this, the chapter discusses the design and execution of fieldwork, emphasizing key issues of local collaborative efforts, centrality of ethical considerations, and finally identification of the researcher's analytical strategy for data.

Chapter 4: Chapter 4 provides segue into the context specific focus of this thesis in the SI. Based on historical, archival, and anecdotal evidence, the chapter initially explores

the foundations to SI formal education. Here suggestions are made to the potential origins of the present ECE sector and the nature of Kahuan ECE stakeholder belief systems. Subsequently, this macro-analysis of education is refined to the development of formal ECE in SI, including an overarching predominantly numerical descriptive account in review of the present state of MUP ECE.

Chapter 5: Having laid the foundation to the study in the proceeding chapters, Chapter 5 delves into the bulk of research findings from predominantly ethnographic fieldwork data. Extending the previous chapter's exploration of ECE policy and origins, this chapter situates these formal endeavors at the practical level of implementation in Kahua communities. Further, it refers back to the literature review in extending the ideas of dominant Western-based ECE assumptions as realized in the rural community context. This is achieved through analyzing ECE in regard to the Developmental Niche framework, based on five different microenvironments of early learning throughout Kahau communities, one of which is the kindergarten.

Chapter 6: Building on the findings from Chapter 5, Chapter 6 focuses on culture-specific learning in the Kahua region to analyze perceptions of “intergenerational cultural decay” and how this in turn is associated with the ongoing functioning and sustainability of kindergartens. This chapter more heavily draws on interview data and collaborative focus groups, exploring local perceptions to understand practical barriers in the implementation and maintenance of Kahua kindergartens.

Chapter 7: Throughout the presentation of research findings (Chapters 4-6), the researcher aspired to limit her voice and analytical commentary in order to not contaminate the findings presented. This is under the premise of true collaboration in which local perspectives and voices play a key role in telling the story of ECE in SI. However, Chapter 7 is presented as an analytical discussion chapter, wherein the researcher more formally separates herself from the collaborative premise of the study to analytically reflect on the cumulative research findings. This allows her to further draw on historical, cultural, and contextual underlying influences often not raised directly from participants.

Chapter 8: In concluding the thesis, Chapter 8 provides an overarching summary of the study and key findings. Additionally, limitations of the study are identified, practical and theoretical recommendations are presented, and future research questions are suggested.

## **1.9 Concluding Introductory Remarks**

The post-colonial landscape in the South Pacific continues to illustrate how Western values, attitudes, and practices permeate present-day life, in addition to how colonial knowledge and practices particularly continue to dominate regional education. The current reality of ECE in SI, and islanders' understanding and perceptions of such programs, is intricately linked with the nation's colonial history. This colonial link is with regard to the introduction of formal education, as well as the ideologies that have developed as the once isolated islands were *flooded* with the culture, customs, and ideas of their colonizers. To take the metaphor of flooding (or perhaps, in dealing with the South Pacific islands, the metaphor of a *tsunami* is most contextually relevant and threatening), as the waters overwhelm communities/islands, many previously steadfast aspects of culture and context are washed away. While slowly communities work to rebuild in the aftermath of destruction, those often unsolicited destructive waters inevitably leave new remnants, saturated deep into the "roots" of the villages that once were. This is not to say that all is lost, but in rebuilding, nothing will ever remain exactly the same, notwithstanding the inevitable nature of change to the concept of culture. Likewise, the flood of ideas, beliefs, values, materials, and knowledge that were brought (or in some cases, dumped) in what are now Pacific small island nations has forever changed their progression of development. Although, in the SI, this initially led to a more Westernized developmental path with their primary colonizers (Great Britain and Germany), new "floods" continue to bombard the islands, increasingly influenced by an

Asian persuasion, with extensive investments being made by China, Taiwan, and Japan over the past few decades. Crossley and Holmes (2001:396) argue,

Growing tensions between powerful “localizing” and “globalizing” forces increasingly mean that local issues cannot be understood without reference to the global context. Conversely, global problems cannot be realistically considered without an understanding of local priorities and agendas...if small developing states...are to engage productively with powerful international agendas in order to formulate and articulate their own priorities in education, a comprehensive understanding of both the local and the global is needed. The case for small states to strengthen their research capacity and build research partnerships is therefore strong, but ways in which this might be achieved have yet to be fully and critically explored.

In light of the above quote, such is what this thesis has strived to achieve. It is noted that this requires a critical understanding of local culture in relation to thinking about the development (Pieterse 2001) of education. Additionally, this necessitates guarding against problems related to post-colonial discourse on culture such as embodying nationalism, myths of uniqueness, new forms of ethnocentrism, and narrow views of localism through traditions/tribalism disguised as indigenization (Clammer 2005).

In entering this thesis, the reader is asked to approach it as a woven tale, like the leaves of a coconut tree intricately interlaced together to create a durable product, like a mat, intertwining the perspectives of a non-indigenous non-Christian Western female researcher with the many voices of diverse Christian Indigenous Solomon Islanders. The image of weaving, as likened to the story of ECE program sustainability in SI about to be told, not only symbolizes the different perspectives this thesis attempts to bring together, but also, as explored in Koya-Vaka’uta’s (2003:32) poem entitled *Weaving*, this image extends to the dynamic entity of changing culture over generations:

*My grandmother wove pandanus leaves  
My mother wove fabric  
I weave words and sound of chanting dreams  
My daughters will weave  
in a computer digital age  
of webbed complexities  
continuing to weave  
on the age long tradition  
Of Pacific women weaving stories  
Of who we are  
And who we choose to be.*

As Carlos Fuentes said, “Culture is a seashell where we hear voices of what we are, what we were, what we forget, and what we can be,” and without this seashell, individuals and groups have great difficulty in finding their way (cited in Power 1992:15). In understanding ECE in remote villages of SI, this is not a story that can be told by an individual, but through incorporating different stakeholders, it should be viewed with a critical light on context and culture sensitivity in “building on the past to give meaning to the present and hope for the future” (Teasdale and Teasdale 1992:2).

## **CHAPTER 2: Literature Review – Contextualizing Early Childhood Education**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Many cultural beliefs about the nature of childhood and children's development have been unexamined by interventionists in the creation of early childhood education (ECE) initiatives, thus making a priori assumptions based on universalized views of childhood (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 2006; Nsamenang 2008; Cleghorn and Prochner 2010). However, by not accounting for cultural practices, parental beliefs, and environmental restraints, these programs are not likely destined to be sustained endeavors due to incongruences with the particular culture and context in which they are being implemented. Ball and Pence (2006:xi) write,

To respond meaningfully to the goals and practices of cultural communities – and to the children and families within them – we must acknowledge the cultural specificity of mainstream research, theory, and professional practice and forge new understandings for preparing human service practitioners to work in cultural communities.

Despite increasing rhetoric responding to issues of cultural sensitivity, thereby acknowledging cultures and contexts influencing children's learning and development, this literature has predominantly not delved deep enough to develop context-informed understandings to apply to specific ECE programs (Cole 1998, Fleeer 2003, Rogoff 2003). This is not to overlook the increasing indigenization of research and practices in developmental studies within the Majority World (Kagitcibasi 2000; Nsamenang 2000; Kim, Yang, and Hwang 2006). However, it recognizes the predominant continuation of Minority World cultures' shaping international ECE research, policies, and practices (Hwang 2004, Pence and Marfo 2008), thereby threatening community-based program sustainability.

In light of the above gaps in the literature, design, and implementation of ECE globally, this chapter will explore the relevant research to address these insufficiencies regarding

context and culture appropriate ECE. Where possible, examples are drawn from developing world indigenous contexts to counter the proliferation of Western-dominant ideas so heavily influencing this field. The chapter is divided into five main sections, which form a progression from the theoretical level, to that of programming and practices at the international and then Pacific regional levels, and finally conceptual issues of program sustainability. Firstly, international theoretical development is reviewed, with regard to context and cognition as applies to researching young children. Next explored is international ECE development and its diffusion globally, as largely propagated through Western-dominant research and development agendas. Then, an examination ensues of ECE in the Majority World and indigenous program contexts based on rationales, exemplary program practices, and persistent obstacles. Subsequently, this is refined to review ECE in the context of small Pacific island nations and their distinctive efforts to locally situate educational developments amidst colonial legacies. Finally reviewed are theoretical influences and practical aspects directly involved in the sustainability of community-based context-sensitive ECE.

## **2.2 Researching Early Childhood**

### *2.2.1 Theoretical Transformations: Context and Cognition*

Recognition of the early years as a formative period in the development of the child has long been influential to many disciplines of study dating back at least as far as Plato (428-348BC),

And the first step...is always what matters most, particularly when we are dealing with the young and tender. This is the time when they are taking shape and when any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark.

(cited in Clarke and Clarke 2000:11)

In particular, research on the influence of culture on child development, often as explored through child-rearing practices, has seen extensive development throughout the

past few centuries in a variety of academic disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy. However, for the purposes of this literature review, the starting point here will be the 1920s, as this was the time when anthropologists began writing ethnographic accounts of childhood around the world. These were based on the premise that,

[T]he conditions and shape of childhood tend to vary in central tendency from one population to another, are sensitive to population-specific contexts, and are not comprehensible without detailed knowledge of the socially and culturally organized contexts that give them meaning.

(LeVine 2007:247)

Therefore, anthropological accounts, beginning with Mead's seminal ethnographic work in Samoa (1928) and New Guinea (1930), and Malinowski's account of Trobrianders (1929), historically consisted of cross-cultural studies about children and adolescents. These studies focused on the significance of context and culture, as opposed to universal trends as done by their psychologically-oriented predecessors. However, by the 1960s, cognitive psychologists (e.g. Piaget 1952, Chomsky 1965) brought about a shift in studies of childhood back to placing little emphasis on environmental influences and their effects on child development. During this time, psychologists, such as Piaget, identified children as active agents in their own development. They reasoned that the early acquisition of cognitive and linguistic skills were universal and innate processes requiring little environmental guidance. Thus, it was theorized that children's development could be categorized into universal stages and substages, with implications suggesting that children were only be able to learn effectively if their current developmental stage matched their learning experience.

Piaget initially viewed children as "little scientists," actively and individually constructing their own development through interactions with their surrounding environment. Bruner (1986:85) criticized the Piagetian perspective of the solitary

scientist discovering concepts for him/herself, referring to this focus on individualism as *unmediated conceptualism* based on the assumption that,

[T]he child's growing knowledge of the world is achieved principally by direct encounters with the world rather than mediated through vicarious encounters with it in interacting and negotiating with others.

Such a perspective is the doctrine that individual children “go it alone” in mastering knowledge of the world. Bruner rejected this notion based on the assumption that humans do not individually construct reality, and instead, the world is mediated through negotiation with others (ibid). Bruner argues,

We need to get away from the image of the child operating entirely on his or her own. I want to look at the development of the child in the context of human interaction. Human knowledge and its acquisition are social – dependent on language, on stored culture, on social modes of transmission. We have not looked at these matters closely enough, given our preoccupation with individual development.

(cited in Hall 1982:63)

Furthermore, post-Piagetian perspectives have criticized this theory for its stage-like, horizontal model (Gelman and Baillargeon 1983); egocentrism<sup>10</sup> (Gelman 1979); and underestimation of children's cognitive competence across a number of domains. The latter of these has been disproved when presenting children with tasks that make sense, are familiar, and significant/meaningful (Hatano and Inagaki 1986, Donaldson 1987). However, beginning in the 1980s, following the publication of Vygotsky's *Mind in Society* (1978) and Bronfenbrenner's *The Ecology of Human Development* (1979), researchers interested in the study of children largely returned to recognize the extent to which cultural contexts play in human development, as seen as a socially embedded phenomena.

In theoretical terms, the shift from Piagetian studies of childhood to more Vygotskian viewpoints, according to Donaldson (1978), can be attributed to flawed experiments by Piaget in which children misinterpreted the language used by psychologists in tasks set

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<sup>10</sup> Notably, Piaget stopped using this term in the late 1960s even though many of his followers did not – as they maintain use of in the United States of America (USA).

forth for them. Subsequently, through her own work, she was able to show that children are capable of more sophisticated reasoning than Piaget had suggested. Walford and Massey (1998) further critique Donaldson's work suggesting that her approach was still flawed, like Piaget's, due to her basic assumption that children's knowledge can be measured and is not context-dependent. This ignored the unfamiliar context of a laboratory to children. Additionally, they note that she did not address the possibility of children merely not desiring to demonstrate their knowledge to researchers. And thus, another shift was made to more context and culture sensitive research of children, such as from the social-constructivist viewpoints of Berger and Luckman (1966), Vygotsky (1966), and Bruner (1972). Although this new perspective offered little in terms of new understanding of the complex reality of children's learning, it did identify the significance of understanding interactions and the process of meaning-making from participants' points of view. Furthermore, this new viewpoint shifted away from viewing children as "little scientists," suggesting that social processes and cultural knowledge play an important role in human development.

In line with Bruner and Vygotsky's perspectives on humans' social nature, in the present study, emphasis is not placed on "the child" as an individual. Instead, emphasis is on the child who is culturally and historically situated in a range of social communities. Accordingly, the researcher did not look within the child but instead focused on interactions between children with regard to the social interactions and relationships that make up their lives and therefore learning. This is in line with Vygotsky's argument (1934:91) that the researcher's quest is not for "the discovery of the eternal child...[but for] the historical child." This child is "historical, social, and cultural...[and lives] under

particular social and historical conditions” (Minick 1989:162). Accordingly, the child is not a representative sample nor timeless or without context.

Despite the development of more culturally-sensitive childhood research in recent decades, inadequate, outdated, and overly generalized frameworks, still often heavily reliant on Piagetian theory (such as used in Solomon Islands [SI] ECE policy), may be prohibiting the diverse development of context-sensitive programs congruent to localized learning values and goals. Countering this ongoing limitation from empirically-based research generalizing about childhood, anthropological work continues to formulate theory of culture and child development. For example, exemplifying this is Whiting and Whiting’s (1975) study of *Children in Six Cultures*, which emphasized the importance of historical traditions and environmental conditions guiding parents in child-rearing. Their position is furthered by research on cultural values and parental goals mediated by environmental demands (LeVine 1974), claims that parental beliefs/goals/behaviors are linked to sociocultural contexts (Field, Sostek, Vietze, and Leiderman 1981; Rogoff 2003), and how culturally distinct contexts influence origins of parents’ belief systems (Goodnow and Collins 1990) and ethnotheories (Harkness and Super 1996).

### *2.2.2 Children’s Cognition and Learning*

Extending the evolving review of researching “the child,” this section advances the historical and methodological development more specifically to that of children’s cognition and learning. Western perspectives of theorists such as Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Piaget have historically influenced early learning and development. The argument was that children acquire knowledge and awareness of the world around them through learning experiences that enable children to individually construct their own learning.

However, more recently, sociocultural and postmodernist literatures have shifted the view of young children to emphasize the culturally and socially communicated nature of knowledge and learning (Rogoff 2003, Edwards 2005). This assertion has largely evolved from Vygotsky's (1978) fundamental premise that knowledge acquisition and the development of intellectual potential within a community is due to the sociohistorical context. Thus, children are not individually constructing knowledge: this process must be defined through the social and cultural practices, beliefs, and experiences of the community. More recently, this idea has been expanded upon by Rogoff (1990), who argues that individual development is defined according to the cultural and social context in which it occurs; therefore, it cannot be defined in universalistic terms.

Educational researchers and developers have predominantly focused on "taught cognitive learning" (Erickson 1982). However, this formalized Western notion of knowledge acquisition is incongruent with dominant trends of sociocultural research, as well as in viewing ECE from a more holistic developmental perspective with cognition as only one of multiple components. Furthermore, learning is not a process that requires direct instruction, and instead often argues for the facilitation of children's individual development (e.g. Vygotsky's scaffolding [1978], Montessori approach [New 2002], and Reggio Emilia philosophy [Giudici, Rinaldi, and Krechevsky 2001]). Therefore, arguably, ongoing deficiencies in successfully supporting learning in early childhood classrooms is congruent with context and cognition not being accounted for in the development, research, dissemination, and usage of practices and innovations.

Jacob and Phipps (1999:91) suggest that, historically, educational developers, largely using positivist lenses, have focused on "cognition without context," while educational

anthropologists, largely using interpretivist lenses, have focused on “context without cognition.” Similarly, Schwartz (1981:4) noted that “anthropology has ignored children in culture while developmental psychology has ignored culture in children.”

Accordingly, initial work identified within the field of cognition and culture generally focused on cultural groups and not on contexts. This was based on views of cognitive development (largely from cross-cultural psychologists) as embodied processes that were universal and context-free. As alluded to in the previous section, prior to the 1960s, cross-cultural psychologists led research related to culture and cognition by conducting experiments comparing Western and non-Western groups through measuring underlying abilities: not actual performance measures. At that time, cognition was viewed as the dependent variable and culture (i.e. representing more underlying biological characteristics of a group of people) was broadly viewed as an independent variable.

The literature presented thus far is not intended to imply that learning styles have direct relations to all individuals of a particular cultural group. Such a claim would be that of “trait approaches” (Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003), thereby implying learning characteristics are innate to those of a shared culture, irrespective of specific tasks, contexts, individuals, or time. Contrastingly, as will be explored through the uncritical international transfer of ECE practices and programs in section 2.3, overgeneralizations of learning styles are inappropriate and potentially detrimental. Take for example the generalization of middle class Anglo-American children learning through a *verbal*-style while a *visual*-style is most often attributed to the learning of indigenous groups of children. Nevertheless, awareness of cultural values and practices can facilitate teaching/learning approaches for a particular context. This is as opposed to linking local dispositions to understanding approaches with ongoing processes not specifically

divisible by individual and contextual differences (Cole and Engestrom 1993, Lave 1996).

A culturally appropriate approach to EECE [sic] [early childhood care and education] can build on the strengths that exist already in the community, therein permitting knowledgeable community participation and more effective reaching out to children in their own cultural contexts.

(Nsamenang 2006:7)

The following subsection provides further review of this contextually-situated learning.

### *2.2.3 Situated Learning*

In reiteration, all children arrive at formal education with informal learning systems they have developed within their local cultures, comprised of learning strategies and contexts that have fostered their early learning (Ninnes 1995). The significance of children's culture on their learning has been well established (Spindler 1963, Harris 1990, Little 1990, Weisner 2005). Typically, when a child enters formal schooling, they are introduced to a new cultural system, which often demands the use of different learning systems. This is particularly true for non-Western cultures where there may be more marked differences between traditional learning approaches and those within formal schooling, which often continues to be framed around Western education systems (as generally introduced to non-Western cultures through colonization). Little (1990:4) refers to this dissonance as a "learning gap" where students' (or essentially families) and teachers' (or essentially program/curriculum developers/policymakers) objectives for schooling, and how to achieve them, are incongruent.

Arguably, to better explore young children's learning across informal, formal, and nonformal contexts, a more situated theoretical perspective of learning must be consulted. Notably, Lave (1982:182) classifies "informal" education as that in which "learners spontaneously, or by observation and imitation, internalize a direct replica of

the behavior they see around them.” This is contrasted with “formal” learning in which learning is structured by instructors/teachers around pedagogical goals, typically in contexts dissimilar to those where the knowledge is to be used. Lave limited his definitions to these two distinct forms, yet argued that the separation of learning into two dichotomous categories is insufficient for the actual variety of learning situations. Through comparative extension, three categories are no more productive in exploring learning within this thesis, and as such merely stand to represent the variety of contexts in which child development occurs. Therefore, *situating learning* stands as the significant analytical concept to this study, emphasizing the complexities of learning within any context. “Even ‘general knowledge’ can be learned only in specific context, and the usefulness of general knowledge is only in its applicability to (re)negotiating or (re)constructing meaning in specific circumstances” (Lewis and Watson-Gegeo 2004:10; Lave and Wenger 1991; Watson-Gegeo 2001). Such perspectives are in accordance with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) analytical viewpoint of *legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP).

Instead of defining relationships between learning and social situations in terms of the acquisition of propositional knowledge, the LPP perspective situates learning in experiences of social co-participation. Accordingly, rather than focusing on specific types of cognitive processes and conceptual structures, LPP examines the social interactions that provide the context for learning to occur. Therefore, theoretically emphasized are knowledge and learning’s relational character, meaning’s negotiated character, and the “concerned (engaged, dilemma-driven) nature of learning activity for those involved in it” (Lave and Wenger 1991:33). The following subsection further explores this and other theoretical influences on the study.

#### *2.2.4 Present Study: Content Theoretical Frameworks*

Drawing on the above literature review of research on children's context and cognition, this section now situates the review specifically with regard to the researcher's perspectives in the present study. Overall, this study is based on a sociocultural-ecological perspective, influenced by the works of Vygotsky (1978), Rogoff (1990, 2003), Bronfenbrenner (1979), and Super and Harkness (1986). This perspective recognizes the holistic nature of early childhood development and education: a process defined through the social and cultural practices, beliefs, and experiences in a particular context, which also incorporates biological and environmental factors. Therefore, through the combination of these works, the resulting integrated perspective allows for more comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted nature of community-based ECE. The following subsections highlight key theoretical perspectives integrated.

##### *Bio-Ecological Systems Theory*

Based on the researcher's perspective emphasizing the significance of understanding ECE *in context*, accordingly, Bronfenbrenner's preeminent theory of development in context (within developmental psychology) of the *Bio-Ecological Systems Theory* (1979, 1986, Bronfenbrenner and Crouter 1983) significantly influenced the study. Child growth and development occurs through an interactive process between biological factors and the environment, which according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework is composed of four systems. By using this perspective to better understand young children, roles, norms, and rules that can powerfully shape development can be explored on the following levels (Bronfenbrenner 1979):

- Microsystem: immediate environments, such as the family, school, and community;
- Mesosystem: larger system comprised of connections between immediate environments, such as a child's home and kindergarten;
- Exosystem: external environment setting which only indirectly affects development, such as parents' workplace; and
- Macrosystem: the wider cultural context, such as Western/non-Western culture, national economy, political culture, and subcultures.

The purpose of this study was not to further identify features of development within these systems; however, the significance of using Bronfenbrenner's theory was to help identify the many sources influencing children's development. Additionally, it was used to recognize and address the need to bring together many disciplines and levels influencing the ecology of a child.

#### *Developmental Niche Framework*

A substantial amount of research has now amassed, as explored above, demonstrating how children's learning and development are both rooted in and transmitted through a context of cultural practices. However, it is important to also recognize the larger framework influencing children's culturally structured experiences, as well as how integrating the diverse perspectives of childhood research can illuminate more complex understandings. To capitalize on these joint underpinnings to child development, emphasizing the cultural structuring through an interactive framework, Super and Harkness (1986, 1999, 2002, 2009) created the "Development Niche." This framework countered long-standing universalistic assumptions purporting developmentally appropriate practices (Kessen 1983, Burman 1994, Woodhead 1999) by providing an integrated theoretical model for more holistically analyzing early childhood in context.

Super and Harkness' Development Niche work builds on the field of sociocultural childhood research. This prominently grows out of Vygotsky's (1978) recognition of child development as a historically and culturally relative social process and Cole's (1992) elaboration on this that child development is a cultural process beyond mere cultural variation. Additionally, it expands on the psychological domain of human development models (particularly early pioneering work by Lewin [1936] and later Bronfenbrenner's [1979] "Ecology of Human Development") and anthropological perspectives (particularly Whiting and Whiting's [1975] model for Psycho-Cultural research). Drawing on these integrated research disciplines, including anthropology, psychology, and ecology, including cross-cultural/holocultural qualitative comparative studies, and more recently quantitative measures, the Developmental Niche capitalizes on these joint underpinnings to child development while emphasizing the cultural structuring through an interactive framework. As a result, it can facilitate the study of the cultural regulation of a child's microenvironment, in order to understand development processes and the acquisition of culture. Accordingly, children and culture are perceived as mutually interactive systems. This has allowed for application to wide-ranging childhood research topics such as commonality and diversity, affective functioning (emotional expression, temperament), cognition (literacy, numeracy, language development), and infant mortality and morbidity (Harkness 1977; Harkness and Super 1991, 1992; Super and Harkness 1986; Harkness et al. 2006, 2009). Yet, the researcher in the present study recognized the untapped potential of this framework for facilitating the exploration of contextually-induced variation between microenvironments involved in community-based ECE. In particular, she believed it possessed the capacity to structure systematic organization and subsequent analysis of cultures within the daily microenvironments influencing a child's learning and development. As such, she

believed culture could be conceptualized within microenvironments, compared/adapted to other microenvironments, and used to explore transitions within and between them.

In theory, the Developmental Niche is composed of three conceptualizations, or “subsystems,” that are involved in the mediation of the child and culture. Each of these perspectives allows for a critical view of culture as a developmental environment, as well as accounts for individual factors that alter the environments and interactions themselves. These subsystems are to be perceived from the child looking outward and function within the larger culture and environment. Therefore children’s developmental experiences are suggested to be organized through:

1. Physical and social settings in which the child lives;
2. Customs of child care and child-rearing; and
3. Psychology of the caretakers: ethnotheories/belief systems brought to interactions with the child.

(Super and Harkness 1986:565)

These three subsystems are said to operate in harmony as children progress through childhood forming social, affective, and cognitive rules of culture (ibid). Notably, as recognized by Harkness (1977), external systems significantly influence the subsystems of the Developmental Niche. Therefore, a primary benefit of the Niche is its ability to identify specific mechanisms behind, and responsive to, the wider culture and environment. In practice, this is particularly evident under conditions of change, in which an aspect of the Niche is in disequilibrium and thus affects the homeostatic mechanisms promoting cultural consistency. For example, changes to a subsystem, such as the introduction of formal education, may not initially be fully accepted by parents. However, as parental ethnotheories begin to change, and if the consequences of a change begin to spread through the system, then initial efforts to maintain homeostasis will evolve into a new consonance. Such can be seen when parents begin to recognize the

long-term implications of education, and as a result, alterations are made to time spent in schools as opposed to traditional cultural practices. This can be associated with an “all or nothing” response to cultural change, as explored through the Developmental Niche subsystem corollaries and desire for homeostasis.

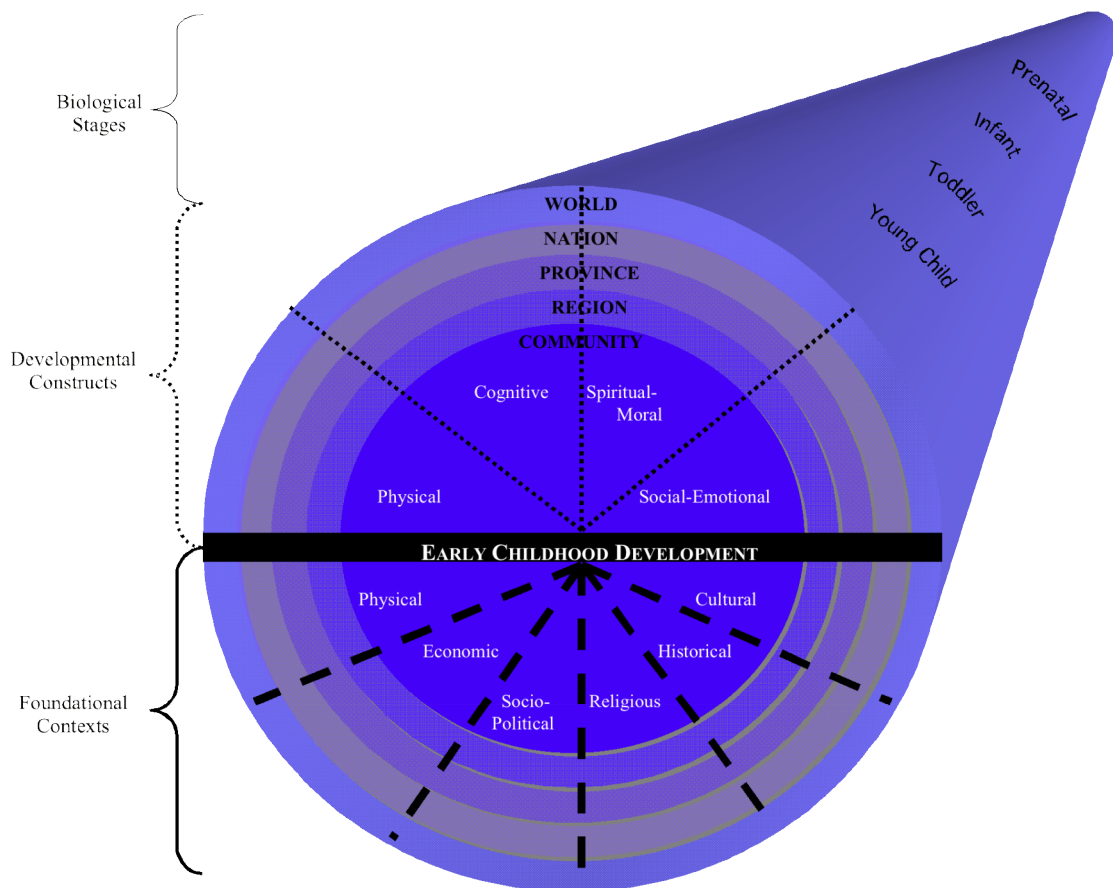
Overall, the model provides a basis for understanding disequilibrium and for insight into why some useful practices are being lost and why some new practices are not as helpful as expected by those who introduce them. Instead of emphasizing ways in which people do not adjust to Western beliefs and practices about care and development (e.g. Mosley and Chen 1984), Myers (1992:70) suggests,

[T]his model begins with what people actually believe and practice, without judging in advance whether these are good or bad beliefs and practices. This includes positive practices and beliefs that can be built upon in conditions of rapid social change, helping the homeostatic process along.

Accordingly, the model was used in this study to assist in gaining deeper understandings of kindy sustainability in Kahua, with an emphasis on cultural influences, made possible by comparing children’s multiple microenvironments of learning.

### *Integrated Theoretical Conceptualization*

In order to better conceptualize how the researcher viewed a combination of the theories highlighted in this section, along with holistic components of ECE, she utilized her model of “Context-Based Holistic ECCD [Early Childhood Care and Development]” (Burton 2008:12) (Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1** Model of “Context-Based Holistic Early Childhood Care and Development.”

The center of this model is based in *Early Childhood Development*: a concept rather than an individual child. Contrastingly to typical models of child development, which often place an individual child in the center, this was deemed unsuitable for representing more collectivist societies and approaches to learning. This central concept is depicted to represent its firm foundation on contextual features: physical, economic, socio-political, religious, historical, and cultural. Each of these foundational contexts shares an equal proportion of the lower semicircle. The top half of the circle represents the four developmental constructs deemed representative of holistic childhood development: physical, cognitive, spiritual-moral,<sup>11</sup> and social-emotional. Next, each colored circle of the model represents a different nested layer of society (i.e. community, region, province,

<sup>11</sup> Often, spiritual and religious components have not been accounted for in models of young children’s development, particularly when coming from the USA; however, for this particular study, it is recognized that religion plays a major role in the participants’ lives.

nation, and world) in which each developmental construct and foundational concept is uniquely defined and influential on childhood development. Notably, the gradient of colors represents the interrelated nature of contexts, as opposed to distinctive bound entities. The final dimension of the diagram is the span of ages (i.e. prenatal, infant, toddler, young child), as at each biological stage, the other components take on different meanings and levels of significance. In Chapter 8, this model will be expanded to incorporate additional elements, as developed throughout the study.

Having established a baseline of historical trends in conceptualizing research on children and their learning, the following section extends this review to situate the concepts more specifically in the context of formal ECE.

## **2.3 International ECE Development**

### *2.3.1 Context-Sensitive, Cultural Nature, of Early Childhood*

Human development, with a particular emphasis on cultural competence, varies widely throughout the world, based on the values, practices, and ecological variations present in different societies.

The reciprocal processes by which culture and psyche co-construct, for example, result in divergences in the praxes, intelligences, and desirable developmental outcomes and child states that are valued and promoted by different people in different times and societies.

(Nsamenang 2008:73)

According to contextualist theories, context plays an integral part in shaping human development, as interplay between the physical context and individuals' social contexts, which are heavily influenced by cultures (Pence 1988). Accordingly, children do not independently construct knowledge or their development: it is a process that must be defined through the social and cultural practices, beliefs, and experiences of a community, and thus is not a universal experience (Rogoff 1990).

Human development is to a great extent a culturally informed process. Children's growth and development occur through an interactive process between biological factors and the environment (Bronfenbrenner 1979). Human knowledge, beliefs, and practices are passed from generation to generation through language and literacy, yet externally evolve and adapt to new cultural, contextual, and biological circumstances. Notably, with regard to the present study, the SI government does recognize this cultural nature of development. This is evident in their national ECE policy and current kindergarten practices, which recognize the wider influences on young children: "...ECCE [early childhood care and education] policy must emphasize links with family, home culture, and home language. ECCE must therefore develop as a support of family, rather than a substitute of family affairs" (MEHRD 2008:2). Based on the significance of culture in influencing child development, and as such ECE, this section will now progress to explore how these ideas have practically developed over time in institutional education.

### *2.3.2 Origins and Diffusion of ECE*

Similar to the diversity of views of "the child," as explored in section 2.2, the field of ECE has experienced much transformation since its formal origins more than two centuries ago. The historic foundations of ECE originated in Europe in the late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Beginning with Owen's "Infant Schools," efforts were made to create *ideal citizens* based on learning to observe natural phenomena. This was followed by Froebel's kindergarten in Germany, based on the belief that children develop in settings that support their natural instincts to play and learn with educational materials (Brosterman 1997). Then, Montessori's sensory approach to early education developed in Italy; while simultaneously, in England, the "nursery school" was created to provide social justice to children based on play, as opposed to kindergartens which were thought

to have become overly rigid (New 2002). While European nations shared similar conceptions of knowledge and childhood, the arrival of their ECE models in the United States of America (USA) saw significant adaptations.

Froebel's concept of kindergarten was most influential in the development of ECE in the USA, yet a more progressive kindergarten spread throughout the nation than its European-based models. This was influenced by Dewey's ideas (Weber 1969) that emphasized the importance of communities as the foundation of children's knowledge and education. More recently, the Italian Reggio Emilia ECE approach has rapidly expanded across the USA and worldwide, yet again it has often been significantly augmented in its dissimilar contexts. For example, through decontextualization, socialist elements of the model have been discarded to fit middle-American sensibilities (Tobin 2005). Thus, "unknowingly," the USA has established a significantly different program than those in Reggio, where even other Italian cities often recognize the inappropriate nature of attempting to copy specific programs into their unique contexts (ibid).

Although little recognition is given to the adaptations of ECE models in modern times, a closer look reveals that original models, which were initially influenced by local cultures, have since been altered reflecting their present location's cultural values and beliefs (Spodek and Saracho 1996). While psychology has traditionally theorized about a "global child" perspective (Pence and Hix-Small 2007), such promotions conceal the complex differences and subtleties in perceptions around the world (Bram 1998). This disregard for the diversity of individuals' development worldwide is further discounted when contextual nuances, such as situated cultural wisdom and contextual identities, have been massed together creating a unified view of the Majority World. Therefore,

this obscures differentiations necessary for context and culture sensitive theory, research, policy, and programming. Nsamenang (2008:74) writes, regarding ECE in Africa,

Arguments in favor of not reinventing the wheel often translate into hushing understandings and bypassing family-centered and community-based resources while extrapolating externally oriented stand-alone policies and programs that have been judged to be successful elsewhere.

Based on the notion that to be human is to learn culture (Rogoff 1990), then logically one begins to recognize the importance of creating culturally-relevant early learning experiences.

Exemplifying the inappropriate international transfer of ECE concepts is the notion that “children learn through play” and that ECE environments should be structured around children to facilitate this. Through this idea, emphasis is placed on learning by doing, and in particular, concrete materials being a means of learning through manipulation by children, which is based on the discourses of Piaget, Montessori, and Froebel.

Exemplifying this is the traditional Western early learning environment where often teachers are actively involved in engaging children through dialogue as they interact with learning materials (e.g. blocks, puzzles, miniature representations of household equipment). In contrast to this child-centeredness, many non-Western environments more commonly involve less of an interactional learning process and children are more so embedded in adults’ activities, during which children act as observers. Take for example learning through observation to use a foot loom in a weaving factory in Guatemala without use of any questioning (Rogoff 1990). Similarly, take Indigenous Australian children learning an important Indigenous dance called the *Dujwandayngu* (“Crow Dance”) which involves very little talking and instead much observation and doing by simply recognizing the beat of the drum (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy 2002:35). These studies have suggested overall findings that learning through

observation is an important tool for Indigenous families in those contexts. However, this is not to suggest these are only practices of Indigenous cultures.

Markedly, some Western world early childhood centers have also taken a different cultural orientation towards children's learning: most notably and internationally recognized, ECE in Reggio Emilia, Italy (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 1998; Giudici, Rinadli, and Krechevsky 2001). This program has been noted for its learning environment that is more closely linked to the community than many early childhood centers, including being filled with resources and equipment for children that are real and not child adaptations. Moreover, these dichotomous learning approaches are not exclusively oppositional, such as between autonomy and cooperation. Autonomy with personal responsibility for decision-making can be compatible with values of interdependence and cooperation among group members (Lamphere 1977; White and LeVine 1986; Paradise 1994; Yau and Smetana 1996). For example, in Japan, autonomy and cooperation are compatible qualities that both fall under the definition of the term "sunao" (Mosier and Rogoff 2000:4). Furthermore, Marquesan (South Pacific) mothers actively arrange infants' social interactions with others, but if they become too self-absorbed, mothers interrupt and urge attention to the broader social environment (Rogoff 1990). And, in Indigenous Australian communities, sharing is not considered cheating; children are willing to sacrifice praise from the teacher for a friend since working independently means one's failures will be highlighted (Fleer and Williams-Kennedy 2002). This latter example therefore makes individual focus on children culturally difficult. Overall, these examples demonstrate the inability to generalize about learning across cultures, just as is contradicting occurring with the uncritical spread of universalized ECE.

Based on the above cultural and contextual differences to early learning, before refining this review more specifically to the developing world context of ECE, it is important to briefly explore the international influences driving global development of such formal programs globally for young children.

### *2.3.3 International ECE Pressures*

ECE arose in the international spotlight during the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien 1990), where the international community made a commitment to increase education opportunities for over 100 million children worldwide without access to literacy opportunities or basic education. Recognition of the importance of early childhood development and education interventions was largely initiated during the 1960's "War on Poverty" in the USA, which operated under the belief of socially engineering society (Eldering and Leseman 1999). One example of this was the creation of the Head Start program for children at risk of educational failure. This was based on the idea that such an intervention could enhance children's long-term development, thus addressing generational cycles of poverty and inequalities upon entering formal education. Increasingly, ECE programs are being implemented globally for a multitude of reasons. Largely the roots of these rationales can be traced to the philosophically optimistic belief, now increasingly supported by research, that, despite circumstances in which children grow up in environments that are not adequately supporting their optimal development, early developmental and educational interventions have the capacity to ameliorate these conditions. Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1993:315) write,

Humans have genetic potentials...that are appreciably greater than those that are presently realized, and...progress toward such realization can be achieved through the provision of environments in which proximal processes can be enhanced, but which are always within the limits of human genetic potential.

Correspondingly, highly influential in this Western-based international development have been a few key international agendas. Resulting from this international diffusion of ECE has generally been a denial of cultural variations and maintenance of dominant cultural groups as the norm (i.e. Anglo-American as dominant base of research) informing programs, policies, and practices.

This section is not intended to go into depth in analyzing the influential international agendas regarding global educational standards, particularly pressuring developing nations, as these have been extensively explored and applied to virtually all ECE development initiatives in the developing world. However, it is significant to identify their existence as the root to much of the global development of ECE, including in SI, as found in:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989)
  - “The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually.” (United Nations 1924:43)
  - “The child shall enjoy special protection and shall be given opportunities to develop in a healthy and normal manner, and in conditions of freedom and dignity.” (United Nations 1959:Principle Two)
  - “States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.” (United Nations 1989:Article 6)
- Jomtien 1990 World Conference on Education for All (UNESCO 1990)
  - “Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.” (Goal 1)
  - “Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programs as appropriate.” (Article 5)
- Dakar 2000 Education for All Framework for Action (UNESCO 2000)
  - “Expansion of early childhood care and development activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged, and disabled children.” (Article 5, para. 8)
- 2000 Millennium Development Goals (United Nations 2000)
  - Achieve universal primary education (Goal 1)
  - Promote gender equality (Goal 2)
  - Improve maternal health (Goal 5)
  - Ensure environmental sustainability (Goal 7)

Within these goals and agendas, little is ever mentioned with regard to how to go about driving such outcomes, nor how this should be accomplished to create “high quality” desired results. This is not to imply that this should be a goal of such international efforts, as this would further raise issues of incongruences between different cultures and contexts. Yet, what comes into question, as the highlighted point here (but is beyond the scope of this review), is without greater advisement on how these statements should be interpreted, deeply held beliefs backing these ideas are potentially lost in translation to varied contexts. This thereby potentially affects the optimal development of ECE programs in specific contexts.

Globalization, educationalization, Western institutionalization, and economization have, largely through colonization, all problematized non-Western ECE. Smith (1999:91), a Maori scholar, argues, “[P]roblematizing the indigenous is a Western obsession.” ECE in the Majority World exemplifies this obsession and the counteraction of the international transfer of Western-oriented educational philosophies and practices. Although the Minority World has *adapted* programs to their particular societies, the *uncritical transfer* of such programs is much more noticeable in the Majority World (Nsamenang 2006). This is particularly evident in light of *Education for All* goals, which impose Euro-American claims of absolute truth in institutionalized education, and as a result, such institutional universalism ultimately can suppress dissimilar societies’ rights to context and culturally appropriate programs (Moss and Petrie 2002). Discouragingly, such an institutionalized model of ECE often is only feasible, and arguably most sustainable, in the urban centers of developing countries, consequently ignoring rural populations (70% worldwide) where community-based approaches arguably offer more realistic prospects.

Ideally, societal values would determine ECE programs, which Spodek (1977) asserts can be identified in any cultural context: materialism and work, spiritualism and religion, individuality and freedom, community and power, family and sexuality, and equality and justice. Years later, he writes,

[E]arly childhood programs teach about the way of life that it values in a particular society, the language of that society, the core elements of that nation – its myths, traditions, heroes, celebrations, and the like and about the values and attitudes it wishes to inculcate in its young.  
(Spodek and Saracho 1996:11)

All of these elements can be incorporated into ECE programs, from storytelling and singing to the types of relationships and interactions nurtured in the school environment. This, however, does not imply a replacement for the sharing of knowledge informally within the home and community, but more so a complementary supplement to what already exists within a child's immediate home/community environment. A more thorough examination of dominant Western-assumptions to ECE is presented in Chapter 5, as reviewed and applied to the SI context.

## **2.4 ECE in the Developing World**

“Lingering effects of colonialism, now in the guise of globalization,” largely disregard the potential of ECE contributions from the Majority World (90% outside Euro-America) (Super and Harkness 2008:108). This typically results in world dominance of Western-oriented ECE interventions, based on Minority World research and lacking understandings of cultural diversity. Consequently, the developing world has increasingly seen the establishment of ECE programs, generally modeled off the West as explored in the previous section. This development has most frequently been based on growing awareness of the importance of early life experiences, particularly in preparation for formal education, in addition to increasing demands for child care due to changes in family structures (e.g. more women entering labor market, HIV/AIDS

pandemic, armed conflict, etc.). In light of these challenges, this section will further explore rationales for ECE in the developing world and how different contexts have achieved implementation of such programs.

#### *2.4.1 Investing in ECE*

##### *Rationale*

Early childhood cognitive and social-emotional development have been linked to education attainment; however, most developing countries do not have national statistics on these developmental areas, which contributes to the invisibility of this problem in development efforts (Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007). A combination of education opportunities and family characteristics leave approximately 99 million primary school age children in developing countries not enrolled in school; furthermore, only an estimated 78 percent of those enrolled complete primary school, which is often far below par with educational systems of more developed countries (UNESCO 2005:69). To tackle problems of future school achievement and enrollment, lost developmental potential in the early years must be addressed.

An expanding body of research supports the international development of ECE initiatives, based on evidence that early experiences have a great impact on young children's brain development and long-term implications for their health, education, and well-being (McCain and Mustard 1999, Vimpani 2004, Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007). Research findings indicate that when communities have access to early care and parenting programs, children are better prepared for school (Vimpani 2004, Engle et al. 2007). Based on the skills learned in ECE programs, which some deem an essential foundation to all further learning (Kay 2005), such enrollment has been correlated with a

higher ratio of primary school completion and a lower primary dropout rate, in African countries (UNESCO 2007).

### *Added Value*

Few studies have examined cognitive outcomes and school readiness of ECE programs in the developing world (Moore, Akhter, and Aboud 2008). A few prominent examples of preschool attendance benefiting the developmental outcomes of children from economically deprived backgrounds have been conducted in Bangladesh (Aboud 2006) and four East Africa countries (Mwaura, Sylva, and Malmberg 2008). Likewise, the Turkish Early Enrichment Project has shown that children enrolled in preschool performed better on cognitive measures, in addition to also performing better when mothers received weekly support on literacy stimulation (Kagitcibasi, Sunar, and Bekman 2001). Positive correlations between ECE and primary school academic achievement were also found in Western Province,<sup>12</sup> SI. Guild (2000) found that students who attended a Preparatory class performed better in specific skill areas in both reading comprehension and mathematical concepts and applications. Notably, higher performances/achievements were related to “high quality” Preparatory classes, which contained a large variety of age-appropriate resources and trained teachers. Moreover, she found that the number of years ECE (Preparatory) attendance was not correlated with children’s comprehensive exam performance.

Internationally, multifaceted approaches (i.e. comprehensive programs including health and nutrition, education and development, and family/community support and education), in particular, appear to be the most effective (Myers 1992; Berlin, Brooks-

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<sup>12</sup> Notably, Western Province is one of the most developed of SI provinces in terms of infrastructure, economics, and education.

Gunn, and Aber 2001). A number of longitudinal studies on the benefits of such integrated interventions for young children's early experiences, adult life productivity, and benefits to families/communities have been conducted in the developed world and are echoed in more limited studies from the developing world (Barnett and Hustedt 2005, Rao 2005, Izu 2006, Schweinhart 2006, Herrod 2007). Interest in family and community inclusive interventions has been spurred by evidence that early interventions solely focusing on children have time-limited impacts (Zeitlin, Megawangi, Kramer, Colletta, Babatunde, and Garman 1995, Engle et al. 2007). Moreover, the family exists in a wider environment that must be taken into account if children are to thrive: the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of the community and nation (Bronfenbrenner 1979, Evans 1997). Despite increasing knowledge of the importance of context-sensitivity, ECE policy and practice have typically been informed by child development research, largely from the USA and UK, based on children's acquisition of the self and ability for social perspective-taking (Woodhead 2005); yet, these perspectives are not universal.

Furthermore, the effects of ECE programs are likely to be lessened when conducted in isolation due to the limited time children spend in such environments in comparison to time spent in other settings influencing their lives. Therefore, by extending programs to reach out to families and communities, there is a greater potential of altering the wider context involved in the development of children. Achieving "spill-over effects," such as by working with parents, broadens the effects of a program, and ultimately makes them more cost effective. For example, such is the case in benefiting other children, where often families can only afford to send some children to ECE programs. Furthermore, programs that build awareness and interest in children's educational development have

been associated with positive affects on children's future school performance (Young 1996). Kirpal (2002:293-294) writes,

[I]f programs are meant to have a lasting effect on changing and improving the condition of children and society, they must be culturally sustainable and respond to local needs and demands. Only if local communities are involved in programs and take ownership of them will ECD [early childhood development] programs persist and continue to have the same positive effects when outside donors cease their funding.

Not only is this a significant contribution to program sustainability, it is in keeping with international mandates [i.e. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*]:

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.

(United Nations 1989:3)

### *Community-Based ECE*

Despite increasing international awareness of ECE programs, in many developing world contexts in particular, substantial state support continues to be lacking, thus leading to the establishment of *community-based* programming by parents and other community members. This is not to imply that community-based programs are of a lesser standard than those created by governments. Creating community ECE initiatives can decentralize national governments' power and potentially improve the quality of such interventions. Reinikka and Svensson (2004) looked at the effects of empowering community schools in Uganda. Findings revealed that the percentage of funds from the central government that actually reached schools rose from 20 percent in 1995 to 80 percent in 2001 (Glewwe and Kremer 2006:46). This was correlated with better monitoring of local officials by the community and better dispersion of information.

Jimenez and Sawanda (1999:415) note,

Centralized structure may work best for regulating and administering large systems uniformly, but it may also be ineffective when school needs differ widely across communities and when there are diseconomies of scale.

Locally managed programs can be found worldwide, but it is important to draw a distinction between such programs. Some have been created out of national policies and others arose when communities felt the need to initiate programs themselves due to insufficiencies on their governments' behalf: developed countries often fall under the former and developing countries the latter (de Grauwe 2005).

In addition to locally developed ECE programs, caregiver involvement has also been found to be significantly influential to ECE. Whether it is by parents or other community members, caregiving affects cognitive and social-emotional competence in the child by cognitive stimulation, caregiver sensitivity and responsiveness to the child, and caregiver affect (emotional warmth or rejection of the child) (Gorman and Pollitt 1992). These factors are affected by contextual issues, such as cultural values/practices, poverty, and exposure to violence (Wachs 2000). In a review of studies in the developing world, only 10 to 41 percent of caregivers were found to provide their children with adequate cognitively stimulating activities (Walker et al. 2007:153). Research has reported that when these children at developmental risk are exposed to cognitive stimulation, or learning opportunities, they have significantly higher cognitive and social-emotional functioning with long lasting effects (Magwaza and Edwards 1991; Kagitcibasi, Sunar, and Bekman 2001). Poor family and community support can exacerbate poor enrollment rates and academic achievements in developing countries, due to a lack of understanding of the benefits of education, often because of differing cultural and social perceptions (UNESCO 2007). However, combining interventions to support the family with support to children has been shown to result in the most positive and long lasting, sustainable benefits of ECE programs (Moran 2003). In addition, parental involvement in ECE initiatives has been shown to decrease their feelings of

disempowerment and inadequacy (WHO 2004). Simultaneously, it can increase effectiveness of programs, since arguably community members are most aware of their children's basic needs, abilities, and incentives to monitor outside care providers (Glewwe and Kremer 2006). Despite benefits to family and community involvement, many people may still be unable to sacrifice other obligations in order to actively be involved in these interventions. Community members also may not have the knowledge, opportunities, or desire to effectively contribute to such efforts. As explored below, cultural differences and practicality barriers need to be recognized and addressed to determine the realistic extent, and supports necessary, of community involvement in each specific context.

### *Persistent Obstacles*

While many cultural traditions are embedded with the belief that attention and care are necessary during the early years, some people remain skeptical about investing in programs specifically for young children. This skepticism often lies in a lack of understanding of this type of investment, in comparison to projects with short-term observable outcomes; a belief that children receive sufficient care from their families; a view that mothers are responsible for their own children; misunderstandings of significant research evidence; and an inability to see the full rate of return (Myers 1992). In contrast, much international evidence has amassed with various arguments supporting early childhood development and education interventions, from human rights to economic benefits and social equity. However, without “high quality” interventions that are empowering, by accounting for cultural, familial, and contextual differences, and not debilitating by causing long-term dependencies, this can be greatly jeopardized (Gray and McCormick 2005).

Most prominent in persistent obstacles facing the international development of ECE are frequent contrasts in program objectives between those designing ECE interventions and those at the grassroots level implementing them. Consequently, these become barriers to program success due to unshared visions between stakeholders. For example, Kholowa and Rose (2007) found that national policies in Malawi, which were closely linked with international agendas, focused on holistic early childhood development (ECD) approaches; yet, parents viewed pre-schooling in a narrower way as preparation for primary school. Contrary to the popular view of looking at this discrepancy as a parental misunderstanding, they argue that parental understandings actually show greater awareness of local realities and thus more directly relate to efforts to escape from poverty (ibid). Extending this review of ECE in the developing world, the following section refines this to the Pacific regional context.

## **2.5 ECE in Pacific Small States**

Indigenous groups around the world are increasingly, in recent decades, aspiring to ensure the maintenance and/or reinvigoration of their unique values, beliefs, and cultural practices, while also not neglecting the capacity of their peoples to successfully engage in the dominant society (Armstrong, Kennedy, and Oberle 1990; LeRoux 1999; Battiste 2000; Smith, Burke, and Ward 2000; Pence and Ball 2006). Accordingly, the uncritical international transfer of universal “developmentally appropriate practices” is empirically unfounded and inappropriate in taking predominantly middle-class Euro-American methods, practices, and objectives to be directly applied in dissimilar contexts, as has been widely argued (Swadener and Kessler 1991; Moss and Pence 1994; Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999; Penn 1997, 2005). Culturally and contextually diverse groups are highly capable of developing programs and practices more congruent with local

values than alternative international transfers (Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989; Lamb, Sternberg, Hwang, and Broberg 1992; Derman-Sparks and Phillips 1997; Chang, Muckelroy, Pulido-Tobiassen, and Dowell 2000; Gonzalez-Mena 2001; Rogoff 2003; Rosenthal 2003).

### *2.5.1 Epistemic Foundations to Pacific ECE*

Turning to the Pacific small island context, this section will explore local epistemic<sup>13</sup> foundations to education and learning. Numerous studies conducted in the South Pacific (Richardson, Landbeck, and Mugler 1995; Mugler and Landback 1997; Phan and Deo 2007; Phan 2008) have suggested that students' approaches to learning/acquiring skills, the nature of knowledge, and beliefs of what knowledge should entail are grounded contextually, culturally, and socially. This is inline with previous research (McCaslin and Hickey 2001, McInerney 2004, Summers 2006) suggesting that learning, motivation, and one's identity are tied to students' sociocultural backgrounds. There is a belief that personal epistemology and approaches to learning are deeply rooted in individuals' sociocultural and familial environments (Ninnes 1991; Nabobo-Baba 2006; Phan 2007, 2008). Within the Pacific in particular, the unique cultural and societal values create a regional ethos of local ideologies and philosophies, which have been suggested to shape the perceptions and epistemologies of teaching and learning processes (Phan 2007, 2010). Unique to this region are indigenous societal values, which often accentuate the significance of tradition and informal approaches to learning (Puamau 2002, Taufe'ulungaki 2002, Thaman 1999). Yet, this is not to say that culture's influence on learning and knowledge is static or a direct product. There are multiple intertwined cultures, as Mugler and Landbeck (1997) assert with regard to Indo-Fijian and Tongan

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<sup>13</sup> Epistemology is used here to refer to the nature of knowledge and nature/process of knowing (Hofer 2001, Nist and Holschuh 2005).

cultures, from an institutional culture within schools, to a rural/urban home culture, to the culture of remote small islands.

Despite the variety of different cultural influences, geographically, the nature of Pacific islands provides a large buffer to local cultures, in their remote isolation, which assists in the maintenance of traditional beliefs and values for the nature of knowledge and how this is achieved (i.e. local epistemology). Yet, with the growing influence of globalization and a cash-based economy, which gives rise to greater significance placed on formal education as precursor to paid employment, there are rapid changes occurring in Pacific societies. These are most notably altering fundamental values, thus creating a dichotomy of epistemological beliefs, of the regional society (Chapter 5). This is particularly evident in higher education, and research focused on such, where scholars working in the South Pacific (e.g. Mugler and Landbeck 1997; Nabobo-Baba 2006; Phan 2007, 2010) have argued that,

...the ongoing social and economical development, are encouraging and nurturing individuals to view education in a favorable light as this brings forth good prospect....[P]arental expectation and the competitiveness [sic] of societies at large inculcate to individuals from an earlier age to do whatever it takes to succeed academically...[leading to] students in general resort[ing] to specific learning styles that are conducive specifically to producing good academic performance grades.  
(Phan 2008:802)

The more extensive work on higher education in the Pacific, in contrast to ECE, provides an interesting example of how the Western culture of formal academic achievement can produce local emphases on performance-based outcomes, arguably perpetuating an ongoing cycle of non-reflective practice and indoctrination (Phan 2007). While it is recognized that there are fundamental differences between higher education and ECE environments, including approaches to learning and objectives for the populations served, arguably important inferences may be drawn. Take for example the “academicization” of ECE in the Western world through a downward movement of

primary school education into the early childhood environment. This is similar to how higher education has taken on a race-paced approach to gaining knowledge and qualifications necessary to compete in the globalized world. Based on these foundations to education in the Pacific, the following subsection hones in on Pacific ECE.

### *2.5.2 Pacific ECE*

Knowledge of early childhood programs (i.e. programs for children age 0-8, including preparatory, preschools, and kindergartens) in the South Pacific remained predominantly obscured until August 1980 when the first regional workshop of early childhood educators from thirteen small island nations, Australia, and New Zealand (NZ) was held in Fiji.<sup>14</sup> At that time, records showed that 12,000 children were enrolled in approximately 500 ECE programs, one-third of which were located in urban centers (Toganivalu 2007:21). Prior to this, records show the first ECE programs to have originated with Fijian kindergartens in the 1930s, while accounts of ECE programs more widely existing in the Pacific were documented since the 1960s (ibid). These early programs were predominantly influenced by, and modeled off of, early education programs developed by expatriates for their own children. Notably, of the original ECE programs circa 1980, most countries' programs catered for 3-5 year olds. This was with the exceptions of the SI and Papua New Guinea (PNG) whose ECE programs were for children aged 3-7/8 (i.e. the age of primary school entry). Furthermore, with the exceptions of the Cook Islands and Nauru (where ECE classes were included in the formal education system) and Micronesia (where USA federal grants funded Head Start programs), these ECE programs were largely supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions, and local communities.

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<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, it was another 24 years before another such gathering was held in 2005 in Fiji, followed by a third in 2007 in the SI.

During the 1980 regional ECE workshop, emphasis was placed on local cultures, values, and traditions, despite an undeniable remaining heavy influence from the expatriate origins of these programs. The legacy of this Western-traditional ECE approach dilemma has persisted throughout the past three decades of Pacific regionally recognized ECE development. As such, programs remain largely influenced by theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, and Montessori, and research from the USA, UK, and NZ. This includes ECE standards, organization, scheduling, and facilities, as modeled after Western-counterparts. However, complementary to this, regional values of widespread significance have increasingly become embedded within these programs, including the significance of religion (Christianity), respect for elders, and use of vernaculars (with the exception of English songs/rhymes). While the latter of these is true within Polynesia and Micronesia where vernaculars have been widely used in children's centers, within Melanesia (PNG, SI, Fiji, and Vanuatu) English has played a more significant role due to the wide-ranging languages spoken in these nations. The following subsection more specifically focuses on SI ECE.

### *2.5.3 Early Learning in SI*

Taking the broader Pacific epistemic discussion from subsection 2.5.1 to the SI context, Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1986a, b; Gegeo 1998, 2001) have extensively contributed to this knowledge base. They have particularly added a great deal to the understanding of children's language socialization amongst the Kwara'ae people of Malaita Province. Based on extensive discourse analysis, they studied education in Malaita in the late 80s / early 90s, looking at the nature, meaning, and transmission of knowledge in both traditional education and national schooling, as imposed by Westerners, and schooling's influence on social change (Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo 1986a, b). One finding revealed

that the Kwara'ae consider a “complete” person to be one that is “knowledgeable and wise, able to reflect on and articulate what he or she knows, and to reason ‘straight,’ that is, systematically and logically” (Watson-Gegeo 1992:12). This ability to “think straight” is believed to lead to correct behavior: ethical, socially appropriate, and sensible (Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo 1990). This significantly contrasts cognitive foci and objectives that are often featured in Western ECE. Accordingly, what follows is a review of educational literature specific to SI.

With the exception of Guild’s (2000) SI ECE study mentioned above (of the relationship between ECE and primary school academic achievement), other prominent SI education research has relevant elements to the present study but has not directly addressed the cultural aspects of community-based ECE in Kahua/MUP. Thomas (1985) conducted a study from the perspective of an officer in the SI Ministry of Education, thus tending to have an educational administration orientation, between culture and curriculum in SI secondary schools. Later, Ninnes (1991, 1995) made the first attempt to analyze the relationship between culture and traditional education in informal learning contexts, from an educational anthropological perspective, amongst rural children in Western Province. His study is notable in its attempt to recognize limitations in being conducted by a non-indigenous researcher. Although Ninnes (1995:15) claims to have “profound, albeit intuitive understanding” of substantive aspects of the research, he recognizes that it would be inappropriate to direct recommendations at Melanesians. Instead, Ninnes appeals to non-Western teachers in general to reflect on their own informal learning contexts in relation to formal schools.

Most recently, a wealth of information has come from indigenous Pacific scholars associated with the PRIDE project (Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education – including preschool through secondary school and vocational training). Their work has been conceptualized through a metaphor for rethinking education in the Pacific as the “Tree of Opportunity,” which is rooted in local cultures:

The Tree of Opportunity encapsulates the new vision of Pacific education based on the assumption that the main purpose of education in the Pacific is the survival, transformation, and sustainability of Pacific peoples and societies, with its outcomes measured in terms of performance and appropriate behavior in the multiple contexts in which they have to live. The primary goal of education, therefore, is to ensure that all Pacific students are successful and that they all become fully participating members of their groups, societies, and the global community.  
(Pene, Taufe’ulungaki, and Benson 2002:3)

Taufe’ulungaki (2002:15) writes that this has not yet been achievable, attributing the “failure of education in the Pacific” largely to “the imposition of an alien system designed for western social and cultural contexts, which are underpinned by quite different values.” In response to this from within Pacific nations, increasingly over the decades, a shift has been occurring in moving away from narrowly viewing education in Western quantitative terms, such as outcomes in educational achievement of students, to be more inclusive of Pacific ideologies as the underpinning of education systems. To exemplify this, at the 2001 “Rethinking Education Colloquium” in Fiji, the time had arisen for a new approach to be taken. This was based on the premise that despite three decades of government and donor support for education development, national goals were not being achieved.

Therefore, at this regional conference, emphasized was the need for all stakeholders to work towards better aid relationships through understanding each other’s needs, expectations, and perspectives.

Sanga (2003:48) summarizes the general patterns of aid relationships in the Pacific:

Decades of donor-recipient interactions have not resulted in greater autonomy, strengthened capacities, sustained policy communities, and leadership by and for the PICs [Pacific Island Countries]. Instead, donors have continued to control education agendas, overloaded local institutions with aid activities, and preoccupied limited resources with imposed frameworks and value systems. The effects of these on the PICs have been disappointing. In short, PICs have become entangled in aid relationships that, for them, are second-rate and hopeless.

Puamau (2005:16) further identifies the root challenge facing the development of education in the Pacific, which she terms the “ownership principle”:

The wholehearted acceptance of Christianity has enabled it to permeate the lived reality of many Pacific societies. People have taken ownership of it, internalizing its values and principles. On the other hand, formal schooling is still viewed as foreign, abstract, meaningless, and irrelevant by many people. Because the culture of schooling generally is not synchronous with the culture of the students, high failure rates and underachievement are the norm for many Pacific Islanders. Indigenous communities have successfully integrated Christianity into their cultural practices, yet view schooling to be outside their ambit of control and something difficult to understand.

While it is widely recognized that most Pacific Islanders have a close affinity to Christianity, custom lands, nature, community/village, and family (wantoks or kinships), arguably, Puamau (2005) appears to underestimate the knowledge Pacific people do possess, particularly with regard to formal education. She argues that since all Pacific constitutions were founded on Christian values and principles, that therefore these should underpin present education systems. This poses quite an interesting dilemma, due to the fact that she emphasizes Pacific Islanders’ rejection of colonial legacies, yet evangelization missions of Christianity arrived at the same time as colonizers, and arguably reinforced the colonization process. Markedly, formal education was principally introduced in the region beginning with missionaries. However, these two different social forces, colonizers and missionaries, provide a fascinating dichotomy with their dissimilar legacies still evident to this day, based on the extent to which external ideas were integrated and internalized by the Pacific peoples. In contrast to how Puamau emphasizes the church’s acceptance into Pacific culture, she references Williams’ (1976:204) contention that education deeply saturates “the consciousness of a society” and thus unquestionably becomes desirable. This would suggest that both Christianity

and education have been internalized into Pacific comprehensions. Therefore, perhaps the better question for debate is that of whose education ideologies garner the majority of Pacific Islander values and beliefs, which within themselves are so diverse, and thus are acceptable to inform Pacific education systems. And furthermore, one must question whether parents who desire education for their children based on Western values, such as emphasizing competition and a few prominent academic areas, are less acceptable than more culturally relevant approaches that are more inclusive of cultural histories, beliefs, values, etc.

Just as it took decades for Western education systems to evolve to what they are today (and are continually evolving), perhaps expectations within the developing world for equitable education systems in such short periods of time are unachievable. However, based on the increasing internal emphasis of culturally-relevant education in the Pacific region (Sikua 1999; Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, and Benson 2002; Thaman 2002; Puamau 2006), the prospect of Western models of education prospering there will not be further explored in this thesis. Instead, development of more culturally and contextually sensitive education systems will be the focus, as is congruent with Pacific regional trends. This is particularly true with regard to the direction SI ECE is progressing, as it is often viewed as the linking transition from home to formal education, and thus has historically emphasized the incorporation of traditional beliefs and practices in the classroom. Based on these evolving cultural and societal education beliefs and objectives, the final section of this literature review will now explore the concept of sustainability, as related to community-based ECE programs.

## **2.6 ECE Program Sustainability**

Despite recent growth in the literature pertaining to sustainability and ECE, much of this has predominantly focused on the sustainable effects of programs on children, emphasizing the significance of program duration and age of commencement (e.g. Kay 2005, Tolbert and Theobald 2006). However, there remains a paucity of literature about the sustainability of community-based ECE programs that goes beyond merely stating the significance of context and culture to development. Nevertheless, from this limited literature, community involvement has been shown to improve childhood outcomes as communities increase their commitment to early childhood centers, which has been correlated with increases in their ECE awareness (e.g. Ball 2004; Nsamenang 2006; Dixon, Widdowson, Meagher-Lundberg, Airini, and McMurchy-Pilkington 2007). Indications have shown that in order to empower parents and communities, thereby increasing their knowledge and skills to take responsibility for community-based early childhood programs, direct inclusion is necessary (de Witt 2008).

Ownership can be enhanced by addressing the individuality or uniqueness of each community. Communities should be alerted that the quality of provisioning by centers should be the focus and not the mere fact that they do exist in the communities.

(ibid:12)

Also identified has been the necessity of making parents aware of their required ongoing contributions to ECE programs to maintain facilities. Before exploring these ECE issues further, below is a review of the concept of sustainability.

### *2.6.1 Sustainability*

The concept of “sustainability” and/or “sustainable development,” prominently arose in the international spotlight at the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987): “the Brundtland Commission.” Subsequently, according to the World Bank, sustainable development has been defined as being comprised of three

components, which cumulatively are necessary to stimulate sustained development

(United Nations 1997:171):

1. Economic objectives – growth, equity, and efficiency;
2. Social objectives – empowerment, participation, social mobility, social cohesion, cultural identity, and institutional development; and
3. Ecological objectives – ecosystem integrity, carrying capacity, biodiversity, and protection of global commons.

Arguably, fundamental to all of these is *natural capital*, which forms the foundation for analytical work regarding sustainability. Throsby (2005:4) defines this, in accordance with the WCED (1987), as “the management of natural resources in a way that provides for the needs of the present generation without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs.”

While often the concept of sustainability is confined to definitions in ecological and financial terms, it can be extended to the concept of *culture*. “Culture plays a central role in sustainable development in order to ensure the survival of traditional knowledge as well as to build upon the knowledge and experience possessed by indigenous groups” (Vargas 2000:13, Davis and Ebbe 1993). With regard to indigenous community-based programs, while the process of development in general is associated with capacity building, sustainable community development “means building the capacity of people to work collectively in addressing their common interests in the local society within the context of sustainability.” (Maser 1996:174). Craig (1998:15) defines what community development strives for as,

...to give ordinary people a voice for expressing and acting on their extraordinary needs and desires in opposition to the vested interests of global economic and political power, to counter the increasing commodification of human welfare and human beings themselves.

At the essence of program development is sustainability, particularly once external supporting bodies withdraw their assistance and local communities assume responsibility

for ownership of their own programs. This requires accounting for many practical elements and obstacles in development. To address these issues, the paradigm of “sustainable science” (Kates et al. 2001) has arisen. Sustainable science recognizes that to achieve sustainable practices, the program/model must “encompass different magnitudes of scale (of time, space, and function), multiple balances (dynamics), multiple actors (interests), and multiple failures (systemic faults, including economic, social, or institutional in nature)” all in addition to the different types of knowledge creation (epistemology) between science, practice, and politics (Martens 2006:36). Essentially, sustainable science calls for the integration of scientific, practical, and varying perspectives (i.e. Majority/Minority world) in knowledge across the entire spectrum of sciences from natural to economic to social. Martens (ibid:38) states that this can be represented as “co-evolution, co-production, and co-learning,” which thus requires shifts in research and development initiatives implementing more heuristic instruments: moving to more demand-driven, participatory, subjective, and exploratory approaches.

While traditionally, sustainability has been conceptualized at global and national levels, increasingly it has been applied to community levels, thereby raising the significance of the cultural component to program sustainability. Hawkes (2001) claims that cultural vitality is the fourth pillar of sustainable community development, which is interlinked with environmental responsibility, economic health, and social equity. Within this cultural pillar, which embodies the foundational values of a society upon which everything else is built, Hawkes (ibid) emphasizes its role in fostering partnerships, exchanges, and respect between different levels of stakeholders. Applying this cultural notion of sustainable development to the Pacific Islands context, Thaman (2002) claims

that sustainability must be rooted in local cultures, languages, and values, which provide understanding for past, present, and future development. “Pacific cultural values such as trust, reciprocity, creativity, restraint, compassion, and their interdependence with their island environment are among those that are intrinsic to both culture and sustainable development...” (ibid:135). However, as is evident in the Pacific, as well as globally in developing world contexts, culture is often not central to educational initiatives, which poses a significant challenge as a cultural gap to sustainable program development. This calls for further exploration of culture as rooted in the family and community.

While not directly transferable, research from around the world, citing the short- and long-term potential benefits of early childhood programs for children and families (Section 2.4.1), suggests that increased participation in these programs could be a significant development investment in a nation’s future. A related body of evidence highlights the contribution of such benefits to *social capital*. The following section will briefly explore this, before returning more specifically to practical elements of ECE program sustainability.

### 2.6.2 *Social Capital*

The theoretical construct of social capital is complex and has been widely debated (Coleman 1988, Foley and Edwards 1999, Gamarnikov and Green 1999); and therefore, it is beyond the scope of thorough review in this thesis. Nevertheless, reference to it is of significance for understanding community-based program sustainability mediating factors. Definitions of social capital range from Bourdieu’s (1986, 1993) interrelated forms of capital (i.e. social, cultural, economic, and symbolic); to Putnam’s (1993, 2000) social and community networks based on reciprocity, cooperation, and mutual trust; and

Goddard's (2003) view of it as individual and collective resources providing personal and communal benefits. However, since this concept is not a theoretical focus of the study, a simplification of Coleman's (1988) definition of social capital was adopted. He refers to the quality of communities' resources and social networks, including availability of information, locals' obligations and expectations, and social norms and sanctions. Based on these elements of social relations and networks in communities, research on education has demonstrated that social relationships and networks comprised of trust and reciprocity relate to communities with significantly higher levels of social capital (e.g. Fegan and Bowes 1999; Jack and Jordan 1999; Farrell, Tayler, and Tennent 2003).

Individual outcomes, such as educational attainment, have clearly been correlated with social capital; yet, currently, there is limited evidence of the role of social capital (individual level and community level) enhancing child outcomes (Janssens, Van der Gaag, and Gunning 2004). However, community participation in preschool and primary schools has been correlated with social capital (Farrell, Tayler, and Tennent 2004; Tennent, Farrell, and Tayler 2005). In a Latin America multi-country study, parental involvement in schools was shown to benefit all children, regardless of if one's own parents were involved (Willms and Somers 2001). A World Bank study of 23 large education projects supports this finding by providing additional evidence of educational benefits being improved through community participation (Uemura 1999).

Notably, references here to social capital are not inclusive of the educational outcome literature (Ainsworth 2002), but instead merely consider the components conducive to supporting community projects. These have been correlated with "dense and complex

social relationships, helpful information networks, clear-cut norms, and perceptions of sustainability” (Tennent, Farrell, and Tayler 2005:2). Contrastingly, communities lacking strong social capital can be characterized by ethnic heterogeneity, low income, residential mobility, and as being socially disorganized (Sampson 1991), along with associated deviant behaviors such as fostering crime and delinquency. Recognizably, these variables merely provide an overview, with limited relevance to certain contexts internationally; yet, they will be explored with greater cultural and contextual relevance as applied throughout this thesis and in the following section as related to ECE program sustainability.

### *2.6.3 Community-Based ECE Sustainability*

Building on elements of community social capital, in widely reviewing gray literature on an international range of ECE programs,<sup>15</sup> characteristics identified as facilitative of strong community-based programs included: child-centered approach, parental involvement, family/community support, community ownership-taking, financial sustainability, integration within a broader development framework, public-private partnerships, and staff capacity building (e.g. Myers 1992, 2001; Kirpal 2002; Rao and Sun 2010). Although cultural-relevance is often raised as an issue of significance to these ECE programs, rigorous analysis is rarely conducted to extend understanding of its role in sustainability beyond that of a challenging and/or prohibitive factor. Due to the nature of such programs, and either being un-researched or solely examined by those with a stake in the program, this has resulted in a paucity of peer-reviewed literature on such community-based initiatives in the developing world. Aside from limited, often

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<sup>15</sup> Integrated Child Development Services in India; Nutrition and Early Childhood Development Project in Uganda; Proyecto Integral de Desarrollo Infantil in Bolivia; Early Childhood Development Program in the Philippines; Wawa Wasi in Peru; Integrated Nutrition Project in Bangladesh; Montessori Preschool Project in Haiti; Mother-Child Day Care Center Services in Uganda; SERVOL (Service Volunteered for All) in Trinidad and Tobago; Madrasa Resource Centers (supported by the Aga Khan Foundation) in Kenya, Uganda, and Zanzibar; Improving Pre- and Primary Education in Pakistan; and the Step by Step ECE reform in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, Haiti, and South Africa.

biased, gray literature by funding bodies, particular gaps in rigorous scholarly work include studies on community-based education programs for the early years, directly exploring sustainability (with a particular emphasis on culture), ownership, and social accountability (i.e. support).

Broadening the view of sustainability elements to more wide-ranging community-based programs, Mancini and Marek's (2004) comprehensive review of the literature, and development of a conceptual model for evaluating community-based program sustainability, highlights seven key elements: leadership competence, effective collaboration, understanding the community, demonstrating program results, strategic funding, staff involvement and integration, and program responsiveness. These seven elements provide a holistic overview of common sustainability features reflected widely throughout community-based program literature (Dahl-Ostergaard, Moore, Ramirez, Wenner, and Bonde 2003; Johnson, Hays, Center, and Daley 2004; Ball 2006). Notably, these individual sustainability elements will not be further elaborated on in this review due to the cultural and contextual sustainability focus of this thesis, as will be illuminated throughout the following chapters.

Despite limited ECE sustainability research directly applicable to this thesis, a few notable examples provide much insight to this research. For example, from de Witt's (2008:2) work on a training intervention for strengthening early childhood centers to run more as businesses in ten South African communities, she asserts, "[C]ommunity-based centers will *automatically involve* the parent community and hopefully assure *sustainable* programs" (emphasis added). Notably, she does suggest that usually community members will need empowerment to fulfill obligations of maintaining such

programs. However, such an assertion is dispelled when examining the current situation of community-based kindergartens in SI. Although these SI programs were initially community established and run, many have not maintained community involvement, thus resulting in unsustainable centers falling into disrepair and closure (Burton 2008).<sup>16</sup> Yet, further critiquing de Witt's (2008) assertion, one must question whether the purpose of a community-based program is primarily about parent *community involvement*, without regard to program *quality* and *standards*.

Another enlightening study, although somewhat dated yet significantly congruent to the current state of ECE program development in SI (Kahua region), is Swadener, Kabiru, and Njenga's (1997) research in Africa. Through the use of a collaborative micro-ethnographic study, they explored emerging community-based ECCE in Kenya amidst rapid social and economic change in child-rearing and issues of community mobilization. The study reveals a dramatically similar situation in the late '90s to what the SI people are experiencing today: despite rapid socioeconomic changes, through "harambee" (literally meaning "pulling together"), local *communities* are able to meet ever-changing ECE needs. This first half of their study explored similar questions, and revealed similar findings, to Burton's 2008 pilot research in Kahua, regarding changing local perceptions and realities of child-rearing and ECE. However, their study also examined ways in which traditional support systems contributed to effective child-rearing and care, as well as how to support and enhance these systems. Ultimately, Swadener et al. (ibid) suggest that programs must be based on locally derived perspectives of child-centered Africanity. However, they offer little insight into community collaboration supporting ECE, aside from emphasizing their own collaborative research efforts, merely revealing a mixed and

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<sup>16</sup> Findings on Kahua kindergartens' sustainability were collected as an aside to the main objectives of Burton's 2008 pilot study. This data was collected unsystematically and therefore does not claim to provide a full account of the current situation in Kahua.

at times contradictory view of it ‘taking a village to raise a child.’ Markedly, Nyanzi, Bah, Joof, and Walraven (2007) also conducted an ethnographic study on Gambian traditional birth attendants, implementing participatory methods to empower participants and make the research results more context-relevant. This emphasizes the importance of culture in designing methodological appropriateness for studying a particular sociocultural context, let alone sustainability in context (Chapter 3).

An additional highly relevant study to this research is Pence and Marfo’s (2008) work on early childhood development (ECD) in Africa, which interrogated constraints of prevailing knowledge bases. Critiquing the inappropriate international transfer of transnational agendas to support ECD in Africa, they identified the implementation of Minority World practices in the Majority World as symptomatic to program failure. This, they claim, was based on frameworks that lack understanding of the diversity of cultural contexts. Based on Canada’s *First Nations Partnerships Program* for ECE, which is the underpinning of the *Early Childhood Virtual University*,<sup>17</sup> Ball and Pence (2006:83) suggest,

By understanding that developmental theories and research are shaped by value systems, philosophical mindsets, and historical circumstances within specific cultures, students are more likely to appreciate the urgency of understanding and framing African child development within the context of local knowledge, values, traditions, and practices.

To explore this idea, Pence and Marfo (2008) present a case study of war-affected children in Eritrea to demonstrate the power of indigenous preventions and interventions to support resilience, contrasted by a Ugandan counterexample regarding a rights awareness campaign for children. However, the latter of these had detrimental effects due to not consulting with adult community members; and thus, this disregard for context sensitivity thereby resulted in undermining parents’ authority and instigating

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<sup>17</sup> A web-based graduate ECD program to prepare community members to work in local Sub-Saharan Africa contexts.

children's rebellious behaviors (Jagwe 2007). Ultimately, it is argued here that until Majority World developmental inquiry and scholarship are acknowledged as of value, such work will continue to be done futilely, and as such unsustainably, under the view that "knowledge" on child-rearing and values comes from the West.

Not only is culture a vital component to ECE programs in developing children's self-identity, it is also highly influential on the feasibility and replicability of often Western-based ECE programs. Due to the generally high program implementation costs of Western ECE programs for developing world contexts (notwithstanding the multitude of other dangers to such uncritical international transfers), community-based programs become essential alternatives to Western center-based models. These community-based approaches thereby rely heavily on parents for continued support, as opposed to ECE programs being viewed as an institutional replacement for parents. In practice, this often leads to tensions between these two diverse knowledge and value bases (i.e. indigenous and Western cultures) (Hwang, Lamb and Sigel 1996; Rao, Ng, and Pearson 2010). For example, Kenyan parents claim to "have been caught up in the web of cultural transition where there are no longer clearly defined values and moral codes of behavior that should be instilled in children and young people" (Cohen 2001:6). Nevertheless, this cultural hybridism of problems is highly significant to developing sustained programs, such as exemplified by Callaghan (1998:33): "[T]he future of the African child lies deep within the African family and the rich, strong, living, growing, sustaining African culture which is reflected" in Africans. While on the surface level, often ECE programs have been narrowly focused on particular aspects of education, it is essential to account for the wider cultural context. This can be seen in China's early childhood curriculum, which is a hybrid of traditional Chinese values of social mindedness and skill/subject mastery,

along side those of constructivist, child-centered Western ideas (Rao and Li 2008).

Likewise, New Zealand's bicultural Te Whariki (literally meaning "a mat for all to stand on," in Maori) ECE curriculum is internationally renowned for emphasizing the critical role social context plays in children's development within a country of diverse cultures.

## **2.7 Literature Review Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has reviewed the literature on ECE as is of relevance to studying young children's learning and program sustainability in SI. Puamau (2005:13) writes,

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.

Incongruences between Pacific Islander and Western-dominant service delivery beliefs and practices, particularly with regard to ECE, continue to oppress the development of SI education. This is occurring as a result of an uncritical international transfer of programs and agendas inconsistent with local cultural contexts' values and knowledge systems. Furthermore, "the systematic study of culture remains an unfinished business within mainstream North American-dominated developmental science" thereby leaving 90% of the world's children living outside Euro-Western Minority contexts unaccounted for in this ECE research, policy, and practice (Pence and Marfo 2008:80).

Based on research evidence as reviewed in this chapter, an essential element for establishing community-based ECE is an emphasis on community involvement. This includes matters of local ownership and sustainability: cultural, financial, social, and environmental. However, knowledge of how to effectively accomplish such elements has only recently begun to be explored (Kirpal 2002, Puamau 2005, Ball and Pence 2006). Further research is required to understand how ECE programs can be designed

and implemented to reach underserved, and the most vulnerable, children across wide-ranging contexts. This is necessary to better guide technical support and decision making from governments/NGOs/grassroots, strengthen the knowledge base on which to advocate for such interventions, and provide evidence to assist in the justification of such investments. Notably, providing low cost programs for children to monetarily poor, rural, and remote contexts is one element associated with the feasibility of increasing accessibility. However, two additional elements are of significant influence: 1) the highly researched notion of “high quality” programming, thus suggesting better cost-benefit ratios; and 2) the less often researched notion of cultural program sustainability if a program is to have a lasting effect in light of cultural practices and contextual restraints. Without local ownership and program sensitivity to local cultures and contexts, particularly once external funding or support is removed, then sustainability of “quality” programming is likely not to be successfully maintained. With the greatest paucity of research on the issue of culture and sustainability for ECE in the developing world, such forms the foundation of the remainder of this thesis. Throughout the subsequent chapters, elements of this literature review will be further explored and applied to the SI context to supplement understanding the study. Therefore, continued supplementary elements of this literature review are embedded in the following chapters, although these chapters are not exclusively “literature reviews” themselves: methodological theoretical literature (Chapter 3); historical foundations to education in SI, including development of SI ECE (Chapter 4); international diffusion of ECE practice and programs (Chapter 5); and program sustainability (Chapter 6). What follows in the presentation of this thesis’ research design, findings, and discussion are overt efforts to contextualize the study of ECE in SI. As such, this aims to illuminate understandings of potential challenges arising from the uncritical international transfers

of ECE ideas, thereby potentially affecting the sustainability of such community-based initiatives.

## CHAPTER 3: Methodology and Methods – Empirical Inquiry and Critical Consciousness-Raising

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the theoretical foundations of this study, how they influenced the design of a methodologically synergistic collaborative and ethnographically-inspired research approach, and subsequently how fieldwork methods were designed and implemented. It will then elucidate the importance of ethical measures taken throughout the research, particularly with their significance in studying “marginalized” groups of people. Lastly, it will present how all of this led to the data analysis design and iterative process. This chapter is not designed to raise groundbreaking methodological debate, but instead aspires to offer an argument to illuminate the significance of the methodologically integrated approach implemented in addressing the following research questions:

*Overarching research question:*

What factors have influenced the cultural and contextual sustainable development of Kahua community-based ECE?

*Supplementary research questions:*

2. What formal, nonformal, and informal microenvironments of early childhood learning are present in Kahua communities?  
*(For each microenvironment)*
  - a. Who are the *participants* involved?
  - b. What *method(s)*, *materials*, and *local kastoms* are involved?
  - c. What are the overt *beliefs* and underlying cultural *values and practices* about early childhood learning of those involved?
  - d. How are early learning experiences in these microenvironments used to convey local cultural values, beliefs, and practices?
2. How are Kahua community-based kindergartens influenced, and shaped, by local cultural approaches to early learning?
3. How do stakeholders’ beliefs in the nature of knowledge and learning in early childhood influence their involvement in community-based kindergartens, and thus ultimately program sustainability (whilst only feasible as a community-based endeavor)?

4. What community characteristics have affected the cultural and contextual sustainability of Kahua community-based kindergartens?
5. How have governmental and non-governmental initiatives influenced rural community-based kindergartens in Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP)?
6. How have historical developmental legacies, post-colonization, influenced the present development of ECE in SI?
7. How has the uncritical international transfer of Western-dominant ECE research, policy, and programming influenced Solomon Islands' (SI) ECE?

As mentioned in Chapter 2, historically educational developers, largely using positivist lenses, have focused on “cognition without context,” while educational anthropologists, largely using interpretivist lenses, have focused on “context without cognition” (Jacob and Phipps 1999). However, in this study, in contrast to the former group of those studying knowledge generation and use by focusing on scientific knowledge as social product (Kuhn 1970), a balance was sought between these groups, where knowledge has been viewed here as social justification of belief (Rorty 1979). Therefore, the approach implemented in this study placed strong emphasis on learning, as locally defined and transpires in the regional Kahua context and culture. Accordingly, an overarching *sociocultural-ecological* perspective formed the foundation of the study for understanding the social and cultural nature of human experiences in context, by accounting for the multidimensional nature of human development. Inevitably research and social world impact each other, thus making complete objectivity impossible. In light of this, great effort was taken in this study to cultivate an emic approach for understanding issues from participants' points of view and appreciate the cultural and social forces that may have influenced their outlooks. This will now be theoretically and practically explored throughout the chapter.

### 3.2 Theoretical Influences

To understand the specific methods implemented in this study, it is important to begin by exploring the researcher's epistemological and ontological beliefs, particularly as selected for working in the context of rural communities in a small developing nation, such as Kahua, Solomon Islands (SI).

#### 3.2.1 *Epistemological Orientation*

The researcher aligned herself with a *social-constructivist* perspective, based on the assumptions that:

- Knowledge is accumulated and is culturally and historically bound. Therefore, in the case of studying culture, culture refers to the meanings people maintain for their experiences. As such, it is identified as changing over time and place and thus not an objective entity emerging from “unbiased” observations.
- Knowledge generation is a social activity (i.e. origins, functions, forms, and applications) and not an individual cognitive construction (Geertz 1973, Gergen 1985). In this sense, knowledge is verifiable through consensus, within groups sharing lexicon forms, as opposed to constituting a universal reality (Graue and Walsh 1998). From this perspective, language and knowledge are proposed as constituting one another. As such, they are inseparable and unable to stand alone (Gergen 1985).

Therefore, in taking this perspective, it was essential that the methods implemented:

- Reflected an emphasis on culturally and contextually bound knowledge;
- Emphasized interactions with participants to form understandings through a sociocultural (dialogic) process, as opposed to independently by the researcher; and
- Recognized the importance of language in conducting methods and analyzing data.

#### 3.2.2 *Ontological Orientation*

Complementary to the researcher's social-constructivist epistemology, she aligned herself with *interpretive-hermeneutics*. From such an ontology, she strived to move

beyond research possible solely through unilateral communication to construct *knowledge* (e.g. interpreting meaning of a phenomena), to that of bilateral communication out of which *understanding* is possible. This is argued for by Heidegger and student Gadamer's (1972/89) philosophical hermeneutics (Holroyd 2008). The use of hyphenation in this perspective indicates the separate but related parts of a unified concept. For interpretive-hermeneuticists, the procedure for interpreting has been outshined by an emphasis on clarifying the conditions under which understanding occurs, in order to avoid science becoming subservient to methods ruling instead of liberating research (Gadamer 1972, Caputo 1987, van Manen 1997). Therefore, as an interpretive-hermeneuticist, the researcher accepted the rejection of achievement of certainty and pursuit of understanding: a capacity that arises out of human existence through experience and less so as a cognitive process (Heidegger 1962). Accordingly, she viewed understanding as based on contextual meaning from participants' perspectives, which arise through a dialogic structure of understanding (i.e. conversation: dialectical perspective) (Pearse 1983). Thus, according to Palmer (1977:215), as Gadamer claimed, the keys to understanding, as applied in this thesis, are not manipulation and control, but participation and openness, not knowledge but experience, not methodology but dialectic.

### 3.2.3 *Unification of Theoretical Influences*

Pearse (1983:161) states, "[M]eaning and meaningfulness are contextual (related to a perspective from which events are seen), and that the researcher's consciousness is relevant to the interpretation." Inductive procedures from the natural sciences cannot give rise to understanding experiences of the sociohistorical world, which negates the experiential fullness of human existence and how it is historically and culturally

informed, known, and understood (Gadamer 1972). In light of this, the theoretical roots of this study are interrelated in their approach to social research. This is based on elements of a social-constructivist belief in the social manner in which humans construct knowledge, as is linked with an interpretive-hermeneutic philosophical stance that emphasizes understanding arising out of contextual meaning and interaction/participation. These illuminations of the researcher's theoretical assumptions, guiding her methodological choices, progressively build upon one another in creating a unified approach (Crotty 1998):

→ Social-Constructivism (epistemology)

→ Interpretive-Hermeneutics (ontology)

→ Ethnographically-Inspired Collaborative Approach (methodology)

Furthermore, these are mutually compatible with the researcher's overarching theoretical foundation of a sociocultural-ecological perspective for understanding the research focus on ECE. From all of these perspectives, there is a strong unifying assumption about the social world as being co-constructed, context-bound, relational, and situated (Susman and Evered 1978). This is in recognition that human existence, as we know it, is fluid, contextual, and relational (Jardine 1990).

### **3.3 Identifying and Overcoming Methodological Stigmas**

#### *3.3.1 Methodological Stigmas*

Conventional, Western-based, approaches used to understand and support social and economic transformations in the developing world have failed to meet many development objectives. Arguably, this can be attributed to insufficiently accounting for indigenous epistemologies, ideologies, and development goals. Of particular contention in much research debate has been issues pertaining to culture and development, including sustainability, local participation, governance, civil society, and indigenous knowledge.

The concept of culture itself also continues to be critically examined, debated, and problematized, most notably within the field of anthropology (Fox and King 2002). The main driver of this change has been located in the advancement of participatory approaches to development (Chambers 1994a, 1998, 2007). This has largely been influenced by critical theory's confrontations of social, historical, and ideological forces that constrain culture. In response to this, a newer *applied anthropology* (Sillitoe 1998) has increasingly developed. This has emphasized adopting more bottom-up participatory approaches, thus placing greater focus on indigenous knowledge, collaborations with natives, and issues of intellectual property rights in ethnography with regard to the crisis of representation. As a result, this change in the conceptualization of anthropology/ethnography has now led to an increasing challenge of how to incorporate local knowledge in anthropological work. Additionally, this raises politically-oriented issues over increasingly democratized emancipatory research approaches (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001).

Within the developing world, and specifically the context of Pacific small island nations, use of terms such as *ethnographic* or *participatory* research have raised particular contention. In general, the former has largely evoked negative connotations within contexts of Pacific islands based on the long history of anthropologists' work there, challenged locally by perceptions of little benefit to participants. The latter has often been negatively perceived amongst research scholars as opposed to development organizations. However, there are growing trends in reaching a middle ground between these approaches, drawing on the strengths, and more importantly, identifying the weaknesses, of each (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1** Critiquing Participatory and Ethnographic Methodologies

| <b>Foremost Methodological Criticisms<sup>18</sup></b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                        | <u>Participatory</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <u>Ethnographic (Conventional)</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Critics                                                | Anthropologists proclaiming such approaches (most notably participatory rapid/rural appraisal [PRA]) have strived to obtain similar findings to ethnographies but in a “quick and dirty way.” (Kane 1995).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Often feminists, ethnic scholars, and postmodernists, proclaiming concerns over perspective and power.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Criticisms                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Application of methods, including. insufficiently trained researchers, inadequate fieldwork time, weak rapport with participants, and shallow participation (Ozanne and Saatcioglu 2008);</li> <li>▪ Overemphasis on locals while ignoring power relations (Mohan and Stokke 2000, Cornwall 2004) including what is accepted as “local knowledge”;</li> <li>▪ Balancing local knowledge and external theory, which requires more than simply valuing different epistemologies (Kalb 2006), particularly regarding the depth of understanding of local knowledge required for presenting it accurately; and</li> <li>▪ Conceptions of communities and local cultures, which are often more fluid than fit into Western methods (Cleaver 1999).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Often one-sided procedures (e.g. research questions, design, interpretations) and accounts (e.g. final account and subsequent use of material), which are critiqued for as to whose lives and realities truly matter (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Accordingly argued, if ethnographers truly purport to represent “others,” without giving greater voice to those at the focus of the study brings into strong question the findings presented and how they have been interpreted;</li> <li>▪ Ethnographer’s single account of culture is but a subjective, partial view of a single situated person (Krieger 1983, Tyler 1986, Clough 1992).</li> </ul> |

Despite the above criticisms, drawing on methodologically synergistic ethnographic and collaborative (participatory) research approaches, as implemented in this study, are believed to have enhanced the research within the particular research context and thesis focus, as is explored in the following subsection.

### 3.3.2 *Methodological Synergy*

Recognizing the researcher’s limitations in this study as a non-indigenous outsider to Kahua, a mixed-methodological approach was deemed necessary, incorporating both ethnographic-inspirations and those of participatory approaches. Reason and Bradbury (2001:1) define participatory research as “a participatory, democratic process concerned

<sup>18</sup> These criticisms of ethnographic research do not imply a rejection of the “reality” that is written in ethnographic accounts. They merely emphasize the constraints of literary conventions, and thus rationale in this instance, for incorporating more participatory approaches whilst striving towards an incorporation of a greater degree of Indigenous epistemologies.

with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes.”

Fundamentally, this differs from ethnographic research approaches (e.g. orientation of researcher, participant involvement throughout research process, outcome objectives, etc.). However, here it is suggested that there is significant synergy between these two methodologies, as well as potential mutual benefit in their integrated implementation.

Fricke (2005:189-190) describes ethnography as,

...a suite of methods to gather information within an overall orientation and set of research questions that are directed toward cultural understanding. Ethnography is research that takes culture seriously...To the extent that culture is a key element of the human condition for living people, then any method that unlocks a portion of that culture can be thought of as ethnographic.

Therefore, implementing some “participatory methods,” in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the research questions, can be thought of as a tool to enhance ethnography. For example, Chambers (1994a:953) emphasizes the importance of participatory methods “for learning about rural life and conditions from, with, and by rural people.” Furthermore, Kane (1995) describes, in relation to early childhood in Africa, the significant ability of collaborative methods to be adapted to particular communities’ communication styles, literacy levels, and self-awareness.

A primary issue being addressed is that of power relations,<sup>19</sup> which, therefore, also requires consideration of *indigenous epistemologies*. Here, this term is used to refer to local Pacific Islander cultural groups' thinking, creating, and reformation of knowledge, based on traditional discourses and communication, thus anchoring the “truth” of discourse in local culture (Gegeo 1994, 1998, 2001). Traditionally, such an approach would be that of an ethnographer, in the sense of attempting to “go native” and become as similar to locals, as humanly possible, to gain local understandings. However, here, in

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<sup>19</sup> In this study, the researcher aspired to overcome many critiques of power relations by taking steps to lower her position in the field: living and conducting herself to as large a degree as possible as do locals; diminishing her role as expert by raising the voices of locals as experts; and having the ongoing active involvement of participants in virtually all aspects of the research, which in turn became a consciousness-raising activity thus reducing power inequalities for all involved.

recognizing the researcher's limitations to understanding Indigenous epistemologies, efforts were made more directly through dialogic processes to seek and understand local knowledges and philosophies underlying everyday life.

### *3.3.3 Ethnographically-Inspired Collaborative Research Methodology*

This study incorporated three historically prominent South Pacific small island research trends over the past century: beginning with extensive use of ethnographically-inspired anthropological research (Goetz and LeCompte 1984, Josephides 1991, Walford 2002, Fife 2005, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007); to the past few decades of non-governmental organization (NGO) development in the use of participatory approaches (Chambers 1994a, 1998; Cornwall 2004; Fazey et al. 2010), and most recently to advances from within Pacific nations, as seen in the development of indigenous methodologies (Berry 1995, Smith 1999, Gegeo 2001). Cumulatively, the researcher termed this integrated methodology an *ethnographically-inspired collaborative research approach*, which also aimed to incorporate indigenous understandings and methodologies. By integrating these methodologies, the researcher aspired towards a variety of outcomes: researcher-focused (i.e. for the purposes of this thesis and future publications), context-practical (i.e. informative to the people of Kahua and nationally in the ongoing development of ECE), and post-research ongoing effects from participants within the research context (e.g. through local research capacity building efforts and ECE awareness development). This was achievable by using different philosophical perspectives and methods depending on the stage of the research process, as guided by the idea of *sequencing* (Mukherjee 1993). In doing so, this study attempted to address both practical local issues and serve the needs of the researcher as a research student, while also addressing epistemological issues from both emic and etic perspectives.

As applied in this study, the primary objective in “Phase I” (pilot study: Summer 2008<sup>20</sup>) of the research was for locals to critically identify and reflect on issues affecting and concerning the Kahua people. This was with regard to their children's early childhood care and development (ECCD), through a dialectical process. Subsequently, this was used to shape this current, Phase II, of research. However, the researcher never aspired to ultimately “fix a problem,” as there may have not necessarily been one, particularly in the eyes of locals. Therefore, for this second phase of research, a fully collaborative process of raising consciousnesses of all participants was neither the goal nor achievable. Furthermore, in contrast to the participatory paradigm, for the particular research topic and context, participants were not viewed as in *need* of empowerment. This was due to the fact that processes and practices being studied had been locally developed for what locals regarded as being their own needs based largely on local values, knowledge, and beliefs. Because of these factors, the methodological approach taken has been termed *collaborative*, as opposed to *participatory*. This denotes the authentic involvement of locals throughout the research process, as opposed to mere involvement in researcher-devised activities.

Markedly, the researcher did not align herself fully with action researchers, who base their work in critical theory, and frequently hold empowerment objectives (including feminist, post-colonial, and participatory perspectives). Yet, she did perceive social reality as historically constructed, recognize the influence of micropolitics on shaping social reality as concerns post-structuralists, and recognize that participatory research methods have the power to be consciousness-raising and reflective, thus increasing participants’ capacity for agency (Ozanne and Saatcioglu 2008). Additionally, the

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<sup>20</sup> Pilot study dually served as research “Phase I” and M.Sc. Dissertation in Educational Research Methodology (Burton 2008).

researcher largely still aimed to fuse theoretical and local knowledges. This was not in the sense of “radically transforming lives,” but it was through dialectical processes, where both participants and the researcher were learners working in collaboration to benefit from one another's strengths: the inextricably boundedness of research, education, and actions. By viewing participants as collaborators, it is recognized that the participatory process has the potential to generate more thorough social accounts. This is not to be mistaken with romanticizing indigenous knowledge as superior to those with power or those researched and documented. Instead, through conscientization, participants critically were able to explore their realities in an active and reflective process. From this, locals are then in a better position to judge whether or not to accept external knowledge/ideas (Gaventa 1988).<sup>21</sup> Additionally, through their inclusive nature, collaborations can deepen participants' investments in the findings and application of the research (Reason and Bradbury 2001); further increase the consideration of multiple perspectives (Herr and Anderson 2005); as well as facilitate the researcher's ongoing participation cycle, thus enabling continuous reflection and analysis to increase process validity by avoiding premature closure of the inquiry.

#### *3.3.4 Enduring Methodological Challenges*

The methodological decision to work collaboratively with participants, and thus aspirations to have an ongoing impact, has strong political connotations as a democratic research process (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001). However, this was deemed fitting and not over imposing of Western beliefs since the working research relationship was based within Kahua and their democratic Kahua Association (KA). Nevertheless, as experienced while conducting this research, taking a collaborative approach has many

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<sup>21</sup> Exploration of these participant derived outcomes are not included in the parameters of this thesis.

challenges in itself. Most notably, in this study, was the degree of critical depth possible when asking a group of participants to reflect on topics that may have been both taken for granted and/or locally perceived as (exceptionally) abstract. These topics were thereby, arguably, beyond participants' comprehension modes and abilities with which to critically verbally reflect. This is not a value judgment on the intelligence levels of the Kahua people, but instead a universal challenge to any participant asked to engage critically at a level not typical of daily life. Therefore, here it is suggested that to obtain highly significant valid data, collaborative approaches likely need to be supplemented by researcher-centered methods, as here was achieved through the incorporation of ethnographic approaches.

Despite challenges as a non-indigenous person to the research context, the researcher did not view her position in this study as a complete detriment due to an increased ability to objectively understand local practices and beliefs that may be taken for granted by Natives. This required a critical understanding of local culture in relation to thinking about the development (Pieterse 2001) of education. This also required guarding against problems related to post-colonial discourse on culture, such as embodying nationalism, myths of uniqueness, new forms of ethnocentrism, and narrow views of localism through traditions/tribalism disguised as indigenization.

### **3.4 Execution of Fieldwork**

#### *3.4.1 Overview of Research Design*

As explored in the previous section, this study was guided by methodological influences from ethnographically-inspired qualitative research, collaborative research approaches, and in recognition of the growing field of indigenous epistemology and methodology. In

accordance, it was shaped by a multiple (embedded) case study design (Yin 1994, 2003; Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2000). Drawing from these different methodological perspectives facilitated the development of methods for understanding local realities of the Kahua people, as verbally expressed. It also facilitated delving deeper into local realities by observing and partaking in aspects of participants' daily lives. This thereby additionally accounted for nonverbal features and eventually allowed for comparisons to be drawn between individuals, families, learning microenvironments, villages, and provincial regions.

Fundamental to this study was its foundation in the issues of:

- Researcher's position as a non-indigenous outsider (thus cultural, linguistic, and contextual dissimilarities), and as such, greater barriers to gaining deeper understandings;
- Fact that researcher worked through the developing democratic grassroots KA, which (amongst other objectives) strives to unite local communities and protect against knowledge and resource exploitation by actively engaging in research generating activities to guide local development; and
- Research focused on autonomous community-based kindies, designed to be culture and context-sensitive programs.

Thus, it was essential that the researcher worked in collaboration with locals in light of these issues, as well as to support and be sensitive of the Kahua people's own culture/development/research practices, objectives, and priorities. Working collaboratively with the Kahua people, as acknowledged previously (Chapter 1), was a key component throughout the study, in efforts to strengthen the research itself, locally aspire to capacity building opportunities, and increase ECE awareness in an effort to indirectly contribute to kindy program sustainability. Moreover, a solely participatory or ethnographic approach would have limited the researcher's ability to fully incorporate the diversity of ECE stakeholders' perspectives, in addition to her own personal critical

perspective. Through this, she was capable of distinguishing, to a large degree, between spoken words and realities, as well as underlying factors affecting the research focus.

### *3.4.2 Overview of Methods*

This section will explore the methods implemented in the study, including participant observations, semi/unstructured interviews, a survey, a forum meeting, and participatory focus groups. Most significantly to be noted throughout this section is not the specific wide-ranging methods themselves, but instead the importance of the environments and interactions they created, or inhibited. Therefore, ultimately, it was not the method-specific physical evidence generated (e.g. children's illustrations, photographs, focus group visual activities) that was most significant. Instead, it was the dialogic processes that were facilitated by the structures and environments created, through the implementation and participation in particular methods, that proved most informative.

Research using a variety of methods to understand the multifaceted components of ECE and development in culturally diverse contexts has increasingly succeeded in developmental research over the past decade (Garcia-Coll et al. 2002, Weisner 2005, Harkness et al. 2006). Throughout a long history of anthropologists' work with child development and socialization in diverse cultural settings (e.g. Whiting and Whiting 1975; Whiting and Edwards 1988; Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989), much research has emphasized the influence of cultural and social contexts supporting/inhibiting children's development. In turn, this has often been theorized to be influenced by the wider conditions, such as sociocultural, economic, political, etc.

It is now well-accepted that early childhood education has been challenged by a theoretical seachange that has seen individualistic developmental explanations of learning and development replaced by theories that foreground the culturally and socially constructed nature of learning.  
(Anning, Cullen, and Fleer 2004:1)

Based on the above quote, in order to understand children's learning in context, whilst capturing these deeply embedded and influential contextual factors, the methods implemented in this study involved a wide range of processes, techniques, and tools. They were frequently used iteratively and complementarily in order to triangulate and progressively build between stages of the inquiry (Pretty, Gujit, Thompson, and Scoones 1995).

Methods implemented were repeated among different individuals and communities to obtain a broader range of perspectives across ages, gender, social status, relation(s) to children, and geographic location. In addition to heightening different viewpoints, and averting singular visions, triangulation was used to validate by checking a variety of sources to establish the reliability of particular issues (Cornwall, Musyoki, and Pratt 2001). Underlying all methods implemented, the essence of the researcher's approach emphasized the need for flexibility in research design to allow for the maximum scope of perspectives to emerge:

[R]esearchers should act as facilitators, guarding against their own biases and seeking to minimize any power differentials between themselves and respondents, so as to enable local knowledge and perspective to emerge. Reflecting this, the research design should be flexible.  
(White and Pettit 2004:11)

Along with this, the variety of methods were generally not specifically selected for particular methods to answer particular research questions, but instead aimed to provide different avenues for the researcher and participants' perceptions and understandings to arise out of, and as such allow for triangulation of information gathered.

Contrary to experimental designs that aim to test specific hypotheses, and can often be more heavily blinded by assumptions built into these hypotheses, ethnographies are designed to be discovery-based and gain focus on theoretical issues and practical

problems as the study proceeds (Fife 2005). Therefore, much like grounded theorizing,<sup>22</sup> fieldwork began with a broad exploration, predominantly implementing participant-observations and unstructured interviews in a single focal community. Subsequently, this provided shape and focus to more structured methods throughout the Kahua region and around MUP, out of which comparisons were then drawn. The following subsections provide an overview of the specific research methods and tools implemented, followed by a timeline of their implementation (Table 3.2). For each method, and supporting tool(s), the subsection contains an overview of their theoretical relevance, followed by a brief explanation of their application during fieldwork. More in-depth descriptions of their implementation in the field can be found in Appendix A.

### Participant Observations

“[P]articipant observation is immersion in a culture...Long-term residence helps the researcher internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes, and expectations of people under study” (Fetterman 1989:45). In this study, this was achieved through the researcher’s participation in the lives and activities of participants involved in the inquiry, while maintaining a professional distance to allow for adequate observation and documentation. Tools used to facilitate this method, as explored below, included semi-structured observations, fieldnotes, visual tools of photographs and video-recordings, and reflective discussions.

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<sup>22</sup> The term *grounded theorizing*, promoted by Glaser and Strauss (1967), was deemed more applicable than the methodological standpoint of *grounded theory*, in order to emphasize its use as an activity rather than procedure (thus denoting the differentiation from the product of this activity: grounded theory), whereby theory is developed out of ongoing data analysis and subsequent data collection, as guided by emergent theories.

### *Semi-Structured Observations*

Semi-structured observations can be used to maintain focus on research questions (Clough and Nutbrown 2002). This can be achieved by structuring observations with observation schedules (Lancaster and Broadbent 2003) to ensure data collected is inclusive of the similar categories of information between individuals/locations, from which comparisons can be drawn. For example, the *Six Cultures Study* (Whiting 1963) conducted in Mexico, the Philippines, India, Japan, Kenya, and the United States of America was comprised of six ethnographic studies, which, through systematic observations of children in their routine “behavior settings,” allowed for recording interactions of children and their environments within diverse cultures, thereby facilitating comparisons within and between settings. Later, this method was further developed by Whiting and Edwards (1988) in a comparative study of childhood in fourteen diverse communities. Additionally, participant observations can give rise to understanding local methodologies and epistemologies, based on a distinction between introduced and indigenous knowledge, as contrastingly conceptualized “from the shore reaching out to the ocean” versus “from the shore to the mountains” (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 2002:381). Here, indigenous epistemology is used to refer to cultural groups’ ways of thinking, creating, reformulating, and theorizing about knowledge through traditional discourses. Take for example the Kwara’ae Genealogy Project in 1994, which provided the context for discussing, arguing, and recording culture, yet also critiquing Natives’ own Indigenous strategies for creating knowledge through a self-reflexive process (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 2001).

During fieldwork, after an initial period of gaining greater focus and understanding in a single village (Toroa), a semi-structured observation and interview schedule were

developed to facilitate comparisons between communities in identifying early learning microenvironments and three analysis subgroups (i.e. settings, caretaker psychology, and customs). This allowed for comparisons between communities to facilitate possible social, cultural, geographic, and economic issues potentially influencing sustained kindy development. While not possible to spend extensive time in each community, greater depth of understanding gained in Toroa allowed for the construction of more focused observations and interviews to address particular issues on a wider scale. This was important for understanding varying issues across Kahua/MUP and not confined to a single case study village. Observations (and interviews) were also conducted on local research inquiries led by the KA and other locally organized groups/projects/programs to gain insights into their approaches to “research.” This influenced the study’s methods’ design, so as to better work in the local context in ways thought more facilitative of understanding local epistemologies. This involved observations, interviews, and photographing to document methods of such interactions as the KA Council of Chiefs’ documentation of land rights, KA Sustainable Forest and Conservation Project (Schuett and Fazey 2010), and less formal processes such as community health awareness sessions from the “traveling clinic.”

#### *Fieldnotes* (and researcher as self-reflective tool)

Fieldnotes are the primary tool of most ethnographers in documenting their observations (Fetterman 1989:45). Additionally, they can facilitate the researcher’s ability to be self-reflective throughout an inquiry (Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte 1999). This fundamental tool is evident in the rich description of childhood presented in ethnography, as surveyed by LeVine (2007) in an historical overview. Notable examples

in the Pacific include *Growing up in New Guinea* (Mead 1930), *Becoming a Kwoma* (Whiting 1941), and *Becoming Tongan* (Morton 1996).

During fieldwork, ongoing documentation of observations during/after participation was conducted in different contexts in an effort to learn “the native’s point of view” (Geertz 1973). This ranged from non-participation to active-participation and complete-participation (de Walt and de Walt 2002). Rapport was built with locals through cultural immersion so as to “intellectualize” what was being learned, put it into perspective, and document it authentically (Bernard 1994:137). Extensive ongoing observations were necessary to gain deeper understandings from a variety of perspectives/settings in order to determine how widespread and frequent certain phenomena and behaviors were. Simultaneously, ongoing identification of patterns was sought through saturating various emerging categories of data with evidence as findings were classified to facilitate addressing research questions.

#### *Video-Recording and Photography*

Visual tools of video-recording (Rolfe 2001, Roberts-Holmes 2007) and photographs (Pink 2001) can be used to document nonverbal communication and contextual features, which words may be incapable of capturing, particularly in light of extensive linguistic and cultural differences. Mead (Bateson and Mead 1942, Mead and MacGregor 1951) advocated for the use of visual records (i.e. video) to deepen the ethnographic understanding of childhood. However, it has rarely been used in ethnographies of childhood outside of linguistic studies (LeVine 2007) (e.g. sociolinguistic fieldwork on language socialization – Fung 1999 video analysis of storytelling). Extensive use of video-recording was also used in the studies *Preschool in Three Cultures* (Tobin, Wu,

and Davidson 1989) and *Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited* (Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa 2009). These studies used this tool in exploring childcare practices to elicit reactions and understanding of different cultures, which significantly facilitated the explication of indigenous assumptions of caretakers about children that had previously eluded conventional interviewing methods. With regard to photographs, de Witt (2008) extensively used photography in studying community-based childcare to document overall impressions of the classrooms, to facilitate interpretations, and substantiate observations in a portfolio of each children's center.

During fieldwork, visual methods were used to reinforce strong oral traditions of communication in SI by documenting and creating visual representations. They facilitated discussions with those recorded to gain insights into their actions by visually reflecting on themselves and not solely relying on mental recall of events that transpired. Further, they were used in interviews and discussions to bridge experiences of reality and visually reinforce points being asserted through providing evidence on which all involved could discuss on relatively equal ground (i.e. photographic elicitation). By using visual tools, this allowed for multiple interpretations of both verbal (including translations) and nonverbal interactions to gain broader understandings from varying perspectives. Finally, these visual tools allowed for ongoing comparisons and analysis by repeatedly reviewing video and photographic data from various stages of the inquiry. As deeper understandings of the context, culture, language, and focus of the study were gained, this allowed for ongoing deepening of reflection and analysis.

### *Reflective Discussions with Research Assistants (RAs)*

In an effort to increase international research partnerships, increasingly Western researchers are forming collaborations with those in developing contexts, as demonstrated in a qualitative participatory study in St. Lucia (Holmes and Crossley 2004). With an emphasis on increased recognition of epistemological issues and cultural values, the study demanded efforts to strengthen local research capacity as part of a process to democratize the education policy process and educational research. The study demonstrates that validity can be strengthened through collaborating with insiders to facilitate interpretations and meaning-making/significance of events observed by outsiders.

During fieldwork, collaboration with RAs was used to compare, contrast, and further investigate meanings, values, and processes underlying the particular events/actions that transpired during particular methods/instances. This tool was used on an ongoing basis with RAs after completion of a research activity/session, or by the end of the day, through reflective discussions (i.e. of data collected and how method worked in given context).

### Interviews

#### *Semi-Structured and Unstructured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are noted for their particular suitability in capturing parents' attitudes, beliefs, and values about issues of child development in mixed-methods approaches to international collaborative research, such as in the *International Study of Parents, Children, and Schools* (Harkness et al. 2006). They can provide both flexibility and structure, ensuring prearranged topics are addressed, while also allowing flexibility

for the meaning-making process of the interviewee. A collaborative study of changing child-rearing and community mobilization in Kenya drew heavily from interviews (and repeated observations) in eight districts (four diverse settings) (Swadener, Kabiru, and Njenga 1997). It was designed in collaboration with Kenyan colleagues to understand, through a wide variety of local ECE stakeholders, ways in which traditional support systems contributed to effective child-rearing/care and how to support and enhance these systems. Likewise, interviewing was used extensively in designing a community-university partnership program for First Nation children's development in British Colombia (Ball and Pence 2006). This illuminated instructors and students' ideas of local conditions that enable successful teaching and learning in the particular context.

During fieldwork, unstructured interviews were conducted on an ongoing basis to gain deeper understandings of various experiences, observations, and questions that arose. Contrastingly, semi-structured interviews were designed at various stages of fieldwork when particular issues arose that were desirable to gain understandings from a variety of perspectives. These allowed for questions to be designed in advance to guide conversations towards certain issues, while still being flexible enough for additional issues to arise. A basic structure was particularly important for semi-structured interviews conducted with NGO and government officials since contact with these informants was more limited than those in villages. Therefore, it was imperative to ensure desired issues were addressed during the limited time.

### *Audio-Recording*

Audio-recording can allow for researcher's greater focus on participants by reducing the distraction/inhibiting factor of trying to write while participants are talking (Denscombe

2003). Additionally, they can allow for the researcher to repeatedly revisit the dialogue, such as for ongoing analysis and/or transcription. Within the SI context, a prime example of audio-recording used in research can be found in Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo's (1999) study of Kwara'ae children's cognitive skills in naturally occurring discourse. Their study extensively relied on audio-recordings for over ten years of studying children's language socialization as supported by siblings.

During fieldwork, the majority of semi-structured interviews with government and NGO officials were audio-recorded (based on consent), since these opportunities were more limited in contrast to ongoing communication with village participants. Due to battery power limitations, not all interviews could be audio-recorded. Documentation of kastom stories collected in all Kahua focal research communities was also audio-recorded. This allowed for full documentation of stories, through transcription, to facilitate deeper analysis, which was of great significance in understanding oral traditions.<sup>23</sup> Finally, focus groups were audio-recorded to allow the researcher and RAs to review audio after completing focus groups, which facilitated greater discussion and deeper translations of what transpired.

### Interactive Groups (Democratic Dialogic Processes)

#### *Focus Groups* (including ethnographic mapping and visual sharing)

Participatory and ethnographic focus groups can facilitate visual sharing, through use of mapping, which allows for the creation of a large scale focal point that all involved can see, manipulate (e.g. representations with stones, seeds, etc.), and alter representations (Pelto and Pelto 1978). Furthermore, during these activities, discussions and cross-

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<sup>23</sup> Copies of kastom storybooks were subsequently distributed to all participating Kahua kindies.

checking/correcting by others can be a consciousness-raising process for all involved, not just the researcher (Chambers 1994b). Within the Kahua context, such methods have successfully been implemented, such as in the works of Fazey, Latham, Hagasua, and Wagatora (2007) and Latham (2007). These researchers explored “drivers of change” in forty-seven villages across the region using running discussions, ranking, and prioritizing exercises facilitated largely by locals trained as RAs. Furthermore, Kenter (2009) implemented a focus group approach during which he utilized “participative choice experiments” for eliciting environmental values of the Kahua people. Notably, also within Kahua, activity-based focus groups were the primary method developed by Burton (2008) in her pilot study to this current research. Participatory group activities can also be used with children. For example, children’s drawings can be used to help understand their experiences on cognitive, affective, and linguistic levels (Hawkins 2002), since drawing is seen as the initial stages to writing in representation making (Kress 1997). For example, Roberts-Holmes (2007) documents a case study in which Year 1 children acted as co-researchers in helping identify issues to ease the transition into nursery school for Reception class children.

During fieldwork, participatory focus group activities were conducted at two stages of the research, to facilitate deeper democratic dialogic processes (e.g. group discussions). Initial piloting of focus groups was conducted in Toroa village to ensure activities sufficiently addressed issues under inquiry based on the researcher’s greater understanding of the community and kindy. Subsequently, due to time limitations in exploring other communities in such depth, yet significance of gaining a wider understanding of issues throughout Makira comparison communities, brief stays were completed in a variety of other kindy communities. Focus groups were conducted in

sixteen villages: ten in Kahua (i.e. one representative community in each KA district, in addition to a Toroa village pilot), and six in greater Makira (i.e. excluding Kahua, one village from each political ward in which the World Vision [WV] Girl Child Reading and Rescue Project [GCRRP] has been implemented). In each Kahua community, six focus groups in total were conducted (i.e. women, men, female/male youths, female/male children). In each greater Makira village, three focus groups were conducted (i.e. women, men, composite of kindy teachers and committee members). Three activities were conducted with each focus group, to facilitate comparisons, exploring 1) early learning throughout village microenvironments, 2) barriers to establishing/operating/maintaining the kindy, and 3) questions regarding awareness/ownership/community involvement in the kindy. During focus groups, an abstract mapping activity was conducted in collaboration with locals to understand physical and social aspects of communities, particularly identifying early childhood learning microenvironments. This enabled participants to visually represent main environments throughout their village for kindy-aged children's learning. This was followed by discussion, with the map serving as focal point, to explore community-based ECE initiatives' fit to the local culture/context and potential changes to better support locally defined goals and restraints.

Additionally, three to four focus groups were conducted with groups of approximately four children in nine different Kahua kindies. This small group size encouraged conversations and shifted power dynamics in favor of children (Brooker 2001), as opposed to one-on-one interviews. Furthermore, to increase the children's comfort level, these were implemented in a familiar setting (typically kindy classroom) and conversation style to the children (Lancaster and Broadbent 2003). Illustrations

facilitated conversations between the researcher and children about what and where they learn in their villages. These also facilitated a child-to-child research approach as children shared and explained their pictures to one another.

### *ECE Stakeholder Forum Meeting*

The main source of documentation of ECE development throughout the Pacific Forum island nations has been workshops and forum meetings. These have been used to convene those involved in the development of such programs to form regional partnerships and increase awareness of different approaches/strengths/struggles/etc. (e.g. Suva, Fiji 1980, 2004; Honiara, SI 2007). The researcher in this study initially gained skills in facilitating such approaches in July 2008 while planning and facilitating a week-long participatory workshop, on strategic planning, for approximately fifty participants from the executive council and subordinate committees of the KA.

During fieldwork, a two-day forum meeting was convened (in MUP capital: Kirakira), inclusive of key ECE stakeholders from grassroots (i.e. kindy teachers/chairmen), provincial (i.e. WV MUP, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development [MEHRD], and MUP government officials), and national (i.e. MEHRD ECE officials, WV officials, and WV Guadalcanal Province literacy team) levels. Assembling these stakeholders allowed for 1) observational learning from kindies in WV GCRRP communities, 2) sharing of experiences regarding ECE between all levels of stakeholders in MUP and external visitors, 3) exchange of ideas from national policy level to grassroots implementation, and 4) dialogic processes to deepen discussions and understandings between stakeholders (as documented by the researcher for this study). By facilitating stakeholders' interactions with one another, as opposed to solely with the

researcher, more depth and understanding was achievable due to dialogic processes raising main concerns from varied perspectives, as opposed to restricted by researcher objectives or singular participant perspectives. Further, the forum meeting coincided with the presence of a relatively large number of MUP kindy teachers ( $n=52$ ) in Kirakira attending a separate WV course. This was capitalized on by including them in various sessions of the meeting, such as to learn from a MEHRD ECE official about a national ECE policy (MEHRD 2008) and newly drafted national curriculum (MEHRD 2009). Opportunities were also designed for these teachers to engage in discussions regarding their concerns and questions with the visiting officials.

### Large Scale Data

#### *Surveys and Document Collection*

Collection of demographic surveys can provide a review of background information on participants and communities involved in the study (e.g. number of households, household members, occupations, education attainment, education enrollment rates, etc.) in order to gain broader understanding of factors that demand further exploration in understanding differences arising within and between particular communities.

Newspapers also provide a good source of public attitudes towards particular issues, as opposed to official documents; can assist in understanding historical events from local perspectives; and help gauge relative public importance of specific issues (Fife 2005).

For example, insights were gained through reviewing secondary data regarding the 2009 introduction of SI fee free basic education funded by Taiwan. Through this, revealing inconsistencies were found between villager-submitted newspaper editorials and government statements from Taiwan and the SI.

During fieldwork, background information on participants and communities involved in the study was reviewed to guide and supplement the research. Examples include the *Kahua Survey* (Fazey et al. 2007), the *SI Digest of Education Statistics* (MEHRD 2005), and the *SI National Census Data* (SI Government 1999). Additionally referenced documents included newspapers (*Solomon Star* and *Solomon Times*), government documents (National and MUP), and NGO (WV) project plans/evaluations. These facilitated understanding a variety of sources influencing what was occurring at different stakeholder and societal levels. This supplemented data collected from fieldwork, enabling a broader perspective to understanding aspects of influential factors on the inquiry. Furthermore, it provided comparisons between realities in remote communities with more formal efforts being implemented by higher-level stakeholders. Significant time was also spent in the SI National Library and National Achieves to more deeply explore historic factors bearing influence on present education initiatives.

Additionally, during fieldwork, as directly congruent with focus group questions, a survey was created and distributed to all WV GCRRP and Kahua kindy communities. This broadened province-wide understandings and allowed for comparisons through a larger sample size (95% inclusion). These surveys targeted kindy teachers and committees for completion on behalf of communities, due to their higher levels of functional literacy skills.

### *3.4.3 Implementation Schedule*

The variety of methods implemented during fieldwork highlights their significance as a process of enhancing the researcher's overall understanding of the complexities of early childhood in SI. Therefore, in reiteration, generally they were not directly implemented

to achieve specific narrow outcomes. As such, the degrees of their contribution to the research findings presented in this thesis vary greatly. Nevertheless, this does not negate their implementation significance, as presented in Table 3.2, or inclusion in this chapter, due to the broader learning achieved by those involved in the fieldwork (most significantly the researcher) and thus use in supplementing understandings of the overall data presented.

**Table 3.2** Phases of Fieldwork in Solomon Islands

| Phase                         | Pilot Study                       | Honiara <sup>24</sup><br>(National Capital),<br>Guadalcanal                                          | Toroa Village, <sup>25</sup><br>Kahua, MUP                                                                                                                                         | Kirakira Station<br>(Provincial Capital)<br>MUP                                                                                                                              | WV GCRRP<br>Communities,<br>MUP (focus <i>n</i> =6) <sup>26</sup>                                                                    | Toroa Village,<br>Kahua, MUP                                                                                     | Kahua<br>Communities,<br>MUP (focus <i>n</i> =9) <sup>27</sup>                                                                                                  | Toroa Village,<br>Kahua, MUP                                                                                     | Honiara<br>(National Capital),<br>Guadalcanal                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Duration                      | June-August<br>2008<br>(2 months) | June 2009<br>(1 month) <sup>28</sup>                                                                 | July-August 2009<br>(2 months)                                                                                                                                                     | September 2009<br>(2 weeks)                                                                                                                                                  | September 2009<br>(2 weeks)                                                                                                          | October 2009<br>(1 month)                                                                                        | November –<br>December 2009<br>(2 months)                                                                                                                       | December 2010<br>(2 weeks)                                                                                       | January 2010<br>(1 month)                                                                                                                                                         |
| Research Facilitators         | 4                                 |                                                                                                      | (Unofficially) Key<br>community ECE<br>stakeholders in<br>specific contexts for<br>different purposes<br>(e.g. kindy teacher[s],<br>host family, church<br>officials, chief, etc.) | Collaboration with<br>WV GCRRP staff and<br>WV MUP Manager                                                                                                                   | 2 research assistants<br>from WV GCRRP (2<br>males, plus 1 boat<br>skipper and 1 crew<br>member)                                     | (Unofficially) Key<br>community ECE<br>stakeholders in<br>specific village<br>contexts for different<br>purposes | 3 research assistants<br>(2 female kindy<br>teachers and 1 male<br>kindy chairman)                                                                              | (Unofficially) Key<br>community ECE<br>stakeholders in<br>specific village<br>contexts for different<br>purposes |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Semi-Structured<br>interviews | ✓                                 | Interviews with<br>MEHRD ECE<br>Coordinator, WV<br>Country Manager,<br>and WV Program<br>Coordinator | Ongoing interviews<br>throughout village<br>about emerging ideas                                                                                                                   | Interviews with<br>Provincial MEHRD<br>ECE Coordinator,<br>WV Makira<br>Provincial Manager<br>and project staff (3),<br>kindy teachers from<br>throughout Makira<br>Province | Interviews in each<br>focus community<br>with: kindy<br>teacher(s), kindy<br>chairman, church<br>leader, chief, parents,<br>children | Ongoing interviews<br>throughout village<br>about emerging ideas                                                 | Interviews in each<br>focus community<br>with: kindy<br>teacher(s), kindy<br>chairman, church<br>leader, Sunday school<br>teachers, chief,<br>parents, children | Ongoing interviews<br>throughout village<br>about emerging ideas                                                 | Interviews with<br>MEHRD ECE<br>Coordinator and<br>Manager; WV SI<br>Country Manager,<br>WV SI Program<br>Coordinator, and WV<br>Guadalcanal Literacy<br>Team Coordinators<br>(2) |
| Unstructured<br>Interviews    | ✓                                 |                                                                                                      | Ongoing interviews<br>about emerging ideas,<br>supplementary to<br>participant<br>observations                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                              | Opportunistically<br>throughout focus<br>communities and<br>whilst in transit                                                        | Ongoing interviews<br>about emerging ideas,<br>supplementary to<br>participant<br>observations                   | Opportunistically<br>throughout focus<br>communities and<br>whilst in transit                                                                                   | Ongoing interviews<br>about emerging ideas,<br>supplementary to<br>participant<br>observations                   |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Participant<br>Observations   | ✓                                 |                                                                                                      | Extensive participant<br>observations with<br>focus on kindy-aged<br>children throughout<br>village                                                                                | Ongoing participant<br>observations of WV<br>GCRRP operations                                                                                                                | Ongoing participant<br>observations,<br>emphasis on kindy-<br>aged children and<br>within kindy                                      | Ongoing participant<br>observations with<br>focus on kindy-aged<br>children throughout<br>village                | Ongoing participant<br>observations,<br>emphasis on kindy-<br>aged children and<br>within kindy                                                                 | Ongoing participant<br>observations with<br>emphasis on kindy-<br>aged children<br>throughout village            |                                                                                                                                                                                   |

<sup>24</sup> Telecommunication services, and therefore contact with supervisor, only available while in national capital, Honiara.

<sup>25</sup> Using Toroa village as base location due to its central location, the first week in Kahua was spent disseminating pilot study research findings, rebuilding rapport, and informing communities of this second phase of the research.

<sup>26</sup> Originally planned to carry out research program in ten villages, but due to weather and sea conditions beyond human control, this had to be narrowed to six. However, the other four villages were still involved in interviews, and merely excluded from community-wide focus group activities.

<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Toroa village was included as pilot study community for semi-structured methods.

<sup>28</sup> Initial lengthy stay in the capital required whilst securing all required government paperwork for research and residency.

| <i>Phase</i>               | <i>Pilot Study</i> | <i>Honiara<br/>(National Capital),<br/>Guadalcanal</i>                                          | <i>Toroa Village,<br/>Kahua, MUP</i>                                                                              | <i>Kirakira Station<br/>(Provincial<br/>Capital) MUP</i>                 | <i>WV GCRRP<br/>Communities,<br/>MUP (focus n=6)</i>                                          | <i>Toroa Village,<br/>Kahua, MUP</i>                                                                              | <i>Kahua<br/>Communities,<br/>MUP (focus n=9)</i>                                                           | <i>Toroa Village,<br/>Kahua, MUP</i>                                                                              | <i>Honiara<br/>(National Capital),<br/>Guadalcanal</i>                                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Document Collection        | ✓                  | Documents collected from MEHRD, WV, National Library, National Archive, SICHE (Panatina Campus) |                                                                                                                   | Documents collected from MUP MEHRD, WV Makira CGRRP                      | Collection of surveys (n=45 distributed by boat around MUP)                                   |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                   | Documents collected from MEHRD, WV, National Library, National Archive, SICHE (Panatina Campus) |
| Focus Groups               | ✓                  |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                   |                                                                          | 3 participatory focus groups (men, women, and kindy committee) within each focus community    |                                                                                                                   | 4 participatory groups (men, women, female/male youths) within each focus community                         |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                 |
| Survey                     |                    |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                   |                                                                          | Surveyed 45 WV supported kindies, based on community kindy teacher/committee completed survey |                                                                                                                   | Surveyed additional 7 non-WV supported kindies, based on community kindy teacher/committee completed survey |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                 |
| Kastom Story Documentation |                    |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                   |                                                                          |                                                                                               |                                                                                                                   | 24 kastom stories written, audio recorded, illustrated, and compiled as book for kindies                    |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                 |
| Reflective Activities      | ✓                  |                                                                                                 | Ongoing reflective discussions with kindy teacher (who also served as research assistant in both phases of study) | Ongoing reflective discussions with WV CGRRP staff                       | Ongoing reflective discussions with research assistants                                       | Ongoing reflective discussions with kindy teacher (who also served as research assistant in both phases of study) | Ongoing reflective written and oral activities with research assistants                                     | Ongoing reflective discussions with kindy teacher (who also served as research assistant in both phases of study) |                                                                                                 |
| Forum Meeting              |                    |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                   | 32 key ECE stakeholders involved in 2-day forum meeting held in Kirakira |                                                                                               |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                 |
| Children's Activity        | ✓                  |                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                   |                                                                          |                                                                                               |                                                                                                                   | 2 participatory groups (boys, girls) in each focus community using drawing activity to facilitate interview |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                 |

### **3.5 Research Assistants**

#### *3.5.1 Significance of Local Research Assistants*

Knowledge is socially distributed and culturally mediated (Wertsch 1995). Accordingly, the training and involvement of locals as research assistants (RAs), at various stages of fieldwork, was a key component in the execution of this study. Working with locals from Kahua was indispensable to the research for the following primary reasons:

- Knowledge of local culture and kastoms.
- Knowledge of Kahua language and ability to translate into SI Pidgin (and English).
- Knowledge of Kahua region for ability to logistically facilitate research processes within and between communities.
- Facilitation as gate keepers who could exponentially ease access and rapport building between the researcher and participants/communities. This was associated with a domino effect of others seeing the research team's strong rapport with the researcher and subsequent desire of others to also personally experience closeness with a (locally well-accepted) outsider to Kahua.
- Local capacity building opportunity to identify problems, assist in designing methods to explore a particular issue, conduct research, analyze preliminary findings, and identify potential ways forward.
- Increased support opportunity of the KA, in the eyes of local communities, demonstrating their ability to attract and support outsiders to Kahua (i.e. "white researchers"), which in turn was perceived as building local knowledge and capacities.

In return for RAs' contributions, as part of the research process, they had opportunities to develop English literacy and language skills, computer skills, understandings of the research process and methods, increased knowledge of ECE, facilitation skills (including increasing confidence, speaking abilities, leadership, etc.), and shared cultural exchanges. Arguably, as a student, the researcher was in a prime position to facilitate others' development and capacity building, which by doing so, personally forced her to challenge her own thinking and conceptions of research.

### 3.5.2 *Research Assistant Selection Process*

Of great significance in the RA selection process was working *through* the KA. This was able to serve as a buffer between the researcher and villagers, so as to make her activities more transparent and avoid issues such as favoritism of individuals or communities. And thus, a formal application process was devised so as to provide an equal-opportunity selection process for all those interested throughout Kahua. Potential applicants were confined to the Kahua region, despite external interest, due to the necessity of, and competence in, the Kahua language; knowledge of regional communities; and possession of strong rapport with, and respect by, locals throughout Kahua. However, after completing a written application process, and selection of RAs with assistance from a panel of respected locals, on the day to begin training, two male assistants from opposite ends of Kahua were required to withdraw their involvement due to extreme extenuating circumstances. Furthermore, many women were prevented from applying for the position, despite desire to be involved, due to culture barriers regarding women's roles in communities and thus inability to spend extended time away from home/family responsibilities. Therefore, ultimately, all three assistants were selected from the Central Kahua region, instead of the desired diverse geographic range and gender balance, yet they were highly qualified, knowledgeable, and well respected throughout the region, thereby making them excellent local facilitators. Furthermore, the efforts to make a transparent RA selection process, involving locals in the process to build capacity, set strong precedence for future research (e.g. Kenter 2009) and received widespread understanding of the extenuating circumstances affecting the smooth execution of the process for this study. Ultimately, the diversity (e.g. age, gender, social status, skills, etc.) of RAs proved to be extraordinarily helpful throughout the fieldwork

as each member of the team felt most confident taking on certain roles and had different levels of connections/relations/rapport with the communities researched.

In contrast to the Kahua RA selection process, whilst working in greater Makira through WV, the researcher was restricted to using WV “Girl Child Reading and Rescue Project” (GCRRP) employees, which was beneficial due to their expertise of, and rapport with, the project communities. However, the two main male RAs involved in this study were also from Kahua, one of whom was formerly a RA during this study’s pilot (Burton 2008). Therefore, with their particular capacities, and in light of the more limited time for the greater Makira phase of fieldwork, these were ideal assistants, and further continued addressing one of the overarching research aspirations: to build local capacities of the Kahua people.

### *3.5.3 Strength of Research Team*

RAs were all acquainted with one another prior to beginning fieldwork.<sup>29</sup> However, during a one-week training program prior to beginning the research, teambuilding exercises were invaluable for taking the assistants from familial acquaintances to building strong rapport between them, as well as with the researcher. Notably, in contrast to research colleague Dr. Fazey (St. Andrews University), who has also worked extensively conducting participatory research in Kahua, the researcher in this study was found to be able to build closer relations with the assistants, as well as participants. This was likely due to her being female, and as such appearing less dominant and/or threatening. Additionally, she was younger than Dr. Fazey and therefore able to present herself as a student and less so of an “expert” (according to RA reflective discussions).

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<sup>29</sup>The Kahua people are descendants from two tribal lines: Atawa and Amea. Most people are familiar with each other and aware of their kinship relations throughout Kahua.

Further, her ethnographic approach, in becoming more actively engaged in the daily lives of the villagers, immensely strengthened her rapport with participants, with the locally expressed perspective that she became a “true Kahua woman.” As a result, activities such as RA reflective discussions and rapport building with participants was deemed achievable with greater ease, and able to develop more deeply, due to these reduced power imbalances, potentially resulting in deeper more truthful interactions and research participation.

Also noteworthy, all RAs were paid small per diems. However, the main incentive for their involvement was expressed as personal capacity building opportunities and a desire to ultimately positively affect their “Kahua family” through the research. Communities also saw intrinsic value from their participation in, and support of, the research. As such, they graciously contributed food and accommodation to the research team, which is also congruent with Kahua cultural practices of caring for visitors to one’s community.

### **3.6 Sample Selection: Focal Communities and Participants**

Throughout the research, emphasis was placed on local participation with and in the study, as opposed to strictly researcher-oriented methods. Through this, the researcher strived to create opportunities for knowledge building through interactive activities allowing for locals to share knowledge between themselves as well as with her. As a result, numerous ECE stakeholders and contexts were included to facilitate a wide range of perspectives and contextual differences, and as such comparisons between these variations.

### *3.6.1 Community Sample*

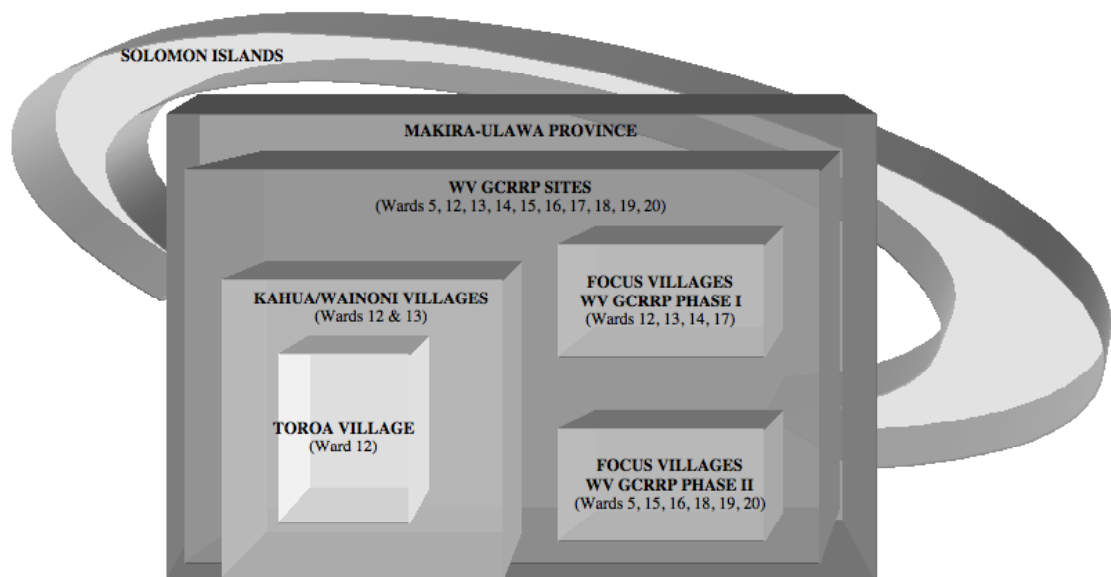
Research focal communities were confined to MUP, inclusive of the ten political wards in which the GCRRP has operated, therefore fully encompassing the Kahua region (Figure 3.1). While the nation of the SI remained the macro-level focal research context, this was gradually reduced in geographic scale, with increasing focal intensity, to embedded levels of case study contexts in MUP (Figure 3.2). Within MUP, this was divided between GCRRP Phase I and II communities; the Kahua region independently; and most intensely, Toroa village, where the most extensive time and concentrated fieldwork was conducted. Therefore, based on the division of Kahua into nine districts, one community from each was selected as a research “focal community,” with the help of a panel of KA members. Selection was restricted to communities housing kindies at the time, whether functioning or not. In greater Makira focal research communities, selection was based on one representative community from each of the ten wards with which the GCRRP has collaborated, outside Kahua. All other GCRRP and Kahua kindy communities were included through survey data ( $n=52$ ).

In selecting focal communities, a variety of strategies were implemented to enable both analysis of literal replication (i.e. similar results between focal communities) and theoretical replication (i.e. contrasting findings between case study communities) (Yin 2003). Therefore, initial focal community selection was narrowed by geographic and political boundaries (i.e. nine KA districts and ten WV GCRRP project site wards). This was based on their unique contextual differences to include a range of different levels of kindy functioning, social cohesion, economic conditions, and geographic areas. Two separate groups of key local stakeholders/leaders (experts from KA and WV) were engaged in the final community selection processes to supplement the researcher’s

substantial knowledge of communities and kindly functioning throughout the region (developed during pilot study fieldwork and her initial two months living in Toroa).



**Figure 3.1** Map of Makira-Ulawa Province fieldwork sites (numbered by political ward).



**Figure 3.2** Research fieldwork embedded case study contexts.

### 3.6.2 Participant Sample

Notification about the study was sent in advance of the research team's arrival to all selected communities to ensure their awareness of the general research program and gain initial access from village chiefs. It was necessary to have communities informed of the

impending research team's arrival, and help identify available participants, prior to arrival of the team, in order for families to reschedule daily activities (e.g. rescheduling days spent working in gardens). Facilitation of this was by a designated "community facilitator." This was a person with whom the researcher had previously developed good rapport with and could rely on for helping with logistical organization in his/her home context, with his/her greatest knowledge of community-specific factors. While particular age ranges and genders were criteria for participant selection, essentially participant samples across focal communities and research methods consisted of nearly entire village populations present. In an effort to involve as many voices as possible, and thus encourage greater ownership of the ideas generated, the researcher strived to include as many interested community members as possible. Recruiting participants was generally not difficult, due to locals' curiosity in the research and researcher. Within different communities, sample sizes varied dramatically, as did the degrees of participants' involvement in the study. For example, virtually all villagers from Toroa community (regular average population approximately 250) were extensively involved with the research. Contrastingly, in greater Makira research communities, where predominantly focus groups were conducted, participants (approximately forty participants/community) had much more limited involvement in the research.

### **3.7 Ethics**

All humans are to some extent researchers, with an inclination to make sense of their surrounding world. This demanded the use of a variety of methods in this study to involve community members of all ages, as well as key stakeholders at different levels of society. Working with such a wide range of participants, including young children, illiterate people, non-English/Pidgin speakers, and those with low power levels within

their society, raised a vast number of ethical issues and concerns. Consequently, this required continuous reevaluation throughout the research process to ensure ethical involvement of all participants.

### *3.7.1 Overview of Ethical Measures*

To begin, a key necessity of research using an ethnographic approach is continuous researcher self-critical reflection, and along with this comes concerns regarding quality and ethics. These concerns are less so about the techniques and more so about the way in which the research is conducted and the relationships the researcher has with participants (White and Pettit 2004). When working and living so closely with participants, questions of quality and ethics directly bear on the validity of findings. While there was no anticipated harm to participants involved in this study, due to its nature, the following formal ethical measures were taken (Appendix B – Ethics Documents):

1. Research approval obtained from the Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC).
2. Research access obtained through the SI MEHRD. Subsequent requirements of research and residency permits obtained from SI MEHRD and SI Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labor, and Immigration.
3. Access to MUP and Kahua obtained from Provincial Premier Thomas Weape, President of the KA Eddie Jude Hagasua, National Quarantine Director and Kahua Leader Daniel Wagatora, and executive members of the KA.
4. Access to individual villages obtained from each village's chiefs, big men, and religious leaders.
5. Informed consent obtained from/for each participant. Within formal settings, such as government facilities where English is spoken, written consent obtained. Within rural villages, verbal consent obtained (in Kahua language and/or SI Pidgin).

Prior to beginning this phase of the research, the Kahua region was aware of the study and familiar with the researcher, based on a two-month pilot study and ongoing

communication with villages over the course of two years. However, an initial two weeks in Kahua were devoted to traveling the region, disseminating pilot study findings, and informing villagers of this second research phase. To maintain a partnership model, congruent with cultural/societal structures in place, the researcher continually worked through a chain of gatekeepers throughout the fieldwork, beginning with the KA, then to village tribal leaders/elders and individual participants. In all instances, upon arrival in a community, the researcher carried out a meeting with village leaders and elders to gain initial research approval and community access. Then, she gave an informal talk about the study to the entire community (facilitated by RA translations into Kahua language) and how community members may be involved. Consent was then obtained on a case-by-case basis as opportunities for particular data collection arose. By using a collaborative and ethnographically-inspired research approach, the researcher aimed to reduce any perceived power imbalances by becoming a fully engaged participant-observer, living alongside participants on as equal a level as possible. Furthermore, she emphasized participants' expertise in their knowledge of the local culture, context, and young children's development in comparison to her's as an outsider. In addition, to further reduce these unequal relationships, the use of locals as RAs facilitating the study fostered participants into feeling more comfortable communicating initially in the presence of the researcher while another Kahua person, and/or someone of their own gender, was also present.

### *3.7.2 Informed Consent*

Government and organization officials who had sufficient literacy abilities received a written brochure and letter explaining the study, along with an informed consent form (Appendix B.3). In recognition that these participants had high levels of education and

were knowledgeable in issues pertaining to early childhood development/education, the documents created for them provided a more in-depth account of the study. This was done to sufficiently inform them, as well as establish the credibility, knowledge, and professionalism of the researcher. However, due to low literacy levels and traditional oral practices of sharing information, written information about the project was not presented to village participants in Kahua/MUP prior to seeking their consent. Instead, these participants received an oral explanation of the study, simplified but comparable to that included in the project brochure. Then, they were read an informed consent script, and the researcher recorded for whom consent was obtained. Since the majority of participants had very limited literacy skills, the researcher aimed to guarantee their greatest comprehension before consenting to participate while also not off-putting potential participants fearing they must be able to read. For any participants wary of signing an informed consent form, the option of verbal consent was offered. In the case of children (under age fifteen: the legal marriage age, and thus transition into adulthood, in the SI), consent was obtained both from them and one of their guardians, as well as (when suitable) the adult overseeing learning in formal environments (e.g. teachers in kindy, primary, and Sunday school). For persons deemed to have mental disabilities, consent was additionally sought from a parent/guardian, where possible, otherwise information was not included in study. Furthermore, any participant wary of participating, such as due to an insufficient understanding of the study, was encouraged to ask any questions to the researcher and RAs (capable of translating), as well as was reassured of his/her confidentiality and anonymity. Notably, individual participants were not paid for involvement in the study; however, participation in daily village activities/chores by the researcher may be viewed as compensation for their participation.

### *3.7.3 Participant and Data Protection*

Unless expressly stated by a participant, all data collected was not recorded with participants' names or directly identifiable characteristics. Instead, identifiers of time/date, location, gender, and participant age (particularly for children) were recorded with data in order to facilitate comparisons between findings. Visual, audio, and typed interview/observation data were stored on a password protected Asus Eee PC (personal computer) and backed up on flash drives, all of which were locked in a case or remained with the researcher while not in use. The only other people with access to electrical equipment (i.e. laptop, camera, and audio-recorder) were RAs who only used this equipment under direct supervision of the researcher. All written fieldnotes and data sheets were also secured in a locked case when not in use by the researcher.

## **3.8 Data Analysis Strategy**

### *3.8.1 Foundations to Analysis*

The main failure of conventional development thinking has been to ignore the existential qualities of human life, what makes it actually worth living, which confers meaning on it for its participants. An economistic, over-socialized and much too rationalized conception of the human person can never capture the reality of actual life worlds.

(Clammer 2005:110)

Clammer's remark lays solid foundation of justification for the particular research methodology and methods implemented in this study. This is based on the belief that traditional approaches to development (or here, research in a developing context), which are often carried out quickly and rely extensively on expert evaluations, would be insufficient for the aspirations of the study. Instead, through working with locals, the anticipation was to bridge the gap between local and external knowledge and understandings with the hope of illuminating more relevant, and potentially consciousness-raising, information. As a result, these findings can be used to

influence/advice the future direction of ECE in Kahua (and potentially MUP and SI on a larger scale). In asserting this, three prominent elements were apparent:

1. As in ethnographic research, analysis of data was not a distinct stage. Instead, it was an ongoing process in which research questions were reformulated, reexamined, and clarified, based on the iterative process central to grounded theorizing.
2. Significance of ongoing dialectical interaction between data collection and ongoing data analysis, based on interpretations between researcher, RAs, and participants, in order to capitalize on the diverse perspectives (as well as strengths and constraints) of each of these research stakeholders' knowledge.
3. Inability to generalize findings beyond small sample; however, aspiration to identify particular characteristics of individual rural communities that may contribute to, or hinder, aspects of social mediation and elements of dissonance in early childhood learning approaches, and as a result, the implementation and sustainability of community-based ECE initiatives.

### *3.8.2 Analytical Strategy*

To address and achieve the three prominent elements above, research data were continuously reviewed, in an iterative process. Due to the interpretive nature of this study, the researcher believed that the social world is understood through shared cultural meanings of situations. Thus, it was essential to try and explore the complexity and diversity of stakeholders' perspectives associated with the research questions, which, by doing so, potentially strengthened validity. "For interpretivists, knowledge is valid if it is the authentic and true voice of participants" (Hughes 2001:36). By triangulating data between participants from all levels of stakeholders and methods conducted, authenticity and reliability could be strengthened through demonstrating consistency (Roberts-Holmes 2007).

Data were analyzed holistically to draw out themes to feed back into guiding the research. This required using thematic analysis, in which emerging themes and patterns were identified across the different data obtained from all research methods. Data were

thematically analyzed, in general, using a two-step process of coding. However, in practice, this was much more ongoing and cyclical as new data continuously was obtained, as is often implemented in grounded theory research (Strauss and Corbin 1998, Esterberg 2002). This data analysis strategy essentially involved open coding and focused coding. The former of these allowed for the micro-analytical level of analysis in identifying themes/categories of significance to the inquiry, out of which the latter then refined this process using focused coding (Coffey and Atkinson 1996), as is similar to open coding but focused more specifically on previously identified recurring themes. After refining the recurring themes into more focused coded categories, content analysis was then used to explore quantitatively the frequencies of themes identified and qualitatively to use narrative description to illustrate the themes. Throughout this essentially two-step coding process of all data, this allowed for comparisons across methods: observation notes, interview transcripts, visual artifacts from drawings to photographs and documents, focus group discussions, survey data, etc. Initially these findings were examined in regard to research question one, and once a baseline understanding of various shared learning experiences within the community were explored, then subsequent research questions were more thoroughly examined in the same manner.

### *3.8.3 Validity and Reliability*

Also important to note were efforts made to strengthen validity and reliability throughout the study. Within case study designs, typically three types of validity are referred to, as incorporated in this study (Yin 2003):

- Construct validity: throughout data collection, used multiple sources of evidence; established chains of evidence; and engaged key collaborators in reviewing and discussing components of findings, analysis, and reports;

- Internal validity: developed theories to explain particular findings during ongoing data analysis and explored contradictory examples; and
- External validity: research designed to explore factors through multiple cases of varied contexts.

Furthermore, drawing on validity in terms of participatory research, the study also aspired towards (Heron 1981; Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen 1994; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Reason and Bradbury 2001; Ozanne and Saatcioglu 2008):

- Outcome validity: created “knowledge for action” and extended local epistemologies, such as by increasing ECE awareness to better support kindies, largely due to mere research presence and participation;
- Democratic validity: thoroughly and meaningfully included a wide variety of stakeholders in order to maximize the range and depth of perspectives included;
- Process validity: recognized participants’ abilities to work as collaborators with the researcher by reflecting on their own social realities. As such, they were involved in ongoing learning through participation, potentially for their own development;
- Catalytic validity: aspired to work collaboratively throughout the research process with communities, partially due to subsequent potential for more practical lasting outcomes from the research; and
- Dialogical validity: facilitated ongoing opportunities for critical dialogue with/between participants/collaborators.

Further, reliability of methods implemented and data collected was achieved through clearly defined research procedures, when possible (e.g. focus groups, interview schedules); repeated methods with similar participants from different research case sites (e.g. same positions in community and/or responsibilities towards kindy); use of multiple interpreters/translators; and tools such as audio/video/photographic recordings, which allowed for repeated analysis of data, as well as in collaboration with different participants.

### **3.9 Concluding Methodological Remarks**

Implications for recognizing historical influences (e.g. colonial influences on the development of education systems) and continued global power imbalances are of significance in developing an appropriate research methodology. This is particularly significant when studying indigenous cultures and education systems, with an eye toward giving a voice to historically marginalized people and systems (Crossley and Tikly 2004). Within the SI, a dilemma persists between policy developers' and villagers' beliefs regarding the purpose of ECE, with the former striving for holistic development verses the latter's view of ECE predominantly as preparation for formal education and employment. This reflects a challenge educational research increasingly faces in general, relating to criticisms for not effectively contributing enough to the improvement of policy and practice, thus calling for more "relevant, cumulative, accessible, and cost-effective studies" (Crossley and Holmes 2001:395). This is particularly an issue for small developing nations, which are more easily susceptible to powerful international development agendas and external research priorities.

In light of this current educational research climate, and the particular research context, key to this study was the necessity of continuing a research partnership with the people of Kahua, as begun during the pilot study. The study was based on an understanding that the researcher needed to form a collaborative learning effort with participants. This was facilitated through the use of methodologically synergistic ethnographic and collaborative approaches, and corresponding methods, as guided a multiple embedded case study research design. The Kahua region itself exemplifies communities taking ownership over their future with the establishment of the KA. Congruently, the Kahua people have a general interest in being involved in local research, in recognition of its

potential in shaping their future lives and regional development. As such, this research provided for continued local capacity building opportunities and greater involvement in the study, thereby facilitating a context-relevant focus and potential practical outcomes. Correspondingly, Crossley and Holmes (2001:269) state, “Experience increasingly shows that successful innovation depends on the generation of realistically grounded knowledge relating to specific social, political, and cultural contexts.”

It would be imprudent to suggest a study related to contrasting viewpoints in the development of ECE without making great effort to diminish the barriers in understanding a wide range of perspectives. Therefore, creating partnerships with a range of ECE stakeholders featured prominently in this study. As such, the researcher aspired to incorporate diverse perspectives and circumstances through varied case study contexts and participants. This thereby aimed to strengthen validity, as well as potentially benefit more participants from shared learning opportunities, and, subsequently, increased ownership-taking of research findings. For as Foucault (1975:27) said, “We should admit...that power produces knowledge, and that power and knowledge directly imply one another.” Controlling the educational research nature and purpose undoubtedly has significant implications for stakeholders. Thus, it was critical that the interests, knowledge, and experiences of local Indigenous stakeholders were central to the research (Rigney 1999:119).

By approaching the research from an interpretive-hermeneutic perspective, the researcher strived to meet her aspirations of creating a shared horizon of meaning with her participants. This was endeavored by broadening the notion of research from a mere focus on cognitive knowledge to that which values experiential understanding and

fullness in interpretation of human experiences within the world, specifically with regard to ECE in SI. The extensive research design and implementation schedule of varied methods allowed for methods to be subservient to the heightened aspiration of facilitating ongoing bilateral communication, out of which understanding (as opposed to solely knowledge) was possible. This was further enabled by avoidance of using rigid theories to define/guide the study, with their potential to blind or restrict the inquiry from an open hermeneutic consciousness: an openness to continually revise understanding of the inquiry as it progressed.

As expressed by one kindy committee member in MUP ward 19,

We [rural communities] have been overlooked by the past successive governments because of our remoteness and geographical location. We are traditionally very shy and never expose our problems...we have been least privileged.

Thus, the ensuing research findings' chapters are believed to be inclusive of truthful and diverse perspectives of community members, kindy committees, and teachers throughout MUP communities, as well as key ECE stakeholders at the MUP and national government/NGO levels. Nevertheless, in the study's underlying effort to support long-term development in Kahua and sustainability for research findings/implications, already the study has achieved outcomes. In addition to the written findings presented in successive chapters, already achieved have been the building of local capacity to support research, development of local knowledge regarding young children, and provocation of participants' thoughts on future ECE planning and practice. Such accomplishments were made possible through the design and implementation of an ethnographically-inspired context-sensitive collaborative research approach. This emphasizes the ongoing underlying prominence in such a methodology of not conducting purely extractive research, solely dependent on the subsequent future dissemination of research findings, but a deeply-seated lasting dedication to the research focus, participants, and context.

## **CHAPTER 4: Culture and Solomon Islands' Early Childhood Education – Colonization to Present-Day**

### **4.1 Introduction: “Valium Education Blong Smol Pikinini Long Solo”<sup>30</sup>**

This chapter marks the beginning of a transition in this thesis to three analytical chapters of the research based on fieldwork conducted in Solomon Islands (SI), drawing on archival and empirical data, predominantly as related to Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP). To enter this analysis, this chapter begins with an historical documentation of educational influences in SI, drawing on archival texts and anecdotal oral histories.<sup>31</sup> This is followed by the presentation of the formal evolution of early childhood education (ECE) in SI, tracing the development of programming (est. 1980s), policy (est. 2008), and curriculum (est. 2009).<sup>32</sup> Finally, the chapter culminates with data analysis of the current state of ECE based on survey data collected in MUP.<sup>33</sup> Through this progression of sections, the chapter aspires to present the layers of historical, contextual, and cultural elements, which ultimately are suggested to bear directly on the development of kindies in MUP.

#### *4.1.1 Culture's Significance on Education*

Extensive research has been conducted examining the relationship between schooling/education and culture, suggesting that practitioners should expand their knowledge base to deliver curriculum inclusive of multiple cultural perspectives (Walsh 2002, Bullcock 2005, Lee and Walsh 2005, Nagayama and Gilliard 2005, Luo and Gilliard 2006). This is further extended by research investigating education and culture

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<sup>30</sup> “Valuing the Education of Young Children in the Solomons” (Translation from SI Pidgin)

<sup>31</sup> The section most significantly addresses supplementary research question #6 (Section 1.6) regarding historical influences/legacies on present-day ECE development.

<sup>32</sup> The section most significantly addresses supplementary research question #5 (Section 1.6) regarding non/governmental influences on the development of kindies.

<sup>33</sup> The section most significantly addresses supplementary research question #4 (Section 1.6) regarding community characteristics influencing cultural and contextual program sustainability.

in third and fourth world early learning programs, such as Gilliard and Moore's (2006) study of how family and community culture shapes curriculum in three early childhood programs on Native American Indian Reservations in the United States of America (USA). This research suggests that children's home and community culture are critical in supporting their sense of belonging, which in turn impacts their academic achievement (Gilliard and Moore 2006, Banks 2002, Osterman 2000). In line with this literature, this study of SI ECE resonates with the perspective of the significance in culturally informed ECE. On the surface level, it would appear as though such a notion would hold greater significance in other world regions, as opposed to small Pacific island nations.

Elsewhere, teachers are dealing with increasingly diversified classroom populations, and as such are arguably facing challenges of greater cultural and linguistic diversity. For example, this is an acute issue in the USA where classrooms are increasingly culturally diversifying yet over 90% of teachers remain of Euro-American descent (Nieto 2000). Nevertheless, such is also of significant relevance for the Solomons, and one in which ECE policy developers have notably been aware.

To examine the cultural adaptability and fit of education programs within SI, different levels of formal education can be compared and contrasted. Take, for example, SI primary and secondary school teachers who are placed by the government into schools throughout the nation, located in culturally and linguistically diverse islands and villages. Most typically and strategically, these locations are outside of teachers' home communities and regions, so as to circumvent social distractions. These placements typically last three years, before teachers are relocated to new posts, with the objective of maintaining teachers' focus on teaching and not becoming distracted by social relations. This approach is suggested by the government to be effective for primary and secondary

schools, where curriculum is to be taught in English and has limited reference to local cultures. However, in contrast, following these guidelines would present particularly challenging issues to SI ECE teachers. ECE policy states that classes are to be predominantly taught in children's mother tongue (or Pidgin/English for classrooms of diverse student groups, such as in urban centers) and inclusive of local cultures/kastoms (MEHRD 2008). Therefore, placing teachers outside their linguistic and cultural regions would not allow for such policy-defined classroom instruction and environments.

Presently, in MUP, where the vast majority of ECE teachers merely hold Field-Based Training (FBT) certificates, they remain teachers in their home communities. These teachers are not formally recognized by the government and as such do not receive a salary from the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD). Contrastingly, for those who do attend a higher education teacher-training program, and thus become formally recognized by the government as certified teachers who receive a government salary, the provincial ECE coordinators are responsible for their teaching placements. With a post-ECE policy (MEHRD 2008) national implementation plan to move towards primary school-based kindies, as opposed to community standalone-classrooms, the coordinators must then place any new formally certified kindy teachers to openings at primary school-based kindies. Most frequently, this is outside one's own community and/or linguistically homogenous region, which therefore challenges the fundamentals to the SI's ECE context-specificity. As suggested in the title of this section, "Valium Education Blong Smol Pikinini Long Solo" ("Valuing the Education of Young Children Education in the Solomons"), for SI ECE there is a clear effort being made to link curriculum, policy, and practice with culture, which is often contrasted by SI primary and secondary education. Yet, notably, as will be illuminated in this chapter,

the historical origins of ECE arose out of demands from the already formally established education sector, which creates an interesting dichotomy of how these sectors have differed in their development and priorities.<sup>34</sup>

#### *4.1.2 Approaching Analysis of Culture and Education*

In order to understand the parallel development of ECE within the SI formal education sector, and dangers of not uniquely approaching this educational division, one must first step back and look at the origins of education in the Solomons. Additionally, one must examine other potential external factors' influencing local ethnotheories of learning, education, and development. This is inclusive of evolving societal values, beliefs, and growing needs out of increasing pressures on local traditional lifestyles. Therefore, this chapter will now proceed to explore the plausible origins and nature of Kahuan ECE stakeholders' belief systems, and predominant macro-level pressures on program implementation.

#### **4.2 Foundations of the Solomon Islands' Formal Education Sector: Potential Origins and Nature of Kahuan ECE Stakeholders' Belief Systems**

Formal (school-based) education in the SI was originally introduced with three predominant objectives:

- Promote the values of a variety of denominations of Christian churches through the teaching of literacy to enable understanding of the Bible;
- Establish a basis of skilled people to work in newly created posts to administer governance; and
- Provide the services and resources for an emerging private sector.

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<sup>34</sup> This is not to suggest that classroom pedagogy, for example, should be homogenous across all SI education sectors. However, it is noted here that the need for ECE originated in demands by primary schools claiming children were arriving unprepared and thus required additional preparatory learning before Class 1. Despite this, as formal education expanded to include younger children, initial efforts towards culturally-relevant and play-based learning have since been overpowered by an often academicization of such ECE settings.

Since inception, through to present-day, many local perceptions of the primary purpose for obtaining a formal education (Appendix C – Formal SI Education System) have remained unchanged: education as a pathway to employment in the formal sector, away from traditional subsistence lifestyles in rural villages. Bearing this in mind, the following subsections, proposed as being potential origins to the nature of Kahuan ECE stakeholders' belief system development, will now shift back in time to understand how such an educational system initially came to be and possible external forces shifting local ethnotheories regarding learning and development. Here, it is recognized that education in the Solomons was not a concept initially introduced through colonization. Nevertheless, in presenting it as such, by using this as the starting point, inadvertently implies connotations of development originating with the arrival of Westerners. Therefore, it is important to understand that this was chosen as the historical starting point for this study in light of colonization and the arrival of missionaries' impact on formally introducing an education sector to the islands. However, duly noted, is an extensive history of diverse and divergent external thought influences on SI beginning with Papuan speakers 50,000 years ago; followed by Austronesians 3,000 years ago; and Christianity finally not arriving until the 1800s along with colonial thought and capitalistic commerce from the 1800s to the 1900s (Crocombe 2005). Furthermore, since then, additional external influences have come from independence periods of the 1960s and 70s, and, most recently, the globalization of science, technology, and communication; consumerism (USA-led); and Asianization in the Pacific (Chinese-led) (ibid).

#### *4.2.1 Legacy of Educating “Savages”: Historical Underpinnings of Missionaries in SI*

##### *Arrival of Missionaries*

Approximately three centuries after Mendana first went ashore and founded the Solomons (1568), in 1845, a small group of Marist missionaries, led by Bishop Epalle, arrived on Isabel Island and found,

...a goodly number of practically naked blacks, armed with clubs and tomahawks, sullenly watched them approach, answered their message of peace with insolent words and then fell upon them with frenzied fury and blood-curdling yells, mortally wounding the Bishop and striving to slay his companions who, only with the greatest difficulty, made their escape, and succeeded in bearing their dying leader back to the boat.

(Decker 1942:129-130)

However, this did not stop the mission, and instead they continued southeastward to San Cristoval Island (a.k.a. Makira). There, fever, the killing of two priests who were then roasted and eaten, and continuing opposition by locals, with repeated attempts to burn the missionaries' homes, made it eventually necessary to abandon the mission (ibid).

Subsequently, the Fathers of the Foreign Mission Society of Milan attempted to undertake the work of bringing Christianity to the “savage” islanders, yet they were also forced to abandon their efforts after suffering many difficulties, including the murder of one of their leaders.

##### *SI Mission Schools*

Finally, beginning in 1849, Christian faith began to spread successfully in schools throughout the SI by missionaries. Initially, boys and girls were taken to New Zealand (NZ) to be educated, due to the unsafe position of missionaries as a result of cannibalistic and tribal warrior practices of the islanders. Furthermore, this was necessary due to the detrimental effects on Indigenous-Whiteman relations in the aftermath of “the other mission”: forcibly recruiting Solomon Islanders for slave trade to work in Australian and Fijian sugar plantations (Laka 1973). As more Solomon Islanders became educated in

NZ and returned to their SI villages, thus spreading their new knowledge of Whiteman and Christianity, it became safe for the missions to open schools locally.

The whole idea of these early schools was to teach industry, regularity, and responsibility rather than learning. From these schools came the teachers, the priests, and the scores of missionaries who took the Christian faith to all the islands...The schools never had a high standard of secular education, but it was a marvelous centre for the training of Christian character. The boys who went out from it were called teachers; perhaps they should have been called catechists, for except reading and writing, it was mainly the Christian faith that they taught.

(Fox 1958:224)

Contrasting Fox's critical anthropological perspective, drawing from the words of Reverend Mother Mary Rose, Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary (SMSM), as expressed in her personal diary while working in SI, "[Y]ou can see missionaries, a mere handful of them relatively speaking, struggling to gather in the harvest of one hundred thousand souls, and accomplishing positive wonders in the face of tremendous odds," (Decker 1942:124-125). From this, she believed that "[l]ittle by little, knowledge of the Gospel is freeing these people from the bondage of slavery and superstition" (ibid:170). Yet, local ideals regarding the church and education were at times seen contrastingly, as in the choice of which mission to accept within one's community, as expressed by one chief to Mother Mary (ibid:132), in a confidential fashion, where he stated,

Seven Day Adventists want me take in boys. Me no take only Catlic boys. Seven Day Adventists no want us eat meat and milk. Catlic let eat all. Me want Catlic boys.

Humorously, this suggests a balance of free-choice ideals with those of an external array of missionaries' values. Nevertheless, nearly all Makiran villages accepted some denomination of Christianity, and along with this, the introduction of literacy and formalized education.

By the 1930s and 40s, mission schools throughout the Solomons were providing a "decent" education to men, who were then able to work in newly created government posts. Soon, education was becoming a priority, despite creating long periods of separation between children and their families, which was merely considered by parents

as part of the education process that would result in positive economic outcomes for families. Laka (1973:3), former headmaster of a SI Senior Primary School, asserts that this trend of obtaining a mission education and resulting in employment from the government eventually became a “pattern of illogical thinking towards the concept of education.” This, Laka claims, is an illusion that has never left the minds of many SI communities. Extension of this argument will be explored later in the chapter, with regard to its present-day relevance to ECE.

### *Missionary-Government Education Partnership*

Due to the relationship between education and government employment, by the 1950s, the government became considerably influential in the nature of education in mission schools. Within the Wainoni Sub-District of MUP, as is the regional focus of this study, a number of brief tour reports were completed by the District Officer, including the state of education and mission schools. Drawing on a few of these surviving reports from the 1940s and 50s, one begins to see the motivation for specific goals by the missions, as well as challenges they continued to face. Take for example the Roman Catholic Mission at Wainoni Bay, which in 1956 was attended by 70 boys and 70 girls from throughout San Cristoval (a.k.a. Makira), led by Fathers and Sisters respectively:

Boys school run by two faathers [sic] and one native teacher and is combined with training school for catechista. School for catechista run in the morning while schoolboys work gardens and school for boys is run in the afternoon – 3 classes with 5 forty five minute periods each afternoon Monday to Friday. Syllabus is thorough. Teaching in native language but with considerably more attention given to English than previously. Seems that quality tends to be sacrificed to quantity and the fact that more than half the time is given to training catechists prevents this school from being the really efficient educational establishment which it might be. A lay teacher is expected to join the mission shortly which should improve matters. The same remarks apply to the girls school but as there is no catechists school to interfere the sisters are able to devote more time to it. Training is given in midwifery, child welfare and nursing in connection with the hospital and crèche. Another Sister qualified as a nuse [sic] and teacher may be joining soon which will ease the situation. The wearing of loose-fitting blouses by the older girls is encouraged but not compulsory. Such relics of Victorianism are neither usefull [sic] nor becoming and it is not clear why they are still encouraged.

(District Officer San Cristoval August 1956)

Furthermore, drawing on a previous San Cristoval District Officer report, with regard to historic external perspectives on literacy development in Makira, Deck (1948:3) writes,

The fact that the local language is used to a large extent in the schoolrooms and throughout the mission is not a desirable feature, for a common language, English is an essential for future progress in the Solomons.

Notably, these historic educational challenges and debates have remained relatively static for decades. Significant elements drawn from the above excerpts are applicable to what was observed in this present study as ongoing Makiran educational challenges, which are displayed in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1** Enduring SI Educational Challenges: 1940s-2010s

| <i>Students</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <i>External Factors</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <i>Contextual Relevance</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quantity of students over quality of education: scaling up without sufficient, appropriate resources to support students</li> <li>▪ Gender balance: inclusion of women, despite separate expectations of genders</li> <li>▪ Lasting impact of conservative clothing, increasingly becoming culturally-engrained</li> <li>▪ Foresight in women's development (e.g. educating on child welfare and development of crèches)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Time balance between formal education and subsistence-living commitments</li> <li>▪ Inclusion of local teachers to facilitate program quality and management</li> <li>▪ Overlapping efforts of missions, now replaced by aid organizations and governments</li> <li>▪ Difficulty of supervision and regular liaison due to transport challenges in remote locations and absence of sufficient infrastructure</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multiplicity of native languages, used as teaching mediums, yet ongoing drive in preference of English</li> <li>▪ Adaptation of education to local conditions: physical, economic, and human</li> <li>▪ Local priority preference on store-brought imported foods over education-expenses</li> <li>▪ Diversity of cultures: efforts to incorporate into relevant education</li> </ul> |

From Table 4.1, it becomes clear that three general categories of factors have persistently challenged education development for over seven decades: students, external influences, and programs' contextual relevance. Nevertheless, it is recognized that these broad generalizations are not exhaustive of all factors, nor inclusive of all challenges, faced by the diversity of regions in the Solomons. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that groups involved in the development of education (e.g. missionaries, non-governmental organizations, governments) have had vastly different objectives and therefore varied impacts through their involvement. For example, Groves' (1940) historic report on a

survey of the British SI Protectorate education development stated that all schoolwork was being developed exclusively by missionaries, without support from Britain in regulation, organization, or supervision. As such, this had an immense impact on the local early religious-orientations and objectives of education.

### *Persistent Education Perspectives*

Arguments for developing a culturally appropriate education system in SI have remained consistent for decades, aside from a significant shift whereby locals have replaced many expatriates as drivers of educational development objectives. Take for example the comparison of educational statements from expatriate Dr. Huxley (1932) and those of an Indigenous Pacific educational planning committee (Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, and Benson 2002:1 – markedly draws on international research):

Huxley  
(1932, emphasis added)

“Perhaps the greatest danger in the education of primitive people is that we should try to force our own concepts upon them ready-made, using for the purpose educational systems adapted to our own conditions...The first *essential is to relate the type of education to the local conditions*, including not only the geography and economics of the people, but also their social organization and traditional ideas. The second part is to *relate it to the ideal which you have for their future development*. And third is to *relate it to the general culture of the world*...But the prime necessity is to educate them for their own particular environment. Education should help them to take a greater pride in their activities, to enjoy themselves more, to *blend what is good in their tradition with what is good in the tradition of Western civilization*.”

Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, and Benson  
(2002:1, emphasis added)

“Research in other parts of the world indicates that to achieve quality education it is not enough to improve leadership, train teachers, revise and renew curricula, provide adequate support resources, upgrade facilities, widen access, lower costs, mobilize community support, and change the structures of school and systems, unless the cultures of schools and systems, that is, the values and belief systems that underpin the behaviors and actions of individuals and institutions, and the structures and processes they create, undergo fundamental changes. Some Pacific educators have similarly come to attribute the *continuing ineffectiveness of education in the region* to the *increasing incongruence between the values promoted by formal western schooling*, the modern media, economic systems, and globalization on the one hand *and those held by Pacific communities* on the other.”

Despite seventy years separating the above excerpts, the authors of both assert that education should not only be adapted to the local context, but further should provide opportunity to transcend that environment.

For decades, internally and externally, there has been a strong recognition of education as a social process, capable of exerting proper cumulative effect over time and across generations. Despite this ongoing trend in understanding educational development as dependent upon its recognition and incorporation of local contextual factors, this has often only been observed from top educational planners, or missionaries as it were. However, it has not been reflected in grassroots' beliefs and attitudes towards such efforts. Take, for example, the significant dissociation between the development of education and that of religion. In comparing them, a lack of ownership by Pacific peoples can be associated with the formal education process as opposed to Christianity. The church has successfully become fully integrated into the vast majority of Pacific island communities and people's lives, while education prevails as markedly foreign to many Pacific peoples. Education remains unchanged, as something that continues to be imposed by the outside, and as such is often perceived to exclude, marginalize, lack relevance to local ways of life, and insufficiently support locals to succeed.

In recognition of the lingering challenges and priorities of SI formal education for nearly a century, one must question the local ideologies that have developed over this time, which have perpetuated a singular educational trajectory. Most notably, this returns one to the notion of guaranteed employment/income as a result of obtaining an education, as here depicted by the relationship between mission schools' education and government employment. Arguably, this is closely linked with the "exotic and strange" stories of desire, epitomized in *cargo cults*, as detailed in the subsequent subsection. These stories of beliefs in the expected arrival of ancestral spirits bearing material goods are inextricably linked to Christianity and the missionaries who first brought education to the "savage" Solomon Islanders.

Christianity was associated with literacy from the first. Books were the strongboxes of the new knowledge that only the white man's learning would unlock [...] the missions maintained a virtual monopoly on education, the new knowledge was strongly bound to be thought of as religious knowledge. Education was literacy, was Bible-reading, was Christianity, was civilized values, was education.

(Swatridge 1985:13)

Congruent with the above quote, here it is suggested that the “delivery” of education from missionaries has formed the foundation of present-day SI formal educational ideologies. This now demands further exploration in the following section on cargo cultures.

#### *4.2.2 Education as Cargo*

Linking the *education of savages* to *cargoism*, education can be regarded as a liturgical expression of a global cargo cult. Illich (1971:45) proclaims that it is reminiscent of cargoism throughout Melanesia in the 1940s, in which “[s]chool combines the expectations of the consumer expressed in its claims with the beliefs of the producer expressed in its ritual.” Thus, this “injected cultists with the belief that if they but put on a black tie over their naked torsos, Jesus would arrive in a steamer bearing an icebox, a pair of trousers, and a sewing machine for each believer” (ibid). Suggested here is the link between Western education as a “rot blo kago” (i.e. cargo road): proposing that education (i.e. literacy in English) can deliver “goods” (i.e. employment), which in fact was not necessarily deliverable by those promoting “education” (i.e. missionaries [religiously oriented] and government [public/private sector orientations]).

#### *Cargo Cults*

The notion of cargo cults has a legacy among coastal tribes of Melanesia. Swatridge (1985:viii) refers to this idea of cargo cults as the “Oceanic Cult of the Ship of the Dead,” in which,

Ghosts are white in Melanesia, as they are elsewhere, therefore when white men landed in Papua (and) New Guinea they were taken for ghosts. They brought unimagined riches with them, but they did not bring freedom. For this reason, there has been a conflict at the heart of “cargoism”: there has been the natural struggle against invaders who have outlawed all that was most exciting in the native culture; and there has been the natural envy of Western goods that seemed to make life so much more worth living.

Bourne (1995:61) describes these cargo cults in the 1940s,

The best known examples come from the South Pacific at the time of the Second World War. As Douglas MacArthur pincered his way up toward the Japanese, he leapfrogged across islands that had scarcely seen a piece of steel, let alone vast, floating villages vomiting thousands of white men, Jeeps, radios, refrigerators, and hospitals onto the beach. Understandably, the locals were impressed. But they were also confounded: they never saw these things produced; the goods simply appeared. And how do you explain a radio to someone who has no concept of electricity – how is it that talking into a little box can cause a great metal bird to come from a place he didn’t know existed and dump things that float down from the sky?”

Historically, cargo cults developed in primitive societies when natives were exposed to the powerful material wealth of the Western-industrialized world (Lindstrom 1993:1).

Similarly to this phenomenon, in which natives interpreted foreigners’ plentiful supplies as coming from their ancestors in the spiritual world, understandings of the power of educational cargo has also, arguably, been irrationally understood by these same natives.

### *Educational Cargo*

Johnson (1999) likens the notion of education as cargo to ECE in Europe, citing in particular the phenomenon of internationally transferring the Italian Reggio Emilia ECE<sup>35</sup> approach. He claims that this “reliance of cargo cults leaves us passively waiting, searching the horizon for the next plane or shipload ‘influx of goods,’ instead of actively addressing other pressing issues” (ibid:71). The relationship between cargo cults and Reggio Emilia is an idea that it “palpates and animates our own diffuse but powerful discourses of desire...it is an allegory of desire. And desire itself, as an emotion, an interest, a future, another self, an unending problem, is desirable,” (Lindstrom 1993:184). Just as anthropologists have been drawn to far-off exotic places of desire, such as the

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<sup>35</sup> Inquiry-based child-centered approach to ECE, developed in the Italian village of Reggio Emilia and widely adopted (to varying degrees) internationally.

South Pacific, so too have early childhood educationalists fallen for far-off desires (i.e. uncritical international transfer of policy and practice), like Italian Reggio Emilia ECE. However, as Johnson (1999:74) states,

In our fanatic attempt to become the “other” – THE Reggio teacher, like THE now infamous multicultural teacher, who replaced THE whole language teacher, who replaced THE Vygotskian teacher, who replaced THE DAP [developmentally appropriate practice] teacher, who replaced THE constructivist teacher, who replaced THE...we have tragically failed to further politicize our own identity and understand more about our own true selves.

Similarly, originating with imported ideas of education as brought to SI in a form of “cargo” by missionaries, one begins to see the development of Natives’ external dependency in driving perceived internal entitlements. Herein, local expectations were often unrealistic, believing in guaranteed direct economic benefits from obtaining missionary educations without modifications to them for the unique cultures and contexts of SI. For example, as Eri (1973:2) describes,

Five days a week the children strained their lungs and vocal cords singing their alphabets and numerals. The teachers did not seem to be bothered by the noise. The parents heard their children’s voices when they passed by on their way to the garden. To them it was evidence that their children were learning – though it seemed to have little significance for them what their children were learning.

Just as those beliefs that goods would arrive through cargo deliveries, so too were *mystical* beliefs that “goods” would directly lead on from any type of Whiteman education obtained.

### *Mystical Understandings*

Building on Pacific idealizations of cargoism leads to a local understanding of development as emerging from mystical experiences. Downs (1972:15) writes, with regard to cargoism, that there was a belief in a “mystical source” to Whiteman’s goods. For example, as expressed in a short story of a young man returning to his village of intrigued relatives, Kadiba (1972) writes of how Whitemans’ goods were simply believed to be delivered after written for on bits of paper. Although presently in

Wainoni (i.e. the MUP regional focus [a.k.a. Kahua] of this study), locals are familiar with some of their ancestors' involvement in the cargo cult movement, nearly all reject the notion that people continue to hold such beliefs today. There is now fairly clear understanding that Western material goods are not *magically* delivered by Whiteman from Solomon Islanders' ancestors. Nevertheless, this belief has arguably transformed into an ideology of warranted development outcomes as a result of obtaining Western (Whiteman) knowledge, as extends to the commencement of formal education, now beginning with ECE. This is realized in the locally perceived linear progression of education to employment, and as such an implied income, as extracted from interviews with the Kahua people in this present study.

#### *4.2.3 Makiran Human Development: The Mystical Experience*

Subsequent to the cargo cult movement, the evolution of belief in mystical phenomena has since emerged in a relatable phenomenon to cargoism that can be seen in the, local to Makira, highly controversial belief in the "Army Movement." This belief began in the Arosi region (Western Makira) and has since spread to Wainoni, particularly causing social divisions within Western Wainoni communities. During this present study, numerous interviews were conducted in Wainoni regarding this more recent mystical subterranean movement to explore its Indigenous epistemic foundations. Informants from Western Wainoni describe the belief in this movement as coming into fruition during Fox's (1919, 1924) extensive anthropological work in Makira in the early 1900s. Kahuan believers in this movement hold that long ago, some Israelites, from one of the original Biblical Twelve Tribes, came to Arosi, settled there, and still remain to this day. The beliefs around the movement began developing when Dr. Fox needed to quickly return to Australia from his work in Makira. At that time, there were no rapid means of

transportation from Makira; however, Dr. Fox quickly went to Australia and returned again, leading locals to believe that he must have access to some type of transportation of which they were unaware.<sup>36</sup> The predominant present-day local Makiran belief holds that these white Israelites have been developing a vast underground city, based on the northeast coast of Makira (i.e. Arosi), where they are all well trained as army men and continue to live today. They are believed to carry guns and other weapons, as well as additionally have supernormal technology (i.e. devised by Euro-Americans and autochthon mythical supernatural dwarfs, native to Makira, called Kakangora).

Currently, it is believed by some in Wainoni, along with those on other parts of Makira, that these Israelites are beginning to enforce the maintenance of culture and kastom by Makirans. For those who do not abide, some believe that the Army Movement people will rise out of the ground and kill those who break the rules of Makiran culture and kastom, Christianity, and present-day government. However, markedly, implicit alterations to these beliefs become apparent in these most recent interpretations, raised through this present research. For example, it seems questionable as to why a separate army cultural group, without obligations to the church or present government (since their origin predates such institutions), would be thought to enforce them. This reveals a fascinating dynamic to the evolution of Makiran mystical beliefs in accommodating present local circumstances.

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<sup>36</sup> Contrastingly, predominantly within in Arosi, there is a suggested belief that this extraordinary power residing beneath Makira originates in the context of Maasina Rule: a post-WWII SI nationalist movement. It was rumored within Makira that “Americans fighting in the Pacific had established a modern ‘town’ in a vast hollowed-out cavern inside the island;” and further, some speculated that these were not foreigners but were actually descendants of Makiran women taken centuries earlier by Euro-American explorers and traders (Scott 2007:105-129, 2008). During the peak of this movement, some in Arosi believed that their returning matrilineal (significant to Makira) cousins would aid in terminating British rule and assist in Makiran development and prosperity, in part of a divine plan for Makira to become an autonomous federal state or independent nation, governed by true Makiran kastoms. As a result, it is believed this would lead to an abundance of wealth and resources flowing to the island, thus promoting Makiran ascendancy through development (ibid).

As a result of differing local beliefs over the Army Movement, a great social divide is being created within communities, thus deeply affecting cooperation between villagers on a daily basis, particularly in West Wainoni. This was recounted and observed to not only affect local belief systems but also directly influence community-based program sustainability, including that of kindergartens. One dramatic example of the movement affecting a community can be seen in a central Wainoni village, where the division of villagers between believers and non-believers has substantially segregated all aspects of daily life, including tearing down the community church (further explored - Chapter 7). Underlying this, in addition to its direct impacts on community-cohesion, and correspondingly program sustainability, these fundamental societal *mystical beliefs* yet again demonstrate a mentality of dependency as Makirans wait for yet another group to drive their development.<sup>37</sup>

#### *4.2.4 Modern Contextual Pressures*

In addition to the Makiran mystical beliefs described above, and dependency on others to provide an easier route for Makiran development, a few prominent contemporary societal and contextual pressures have also dramatically shaped the development of current SI education systems and locals' beliefs towards them.

#### *Population Growth and Associated Contextual Pressures*

Within MUP, population has been increasing at an annual rate of 2.7% (SI Government 1999); and more specifically, in Kahua, projections suggest that the population is

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<sup>37</sup> Most markedly, widespread Makiran belief holds that the highly regarded, now deceased, former SI Prime Minister, Solomon Mamaloni, is actually still alive and working with the Army people in planning to lead the movement above ground. This is deemed possible based on a story that Fox obtained a Kakangora's (i.e. dwarf autochthon) stone. These stones, according to local kastom stories, are believed to be held under the armpit of the Kakangora and responsible for giving the Kakangora supernatural powers. It is believed that Fox then gave his stone to Mamaloni, thus giving him special abilities whilst in governmental power and now in his current disputable state. Through this, it is presumed that Makira will become a highly prosperous, independent state as a result of external supernatural assistance. This epitomizes mystical beliefs regarding development, as held by believers in the Army Movement, and more widely in Mamaloni's power as a result of his Kakangora's stone.

growing at an unsustainable rate for available natural resources. Kahuan population is expected to double over the next 14 years (from 4,053) if trends continue, based on an estimated 6.7 children born per woman per lifetime (Fazey, Latham, Hagasua, and Wagatora 2007). Consequently, this is driving numerous other regional livelihood and wellbeing challenges, in addition to having significant imminent impacts on ECE.

Historically, in Wainoni, there were widespread beliefs regarding family planning. This included the belief that one could prevent pregnancy through the use of what were essentially *mystical beliefs* in “black magic” (i.e. *maura*): a combination of powerful word recitation and use of local medicinal plants. Although a few Natives still hold some of these beliefs, particularly in West as opposed to East Wainoni, many have long discounted them since the arrival of the church.<sup>38</sup> As a result, more recently, some have begun to cite the loss of these traditions as justification for rising regional problems, such as that of rapid population growth.

In addition to links with Makiran mystical beliefs, the significance of raising issue with unsustainable population growth is to highlight growing pressures on local subsistence resources (i.e. food and building materials). Ultimately, insufficient natural resources for the regional population are leading to a cash-based society out of necessity.

Furthermore, in order to participate in such a cash-based society, this is driving a knowledge-based economy out of a linear progression belief in educational means to financial ends. Here, a keen distinction must be made between the purposes of this societal change, whereby in order to obtain most well paid employment positions, one must achieve a good formal education. But, this begs the question, is this growing

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<sup>38</sup> It is difficult to grasp the extent to which people reject or maintain these traditional beliefs. Often a person who will regularly verbally reject such practices and beliefs will find her/himself turning to village elders and medicine doctors in times of extreme need when modern medicine and prayer are not producing desired effects.

educational attainment out of necessity driving a knowledge-society or merely a knowledge-economy. At present, as argued here, education is predominantly the means to an end in transitioning from a subsistence- to cash-based economy. As such, debatably, it is a knowledge-based economy that is most widely developing. This is in line with Natives' longstanding desires to have "Whiteman goods," as originated with the arrival of missionaries, and accordingly beliefs that this is achievable through formal education leading to employment. As such, intrinsic value of Western-knowledge, as gained through formal education, is not actually seeping into the society, but largely merely driving the economy.

As is becoming observable throughout SI, consequently, correlated with a growing economic priority are depleting natural resources. This is further spurring greater demands on a knowledge-based economy out of necessity to buy resources that once were readily available on one's own land. These changes can largely be attributed to an increase in population pressures on the land, as well as increasing resource extraction as a rapid means to income generation. The detrimental wide-spread, lengthy-to-reverse, effects of the latter of these is slowly becoming realized, such as in soil erosion, lack of and displacement of subsistence resources, contamination of water sources, rising food prices due to increased demand and reduced supply, etc. Correspondingly, this can be associated with a loss of social cohesion and the cultural practices/values of sharing and respect, as individuals increasingly have land disputes and/or whose actions have detrimental impacts on others' livelihoods and wellbeing. Therefore, as initially prompted by a growing population, and as such depleting resources, education has predominantly taken on the role of financial avenue. Yet, as quicker and easier avenues arise (e.g. cash crops and logging), education is increasingly left to the wayside.

Furthermore, without development of critical thinking skills through formal schooling, the long-term effects of these rapid financial avenues are often not properly negotiated (i.e. with external investors) or thought out for their long-term consequences. Therefore, as evidenced in MUP, this is eventually leading to exploitation of Natives and other irreversible negative environmental, social, and cultural impacts.

#### *4.2.5 Reviewing Historical Ideological Implications*

The preceding sections, tracing potential origins to the development of Makiran belief systems, of relevance to educational advancements, demonstrate a progression of ideologies indicative of how Makiran development as a whole has been projected to unfold. Much in the same line of thought that previous, often mystical, external forces to the daily lives of Makirans would bring about the support for their rapid development, the present educational system has unrealistically been perceived. At the grassroots, education is viewed as a rapid means to long-desired ends of prosperity, as believed to involve money and Western-material wealth. As traced thus far in this chapter, these ideas originated from the expectations associated with obtaining a mission school education; to the building of “roads and wharfs” in anticipation of long-awaited cargo from ancestral spirits; and now as realized in yet another mystical externally-driven movement of the Army people, who are anticipated to eventually bring about Makiran development and prosperity. Through these suggested origins of Makiran beliefs, with particular reference to ECE stakeholders, one begins to see how they have strongly influenced locals’ reactions to contextual pressures on land and resources, as correlates with population pressures. On the surface level, formal education in SI has grown in prominence over the past century, with its primary objective as a means to individual financial prosperity. Yet, many questions remain as to how these epistemological,

ideological, and societal developments are conducive to ECE, particularly as a community-based initiative. Such questioning must be made with regard to the particular cultural and contextual circumstances of SI, as opposed to Western societies. Markedly, SI society remains largely communal, job opportunities are extremely limited, depleting natural resources must be used with great care, and a resurgence of traditional knowledge and skills is emerging. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will shift focus from these wider issues of SI education more specifically to that of formal ECE in SI.

### **4.3 Solomon Islands' Early Childhood Education<sup>39</sup>**

#### *Foundations*

Building on “Makiran” historical ideological underpinnings raised in the first half of this chapter, this section now turns to exploring formal ECE in SI and how these local beliefs have influenced such program development. Sir Geoffrey Henry, former Prime Minister for the Cook Islands wrote,

If each of you went forth with lanterns and spent a lifetime searching, it is unlikely you would find an educational system that truthfully served its culture. [...] Part of the problem, I suggest, is that we teachers tend to see education as a stand-alone, rather than integral part of a greater endeavor. We tend to define this discipline narrowly and happily burden it with our own rules and theories.

(cited in Teasdale and Teasdale 1992:9)

In light of Sir Henry's statement about education truly serving a culture, SI ECE sets a concrete example of such an educational endeavor, aimed widely at supporting holistic child development and local culture. Yet, one must question its ability to be “truthfully serving culture,” as opposed to being defined narrowly by international standards and historical, religious, and colonial educational influences. Here, this is suggested as

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<sup>39</sup> Due to the paucity of documentation and analysis of SI formal ECE, this section presents a compilation of information. This is inclusive of government and NGO policy and program documents, alongside evidence collected by the researcher through interviews and participant observations conducted with all levels of ECE stakeholders in SI.

potentially occurring as a result of the ideological development from historic dependency building forces on external resources and ideas, as explored in the previous sections.

### *Origins of SI ECE*

From the conception of the idea for a standardized form of ECE throughout the Solomons, substantial influences for such a program have clearly come from interventions and consultants in England and NZ. Additionally, expatriates who originally implemented their own programs for their young children, in SI urban centers, served as models for programs developed by locals. Contrastingly, there is also a SI belief that ECE has held a prominent role in Solomon society since well before outsiders began introducing such programs. Instead, ECE has been viewed as G-d's creation, thus linking this stage of formal education with the introduction of Christianity through missionaries, and as such in line with that of primary and secondary schools' historic foundations. Therefore, arguably, the notion of formal ECE is also an imported idea dating back to the arrival of Christianity through missionaries in the Solomons, and thus, "G-d's Word". Yet, due to the fact that religion (Christianity) has become a fundamental component of local culture in present-day, here it is accepted that belief in the Bible and "G-d's Word" are deeply internalized by the vast majority of Solomon Islanders, and as such are no longer "foreign" per se. This is in contrast to imported cultures and materials from the Western world, as well as ancient "hedonistic" ancestral beliefs, which are both predominantly no longer associated with the fundamentals of present-day Solomon culture. Along these lines, as taught in the SI ECE Field-Based Training (FBT) program, a possible explanation for the introduction of ECE to SI can be traced back to when G-d created the first two human beings, Adam and Eve, and such was the beginning of family life. The Bible (Genesis 4:1-15) reveals the purposes of the family as to teach, train,

discipline, and be the center of worship of G-d. Further, these duties towards the child are stated as needing to be addressed in the home and not the classroom. This clarifies the local lucid understanding, as overtly expressed throughout the Solomons, that parents are children's first teachers.<sup>40</sup> The SI FBT manual (Provincial Ministry of Education 2008) states, "Early Childhood Education is part of the Family or Home Management which is all about the upbringing of the child under the Moral and Cultural Beliefs and where the shaping and molding of the lives of the child begins." Thus, the blame for neglecting ECE of SI children "begins within ourselves, our communities, the parents, and our country. Therefore we must bear in mind that during the creation G-d has already identified each and each [sic] one of us the responsibly we are to act upon," as stated in the Bible: teaching, training, discipline, and worshiping G-d (ibid). Based on these foundational origins, the development of ECE in SI will now be surveyed.

#### *4.3.1 Formal Development of Early Childhood Education*

##### *Beginnings*

Prior to the 1980s, ECE was considered to be a parental, rather than state, responsibility in the SI (MEHRD 2008). If anything, addressing children's needs was done through church and community groups, often led by expatriates and later taken over by SI women as commercial endeavors, near exclusively in urban centers. ECE was first introduced into the SI education system in the late 1980s, at which time the concept was based on *good sound beginnings*. This idea spun out of concern that children were entering primary school (Class 1) unprepared and unable to cope, and therefore an additional year called *Preparatory* was added with the assistance of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (UNESCO 2006). Although a curriculum for

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<sup>40</sup> Parents as children's first teachers is a common notion also expressed in many Western contexts. Yet, contrastingly, in the SI, this is not an externally imposed notion from the education sector, but instead is an extrapolated idea from Biblical teachings.

this additional year was developed in the 1990s, emphasizing learning through play, in reality, these classes were more so an extension of Class 1 curriculum. In response to this, a community-based ECE program for children age three to five/six was recommended to the government and developed with assistance from the NZ Agency for International Development (NZAID) and UNICEF. This program was based on the bicultural Te Whariki ECE approach from NZ, which emphasized a holistic curriculum philosophy: empowerment, holistic development, relationships, and family and community (Anning, Cullen, and Flear 2004).

Since inception, formal SI ECE (i.e. kindergarten) has been based around twelve learning areas: art, blocks, books, crafts, dramatic play, manipulatives, music, physical education and health, sand and water, science, tradition and culture, and morals. Implementation has focused on child-centered play-based learning and fostering holistic early childhood growth, learning, and development: physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and language (Provincial Ministry of Education 2008:1). This is to be based in local cultures (e.g. classroom materials predominantly made of local bush materials and of significance to cultural traditions) and vernaculars (i.e. mother tongue language as well as initial teachings of English – yet, often teachers use SI Pidgin due to lack of confidence and/or knowledge in English).

### *Intermediary*

Over time, as parents began to see the impact of early education on their children, more individuals and community groups began establishing their own early years programs. Notably, in the 1990s, the national government supported Preparatory classes, but not kindergartens, which instead were encouraged to be developed as part of primary schools

by organizations and communities. In 1993, the Preparatory program was restructured to include both formal and non-formal ECE programs (MEHRD 2008). Further developments occurred between 1996 and 1998, with the establishment of Field-Based Training (FBT) and development of ECE teacher certification from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) (MEHRD 2007a).<sup>41</sup>

Despite ongoing improvements to the formal sector of ECE in SI, a lack of funding to support sustainable, quality, age-appropriate programs, led by trained and paid teachers, has prohibited their widespread success according to provincial and national ECE coordinators. Recently, the *SI Education Strategic Plan 2004-2006* (MEHRD 2004) proposed phasing out Preparatory classes from the primary sector and including them in the ECE sector. This was on the basis of educational officers' observations that benefits achieved through community-based learning were being undone by teachers untrained to teach to the specific needs of young children. However, two years past this policy proposal, Preparatory classes are still located within primary schools and typically led by untrained teachers or those trained in primary education. According to primary and ECE teachers throughout the Kahua region, Preparatory class teachers are generally unqualified for teaching that year group. Furthermore, they no longer have the curriculum guidelines written in 1992, which have since never been reprinted or redistributed, according to a MUP Ministry of Education official.

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<sup>41</sup> FBT aims to provide locals with the skills to establish their own community kindergartens. Since inception, FBT has consisted of six modules: child development, classroom learning areas, administration and management, and working with children – all of which include a sixth module of language and culture that is studied simultaneously. Each module lasts one week, inclusive of twenty contact hours with a trainer, followed by twenty hours of independent work through readings, assignments, and practical work in a kindergarten. FBT takes place over the course of two years; however, due to a lack of funds and limited training staff, not all modules are currently available to teachers desiring training. Most recently, in recognition of the limited number of spaces available to kindergarten teachers desiring to obtain a teaching certificate from SICHE, the first ever SICHE distance course, supported by World Vision Makira and the Makira Provincial Ministry of Education, was trialed in MUP over three “summer school” intensive blocks beginning in 2009.

### *Recent*

Most recently, as of 2008, the MEHRD created a *National Early Childhood Education Statement*, which was approved by Parliament, requiring all children to attend three years of kindergarten before being allowed to enroll in primary school. Further outlined in this policy are:

- Requirements for kindergartens to begin receiving financial support from the government, including teacher salaries<sup>42</sup>;
- Formal recognition that the sector for ECE has become a division of the MEHRD and as such can expand their staff throughout the country; and
- Plans for Preparatory class to be eliminated in its current form and instead become the final year of kindergarten, in 2011.

In line with the *National Education Action Plan 2007-2009* (MEHRD 2007b) and *Education Strategic Framework 2007-2015* (MEHRD 2007a), this *National Early Childhood Education Policy Statement* (MEHRD 2008:12) defines the SI vision for ECE as,

To ensure that all young children of Solomon Islands including girls and children with disabilities have equitable access to quality Early Childhood Education led by trained staff and teachers who implement an appropriate play-based national curriculum which will enable children to be effective learners who live in harmony with others and the environment and become productive, reliable and responsible citizens when they grow up.

Since the passing of the *National Early Childhood Education Statement*, the ECE division of the MEHRD has shifted focus to drafting a national curriculum framework, beginning in June 2009: “Valium Smol Pikinini Blong Iumi” (“Valuing Our Young Children”). This aims to create a consistent curriculum and program suitable for three to five year olds throughout the great diversity of ECE settings in SI. The curriculum is used to describe a,

...play based program, experiences, activities and events, interactions and relationships, that occur within an early childhood environment designed to support and enhance children’s learning and development.

(MEHRD 2009:5)

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<sup>42</sup> Currently, aside from the minority of teachers who have completed the ECE teacher certification program at SICHE, the vast majority of teachers are paid menial salaries, or paid in kind, from their communities.

Further, the document acknowledges the great significance of the transition between kindergarten and primary school, and thus outlines links between the ECE curriculum and that of the first year of primary school. Future work for the national division of ECE includes extending national policy to cover the years of birth to age three, for which provision is established in the current national policy (MEHRD 2008). Presently, however, focus remains on logistical priorities regarding access to kindergartens for children throughout the Solomons, which is being tackled by creating the first national survey and plotting of all kindy locations.

Despite a small, yet very committed, team of government ECE officials,<sup>43</sup> as of 2005 (MEHRD 2007b:25), these most recent national statistics reported approximately 27.5% (11,194 children) of the estimated three to five year old population in SI was attending an ECE program. Notably, these statistics should be taken cautiously, reflecting the number of children who continue attending ECE past age five, due to long/difficult/dangerous distances to reach primary schools, thus preventing regular attendance of very young children. Therefore, it is suggested that actually approximately 70% of these ECE enrollments are of children aged three to five (MEHRD 2008), which is projected to significantly increase post mandatory kindy enrollment policy enactment. While gender issues of children enrolled are not a significant problem, ECE teacher supply is notable. In 2005 (MEHRD), 80% of ECE teachers were unqualified (total number 739: 652 women and 87 men); however, these figures merely account for those who have completed ECE teacher training at SICHE and do not account for those who have undergone some FBT (MEHRD 2007b:27).

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<sup>43</sup> SI ECE officials: two at the national level and six provincial ECE coordinators, spread throughout nine provinces as of 2008, after which additional staff began being hired, until a hiring freeze was enacted in 2009.

### *ECE Rationale*

The fundamental justification for ECE in SI can be seen as rooted in developing a strong distinctiveness of SI's culture and national identity, and the corresponding values attached to those. The national curriculum aim for SI children (MEHRD 2009:4) states:

[T]o develop a sense of belonging to the Solomon Islands cultures and nation. It supports the child to develop an understanding of the languages, values, beliefs and traditions, customs of our diverse Solomon Islands cultures and nations, secure in the knowledge that each he or she makes a valued contribution to our society and the wider world.

This curriculum aim is reflected in the SI National ECE Policy Statement (MEHRD 2008:2), proclaiming, "Early childhood education must enable all young children to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes for meaningful participation in Solomon Islands society." Ultimately, the SI is striving to "enable teachers to create and develop child centered learning environments" and ensure that "learning is accessible, equitable and inclusive, and occurs within a community in which stakeholders are acknowledged and consulted on all levels of planning" (MEHRD 2009:4). Yet, within the Solomons, there is great diversity between and within cultural and linguistic groups, posing a challenge to creating all-inclusive universal programs capable of instilling a "Solomon culture" into its youngest generation. This presents a challenge for defining and developing an ECE program, flexible enough to incorporate local cultures, yet structured enough to be implemented on a national scale, for which the SI has opted. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, the following section will specifically focus on efforts in MUP to develop such an ECE program.

## **4.4 Early Childhood Education in Makira-Ulawa Province**

### *4.4.1 World Vision Support*

Amongst the nine SI provinces, excluding urban centers, rural communities in MUP have experienced the most unique and rapid development of formal ECE. In response to

challenges for accessing education in rural communities of MUP, World Vision (WV) Makira designed a project to work collaboratively with the Provincial Education Authority and rural communities to support basic literacy skills and entry into the formal education system. The idea for this program was sparked after realization that a previous WV project in Makira, solely focusing on adult literacy (Tiapou and Radosavljevic 2006), missed the base level of literacy development with the youngest of villagers. Therefore, the “Girl Child Reading and Rescue Project” (GCRRP)<sup>44</sup> was established as a three-year initiative, beginning in 2005 (i.e. Phase I), in the four eastern political wards of MUP (12, 13, 14, 17). The objectives were to train teachers from East Makira villages; establish twenty kindies for 1000 children; and strengthen capacities within MUP to support ECE, nutrition, and hygiene (Donnelly 2008b): a task the Provincial Ministry of Education had begun endeavoring in the 1980s.

Upon completion of Phase I (2005-2008) of the GCRRP (WV 2004), it was revered a success by WV (2008). As such, WV Makira extended the project for another three years in 2008 (i.e. Phase II) to support ECE development in Makira wards 5, 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20, with a no-cost one-year extension in Phase I communities. Notably, upon completion of Phase I, no formal evaluation of the project was conducted, due to no allocation of funds for such a task in the initial budget (WV 2004). A formal evaluation of the project is projected to be completed at the end of Phase II in 2011. However, prior to this, yet again the project has been expanded in additional Markia wards for a further three years (2011-2014). Although a case study was conducted on Phase I (Donnelly 2008a, b), this report drastically differed from Burton’s (2008) more widespread investigation of the situation of ECE in Kahua communities. Most prominently, this is

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<sup>44</sup> WV Makira claims that the GCRRP was never intended to solely focus on girls, which would likely be unsuccessful without the support of boys and men. Instead, all young children are included, but the title alludes to young girls needing to be “rescued” from traditional pathways for girls of domesticated futures (Donnelly 2008a).

with regard to kindy functioning and resources, which Burton observed as significantly more non-functioning and under-resourced in comparison to Donnelly's report.

Markedly, he was an external consultant hired by WV to conduct the evaluation, which was compiled predominantly for project investors. Furthermore, his field experience was brief and guided by WV, as to which communities he visited, in comparison to Burton's more widespread fieldwork.

#### *4.4.2 Current Status of ECE in MUP*

Turning to the present situation of ECE in MUP, this section presents findings obtained by a survey conducted throughout all regions of the GCRRP, supplemented by researcher-derived analysis generated from province-wide interviews and participant observations. Aside from urban center Kirakira, MUP is composed of numerous rural and remote communities. Although there is much desire expressed by these villagers to implement ECE programs for their children, the reality of life in these communities makes this extremely difficult. This is largely attributed to: geographic challenges of remoteness related to distances and terrain between communities/schools, lack of skills required to establish such programs with high rates of adult illiteracy and few qualified teachers, and lack of financial and time resources for communities to establish and maintain such programs.

The state of education in MUP, as compared with nationally set minimum standards, is mixed. Table 4.2 provides an overview of education progress in MUP against these standards.

**Table 4.2** Statuses of MUP Achievements against National Minimum Standards

|           | <b>Standard</b>                                           | <b>Achievement</b>                                                                       | <b>Result</b>              |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | Net enrolment ratio, Early Childhood Education (20%)      | 35.9%   | Standard met               |
| <b>2</b>  | Net enrolment ratio, Primary (100%)                       | 81.3%   | Standard not met           |
| <b>3</b>  | Net enrolment ratio, Secondary (20%)                      | 48.0%   | Standard met               |
| <b>4</b>  | Teachers, certified (70%)                                 | 60.1%   | Standard not met           |
| <b>5</b>  | Teacher: Pupil ratio, Early Childhood Education (1:15)    | 1:12.5  | Standard met               |
| <b>6</b>  | Teacher: Pupil ratio, Primary (1:30)                      | 1:26.5  | Standard met               |
| <b>7</b>  | Teacher: Pupil ratio, Community High Schools (1:30)       | 1:21.5  | Standard met               |
| <b>8</b>  | Teacher: Pupil ratio, Provincial Secondary Schools (1:30) | 1:21.1  | Standard met               |
| <b>9</b>  | Teacher: Pupil ratio, National Secondary Schools (1:30)   | 1:24.5  | Standard met               |
| <b>10</b> | Literacy, Std 4 (60%)                                     | 41.0%   | Standard not met           |
| <b>11</b> | Numeracy, Std 4 (60%)                                     | 42.5%   | Standard not met           |
| <b>12</b> | Average number of pupils/class in Primary (1:30)          | 26.58   | Standard met               |
| <b>13</b> | Average number of pupils/class in Secondary (1:30)        | 42.5    | Standard not met           |
| <b>14</b> | Toilet/Pupil ratio in all schools (1:50)                  | 1:129   | Standard not met (primary) |
| <b>15</b> | Pupil: Dormitory ratio (1:50)                             | 1:58.6  | Standard not met (2005)    |
| <b>16</b> | Clean water (primary schools only) (100%)                 | 44.0%   | Standard not met           |
| <b>17</b> | Teachers qualified (70%)                                  | 63.5%   | Standard not met           |

(Source: Kirakira Provincial Education Office 2007)

With particular regard to ECE, although MUP surpassed the minimum enrollment standard in 2007, since national policy enforcement of mandatory kindergarten as prerequisite for primary enrollment, this minimum standard no longer holds much significance. However, notably, the teacher-pupil ratio of 1:15 is suggested to have maintained its minimum standard since 2007, in line with national ECE policy requirements, as evidenced through this study's self-report survey data (Table 4.4). Also significant to understanding MUP educational development has been the introduction of fee free basic education throughout the Solomons, made possible through substantial financial support (SBD\$10 million) from Taiwan.<sup>45</sup> This was allegedly allocated in four installments between January 2009 and June 2010, after which the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) acquired continued support for the program. The

<sup>45</sup> Taiwan has been one of the largest donor nations to the SI in recent years. This has been a controversial relationship with questionable practices underlying their economic aid for SI development, particularly regarding possible exploitation of natural resources and allegations of their aid's political influences.

funding aimed to increase kindergarten through Form 3 enrollment rates by releasing parents from the burden of paying schools fees and allowing them to participate in other economic activities. However, in reality, anecdotally, rural villagers in MUP experienced little to no change: previously they were not paying school fees and continued to be required to pay related fees, such as for materials post-“fee free education.” Despite minimal grassroots effect in MUP from this funding, ongoing provincial efforts to construct additional “extension” primary schools have successfully increased enrollment and attendance figures by circumventing challenges of distance and terrain in children’s daily travel to school.

#### *4.4.3 MUP Kindy Survey*

Within the different divisions of MUP, as selected for this study - political wards, geographic regions, and phases of involvement with the GCRRP - many illuminating comparisons were identified by the researcher through a self-report survey completed by kindy committees in MUP (Appendix A.4). These are presented in the following subsections, which outline findings based on 52 communities. Data is inclusive of 95% of GCRRP kindies in MUP and all communities with kindies in the Kahua region, as is the focus of this study.

#### *Kindy Survey Overview*

Selection of research communities strategically allowed for comparisons between phases of the GCRRP. As such, Phase I is inclusive of the Wainoni/Kahua region, where some ( $n=11$ ) kindies have been supported for the longest time in the development of ECE by WV (Table 4.3). Additionally, the inclusion of Wainoni independently-established kindies ( $n=7$ ), without the support of WV, allowed for comparison between community

levels of autonomy in the development of ECE. Ultimately, these differentiations between levels of support and length of time since introduction of community-based ECE were used to understand factors of kindy ownership, ECE awareness, and program sustainability.

**Table 4.3** Overview of ECE in Makira Research Communities  
(Based on 52 self-report surveys from MUP kindy committees – Appendix A.4)

|                                         | <b>GCRRP Phase I</b><br>(2005-2008) | <b>GCRRP Phase II</b><br>(2008-2011) | <b>Wainoni GCRRP</b><br>(Phase I WV assisted<br>communities) | <b>Wainoni Independent</b><br>(not supported by WV<br>GCRRP) |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Makira-Ulawa Political<br/>Wards</b> | 12, 13, 14, 17                      | 5, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20                | 12 & 13                                                      | 12 & 13                                                      |
| <b>Number Kindies<br/>Surveyed</b>      | 24                                  | 21                                   | 11                                                           | 7                                                            |

### Kindy Children

Average reported teacher-child ratios are nearly in line with national policy standards of 1:15 (Table 4.4). This demonstrates community efforts to find and encourage a sufficient number of villagers to serve, and predominantly train, as ECE teachers.

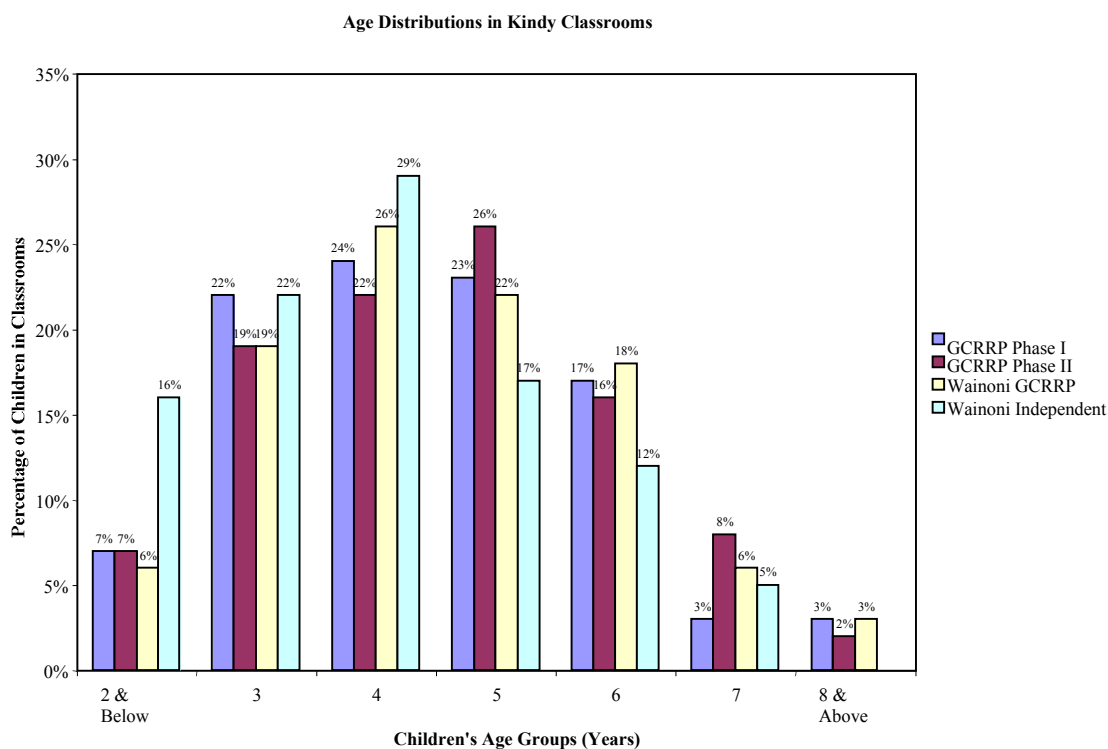
**Table 4.4** Kindy Children: Overview

|                                              | <b>GCRRP Phase I</b><br>(2005-2008) | <b>GCRRP Phase II</b><br>(2008-2011) | <b>Wainoni GCRRP</b><br>(Phase I WV assisted<br>communities) | <b>Wainoni Independent</b><br>(not supported by WV<br>GCRRP) |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Avg. Travel Time to<br/>Kindy (1-way)</b> | 9 minutes                           | 11 minutes                           | 15 minutes                                                   | 17 minutes                                                   |
| <b>Total Number<br/>Children Enrolled</b>    | 622                                 | 868                                  | 297                                                          | 139                                                          |
| <b>Girl:Boy Ratio</b>                        | 313:309                             | 418:450                              | 73:66                                                        | 147:150                                                      |
| <b>Avg. Teacher:Child<br/>Ratio</b>          | 1:13                                | 1:16                                 | 1:13                                                         | 1:16                                                         |

However, obscured within the above figures are daily practices in numerous kindies involving unreported rotating teacher schedules. This allows for some teachers to work their gardens and care for families on days when not teaching. Debatably, this shows much community ingenuity and resourcefulness. This is in light of the utmost importance for rural villagers remaining with subsistence livelihoods for survival, yet efforts to balance this with teaching responsibilities in recognition of the increasing local

value placed on early learning and development. Additionally, such higher teacher-child ratios do not directly imply detriments, when culturally rural SI children traditionally maintain a greater degree of autonomy than their Western counterparts, as well as higher levels of peer support when in the absence of adult guidance. Also observed in these kindy figures are enrollment rates, which reflect formally registered children. Yet, frequently, under-aged children attend kindies out of personal interest and/or parents' encouragement based on the belief that younger attendance, as an "observer," *must* be beneficial to the child. Furthermore, enrollment figures vary dramatically from daily attendance rates, which are often externally influenced by contextual challenges preventing travel, such as heavy rains, river flooding, and excessive mud.

Although age distribution for kindy classrooms presents itself in a relatively neat bell-curve (Figure 4.1), more careful examination between and across research communities raises considerable issue.



(Based on Makira Kindy Committee Survey [Appendix A.4]: wards 5, 12-20, inclusive of 52 kindies)

**Figure 4.1** Kindy children age distribution.

The policy-defined age range for children in attendance is stated as three to five years, and at age six, children are supposed to move on to primary school (MEHRD 2008). Under no circumstances are children to be held back for additional years of kindy, such as occurs in performance-based primary school grade repetition. The sole remaining exception to this is until the three-year mandatory kindy prerequisite for primary school policy is sufficiently underway. After which, it will be possible to withhold children in kindy out of obligation to meet their three-year enrollment requirement. However, at present, inclusion of children over age five, as well as “observer” children under the age of three, places additional demands on teachers already facing large class sizes and challenges of meeting the diverse needs of children across such a range of developmental levels. Markedly, independently-established kindies show larger numbers of younger children in their classrooms. This is suggested to be associated with some community

perceptions of kindy as not merely an educational establishment, but also a form of childcare. Many of these communities have yet to be included in WV or MEHRD ECE awareness talks, to develop an understanding otherwise.

### Kindy Classroom

“Regularity of kindy functioning” in this survey was left to open interpretation by communities in light of the variety of circumstances unique to each village, which affected understandings of such a concept (e.g. weather-related travel conditions). However, across interpretations, “regularly functioning” was associated with holding kindy at least three days a week for approximately three hours per day. The highest proportion of regularly functioning kindies was reported by independently-established classrooms (71%), which is associated with their more recent establishment and thus greater level of dedication and support in the initial stages (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5** Kindy Classroom: Overview

|                                                | <i><b>GCRRP Phase I</b><br/>(2005-2008)</i> | <i><b>GCRRP Phase II</b><br/>(2008-2011)</i> | <i><b>Wainoni GCRRP</b><br/>(Phase I WV assisted<br/>communities)</i> | <i><b>Wainoni Independent</b><br/>(not supported by WV<br/>GCRRP)</i> |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Regularly Functioning Kindies</b>           | 29% (n=7)                                   | 62% (n=13)                                   | 18% (n=2)                                                             | 71% (n=5)                                                             |
| <b>Sufficient<sup>46</sup> Classroom Space</b> | 42% (n=10)                                  | 43% (n=9)                                    | 55% (n=6)                                                             | 57% (n=4)                                                             |
| <b>Sufficient Materials: Bush</b>              | 17% (n=4)                                   | 19% (n=4)                                    | 9% (n=1)                                                              | 29% (n=2)                                                             |
| <b>Sufficient Materials: Manufactured</b>      | 0% (n=0)                                    | 5% (n=1)                                     | 0% (n=0)                                                              | 0% (n=0)                                                              |

Kindy functioning was found to decline over time, as associated with teaching staff commitment, community support, and children’s interest-level in attending, which was observed in longer-established kindies. Accordingly, this is reflected in Phase I kindies having the lowest number of regular functioning classrooms (29%) due to diminishing

<sup>46</sup> Due to great community variability, the term “sufficient” was left open to interpretation by kindy committees, merely with the guidelines of having *enough* of something for all children in attendance.

levels of community interest and motivation for ongoing support. In turn, this has resulted in teachers' lack of motivation without community financial, or in kind, support towards them, as well as general community sentiment lacking value for teachers' work/efforts.

As per FBT and ECE curriculum and policy statements, kindy classrooms in rural communities should be predominantly stocked with local resources that are gathered, constructed, and donated by communities. However, kindy committees' self-reports regarding sufficient locally made classroom resources from bush materials were significantly low across all researched communities. This is associated with communities' insufficient support in creating such resources on a regular reoccurring basis. Yet, in general, across research communities, the most significant concerns reported related to insufficient amounts of manufactured materials for both children and teachers. Although the national ECE policy places greater emphasis on creation of classroom resources from bush materials, there remains limited understanding, at the MUP community-level, as to how children learn from these. Furthermore, predominant grassroots' conceptions hold that children must have manufactured resources, such as books, crayons, paper, etc. to facilitate their learning. Without alternative models of early learning visibly available to rural villagers, association between classroom resources and children's development are drawn from the most relatable local learning environment: primary schools. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that many communities continue to fail to see the significance of abundant materials with which children can "learn through play," since such a model is a foreign concept, despite being the foundation of SI ECE programs. Notably, this situation regarding manufactured resources has rapidly begun to change as of December 2009 when the MEHRD began

giving donations to each registered kindy throughout the nation. Additionally, as evidenced by the sole reporting kindy to have sufficient manufactured resources, partnerships between primary schools and kindies create local avenues to address this issue by means of primary schools sharing resources, fully aware this ultimately will benefit their future incoming students (currently attending kindies). This is particularly evident when supported by strong primary school headmaster leadership and shared visions between kindies and primary schools.

The majority of kindies reporting insufficient classroom space were not directly related to required standards of square footage per child, but more so reflected community desires to have permanent kindy structures, as opposed to traditional leaf houses. This is currently not feasible due to limited funds within remote villages. However, rural MUP villagers have extensively argued for government-funded permanent kindy structures based on the reasoning that the government built permanent/semi-permanent (e.g. wooden/corrugated metal roofs) structures for most main primary and secondary schools. Notably, this excludes extension primary schools, which also fall into the category of community infrastructure development.

### Kindy Teachers

Average years of teaching experience between research community groups was found to be relatively indicative of external support received by communities in the initial development of their kindies (Table 4.6).

**Table 4.6** Kindy Teachers: Overview

|                                                       | <i><b>GCRRP Phase I</b></i><br><i>(2005-2008)</i> | <i><b>GCRRP Phase II</b></i><br><i>(2008-2011)</i> | <i><b>Wainoni GCRRP</b></i><br><i>(Phase I WV assisted</i><br><i>communities)</i> | <i><b>Wainoni Independent</b></i><br><i>(not supported by WV</i><br><i>GCRRP)</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Avg. Years Teaching Experience</b>                 | 3.07 years                                        | 1.93 years                                         | 2.71 years                                                                        | 1.18 years                                                                        |
| <b>Total Number Teachers</b>                          | 48                                                | 56                                                 | 21                                                                                | 13                                                                                |
| <b>Avg. Fortnightly Teacher Salary from Community</b> | SBD\$22.63<br>(48% receive nil)                   | SBD\$5.54<br>(63% receive nil)                     | SBD\$20.38<br>(48% receive nil)                                                   | SBD\$1<br>(46% receive nil)                                                       |
| <b>Trained Kindy Teachers (minimum of FBT)</b>        | 77% (n=37)                                        | 95% (n=53)                                         | 76% (n=16)                                                                        | 8% (n=1)                                                                          |

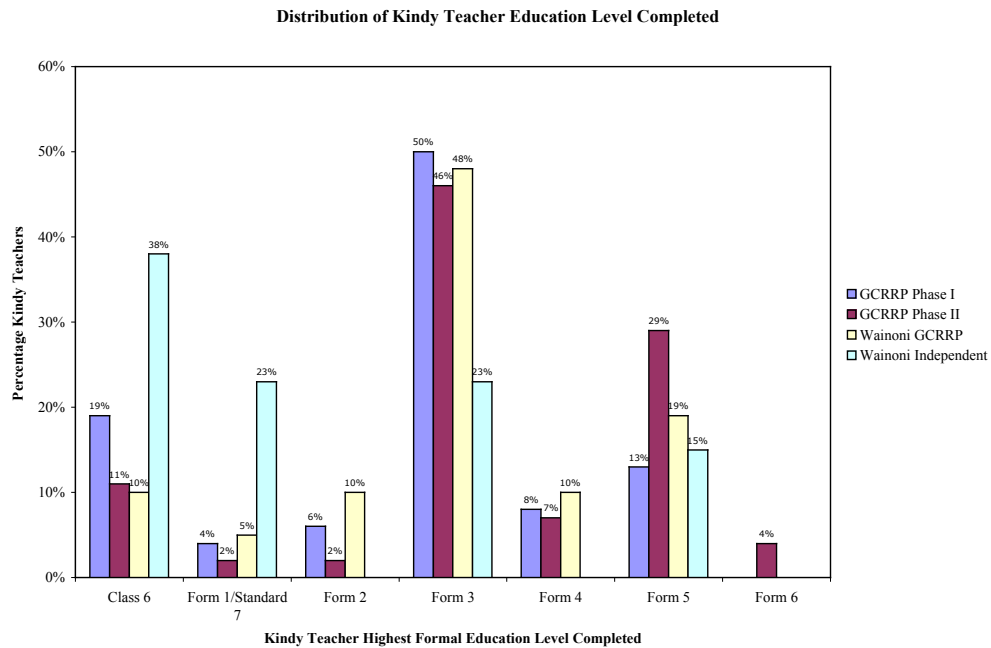
GCRRP Phase I teachers on average have been teaching the longest (3.07 years), with GCRRP Phase II teachers having approximately one year less experience (1.93 years). This is in spite of Phase II teachers not receiving official WV support until three years after Phase I communities were initially assisted. This can be explained by a word-of-mouth ripple effect around the island regarding the development of kindergartens. Additionally, to a lesser degree, this can be attributed to comparably minor efforts of the sole provincial ECE coordinator in developing province-wide ECE. Lastly, independently-established Wainoni kindy teachers were reported to have the least experience (1.18 years), despite these communities being in closer proximity to receive word-of-mouth awareness regarding kindy development from WV Phase I communities. This is explained by these independently-established kindy communities initially sending their children to Phase I established kindies, despite the substantial travel distance. Additionally, these villagers had anticipated that over time WV would return to the region to train a new group of teachers. Ultimately, this was not possible due to WV's progression to the next project phase, inclusive of other MUP regions. Thus, these independently-established kindies arose in the absence of external support yet communities' desires to offer their children similar ECE opportunities. Such provides strong evidence with regard to community-ownership of kindies, as associated with

kindy autonomy in establishment and maintenance, which will be discussed further below.

Average fortnightly teacher salaries were reported as remaining highest in Phase I communities (SBD\$22.63 fortnightly), as skewed by a few “wealthier” villages (due to cash crops), despite on average most of these communities having extremely limited cash flow. Contrastingly, the majority of Phase II communities are located on the weathercoast of Makira, making it even more difficult for villagers to maintain successful economic endeavors with their greater distance and rough sea-travel conditions to markets in the provincial capital. Despite this, due to Phase II kindies more recent establishment, teachers remain more willing to teach (62% regularly functioning kindies), compared to Phase I teachers (29% regularly functioning kindies), regardless of having little (average SBD\$5.54) or no salary. This is suggested to be due to the shorter length of time Phase II teachers have endured such unrequited hardships. Additionally, despite Wainoni independently-established kindy teachers all virtually receiving nil compensation, they maintain the highest kindy functioning rate (71%, with the additional two kindies set to imminently begin). This is suggested to be related to their most recent establishment and greater teacher initiative and drive, as required in the absence of any external support. Notably, as proclaimed during this study’s ECE stakeholder forum meeting (September 2009), the MUP Ministry of Education pledged a small allowance to all FBT teachers beginning in 2010, small grants to registered kindies with certified teachers for resources, and resource donations for kindies with uncertified teachers. This will be the first provincial government in the SI to offer any such support initiative for ECE.

Table 4.6 merely displays the percentage of teachers who have received the minimal level of ECE training (i.e. FBT), yet training levels are significantly increasing and obscured by these figures. Markedly, Phase II communities have the highest number of FBT teachers (95%), reflecting WV's most recent work there, while Phase I communities have a lower percentage (77%) based on these communities' subsequent recruitment of additional community members to begin teaching post-WV support. At the time of data collection (2009), only one teacher in Phase I and one teacher in a Wainoni independently-established kindy held government recognized ECE certificates from SICHE (thus granting government paid salaries). However, through the piloting of SICHE's first ever intensive distance summer course program, with the support of WV, 52 additional teachers have since been working towards their certificates, which as of December 2010 they obtained.

A clear differentiation between Phase I and II teachers' education levels completed was identified, with Phase II teachers skewed towards the higher end of basic educational achievement. This is attributed to a recently introduced WV requirement, in collaboration with the provincial ECE coordinator, that newly FBT-enrolled future kindy teachers ideally should have completed a minimum of Form 3. Such is due to basic academic requirements involved in FBT, classroom daily duties (e.g. record keeping), and non-governmental/governmental difficulties working with the limited literacy abilities of mere Class 6 leavers. However, as depicted in Figure 4.2, some teachers still included in FBT were not Form 3 completers, as exceptions were made based on limited potential community candidates.



(Based on Makira Kindy Committee Survey [Appendix A.4]: wards 5, 12-20, inclusive of 52 kindies)

**Figure 4.2** Kindy Teacher Educational Attainment.

Additionally notable is the significantly greater proportion of Wainoni independently-established kindy teachers who hold the lowest levels of education completion yet highest kindy functioning rates. This demonstrates their drive to create better educational opportunities for future generations of children; capitalize on one of the few employment opportunities within remote communities, with the hope that eventually additional trainings will be offered to them and result in a salary; and efforts in spite of lower academic skills to contribute their child-rearing/development capacities to their communities.

### Kindy Community Confounding Variables

WV Makira has made an ongoing effort in endeavoring to support overarching GCRRP objectives, such as improving education for children in rural areas of MUP. This has been addressed by supporting other potentially related barriers, such as low community literacy levels, lacking knowledge on health and nutrition, and insufficient skills in

financial planning and management (e.g. saving for future education). However, these isolated standalone programs<sup>47</sup> (i.e. awareness talks) may not be having the lasting beneficial outcomes desired due their often one-time community visits and limited attendance (minority) by community members (Table 4.7).

**Table 4.7** Kindy Community: Overview

|                                                               | <i><b>GCRRP Phase I</b></i><br><i>(2005-2008)</i> | <i><b>GCRRP Phase II</b></i><br><i>(2008-2011)</i> | <i><b>Wainoni GCRRP</b></i><br><i>(Phase I WV assisted</i><br><i>communities)</i> | <i><b>Wainoni Independent</b></i><br><i>(not supported by WV</i><br><i>GCRRP)</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Community ECE Awareness Level*</b>                         | 3.6                                               | 3.0                                                | 3.9                                                                               | 2.7                                                                               |
| <b>Community Literacy Level*</b>                              | 45.4%<br>(1male : .79 female)                     | 62.9%<br>(1 male : .85 female)                     | 54.5%<br>(1 male : .76 female)                                                    | 58%<br>(1 male : .68 female)                                                      |
| <b>Literacy Program Involvement</b>                           | 71% (n=17)                                        | 14% (n=3)                                          | 82% (n=9)                                                                         | 29% (n=2)                                                                         |
| <i>Effectiveness*</i>                                         | 4.4                                               | 3.7                                                | 4.6                                                                               | 3.5                                                                               |
| <b>Health Awareness Talk Involvement</b>                      | 67% (n=16)                                        | 81% (n=17)                                         | 64% (n=7)                                                                         | 71% (n=5)                                                                         |
| <i>Effectiveness*</i>                                         | 4.7                                               | 4.6                                                | 4.5                                                                               | 4.3                                                                               |
| <b>Family/Financial Management/Planning Awareness Program</b> | 38% (n=9)                                         | 52% (n=11)                                         | 27% (n=3)                                                                         | 29% (n=2)                                                                         |
| <i>Effectiveness*</i>                                         | 4.6                                               | 4.9                                                | 4.3                                                                               | 4.0                                                                               |
| <b>Community Church Involvement</b>                           | 4                                                 | 4.5                                                | 4                                                                                 | 3.3                                                                               |
| <i>*5-Point Ranking Scale: 1=poor, 5=strong</i>               |                                                   |                                                    |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |

Kindy teachers and committees in project communities estimated overall literacy levels for Phase I communities at 45% and Phase II at 63%. However, this does not appear to support the fact that WV's previous literacy program operated in the majority of Phase I villages, since this is where the lowest literacy rates remain and highest rate of non-functioning kindies exist. Notably, there is no similar baseline literacy data for Phase II communities to compare literacy levels with the present findings. Additionally, this is confounded by Phase I kindies on average operating for longer than Phase II kindies. Further notable, in self-reporting, Roman Catholic, Church of Melanesia, and Anglican church communities rather consistently ranked themselves as having greater church

<sup>47</sup> WV has been the main provider of literacy programs, in addition to a few occasional women's fellowships and one South Seas Evangelical Church group. Predominantly nurses and nurse's aids conducted health awarenesses, except for two communities visited by Save the Children. WV was the sole provider of financial planning awareness.

involvement, as far as embodying Christian fundamentals such as giving, cooperation, and fellowship. However, this was in fact more dramatically observed, by the research team, in more modestly ranking communities (i.e. South Seas Evangelical Churches and Seventh-Day Adventists). This was further correlated with their greater community support for, and as such regular functioning of, kindies.

#### *Review: Key Survey Findings*

In review of findings obtained through surveying kindy committees across MUP, and supplementation by research observations and interviews, the following key points were identified:

- Enrollment in kindies is increasing as a result of the 2008 enacted national policy enforcing three years mandatory kindy as prerequisite for entry into primary school. Correspondingly, the number of kindies has been increasing, thereby raising enrollment and attendance rates by eliminating barriers related to travel distance and terrain. However, attendance rates continue to vary dramatically due to wavering teacher commitment; geographical/environmental obstacles preventing safe travel to/from kindy; and declining parent/community support over time for teachers, sufficient resource-making, and classroom maintenance.
- Increasingly, over time, kindy classroom age distributions are consolidating, to the span of three to five year olds, as communities conform to policy guidelines regarding age of entry to primary school. However, teachers remain overly burdened with “observer” children, under the age of three, attending kindy independently, often out of a “childcare” mentality of some parents. Notably, gender-ratios of children in kindies are essentially balanced.

- Kindy functioning is significantly associated with the length of time since establishment, and/or length of operation, whereby functioning was found to waver as community/parents/teachers commitment dwindled over time. Additionally, the greater the level of autonomy, and as such ownership-taking, communities had in the establishment and maintenance of their kindies was related to higher functioning rates. This was contrasted by communities that were significantly externally supported, which was found to breed dependency and therefore less ownership-taking.
- Teacher salary and education levels were less indicative of kindy functioning than kindies' levels of autonomy. Correspondingly, committed teachers to their kindy/children were found to maintain their programs, regardless of external support, out of desire to push future generations to achieve better educations. However, long-term functioning is suggested to be linked with some form of compensation (financial or in kind) due to growing societal financial/subsistence pressures. Additionally, with increased demands on teacher record keeping and continuing education opportunities, increasing levels of basic education will be required to meet the literacy and comprehension demands on future kindy teachers.
- Community literacy levels were less indicative of kindy functioning, as associated with community support, in comparison to community cohesion, as correlated with community church involvement/denomination. This was associated with more highly educated communities being involved in more finance generating or community leadership endeavors and as such having less time to support the kindy. Additionally, this included communities that were

capable of faster means to income generation than the education path, such as through cash crops (i.e. cocoa, copra, logging). Contrastingly, those with lower educations, when thoroughly made aware of ECE, were found to have a greater commitment to the kindy out of desire to support a more successful future for their children.

#### **4.5 Concluding Chapter Remarks**

This chapter has engaged in a lengthy journey, identifying influences of current SI educational understandings, dating as far back as 50,000 years with the first arrival of documented outsider knowledge: Papuan language. As explored through the chapter, centuries of external influences have played a critical role in the design, implementation, support towards, and functioning of ECE in MUP. On the one hand, this can be traced the long-standing trend of waiting for development to happen to Solomon Islanders, as though they rightly deserve something which has been withheld for decades, if not centuries. This links historical trends in mystical beliefs of waiting for benefits to simply arrive, such as in cargo cults, which extends to present education beliefs of linear progressions as a means to prosperous financial ends. By contrast, there has been a more recent occurrence of Pacific Islanders taking ownership of their own educational development, to re-steer it in line with regional overarching societal development objectives, inclusive of cultural maintenance. While neither one nor the other exclusively is the most valid exploration of islander intellectual thought development, regarding the topic at hand, their dual development, particularly at different levels of stakeholders, is where the significance lies. For, in order to establish an educational program where locals' objectives are congruent with those of the program and realistic outcomes, this demands appropriate adaptations of externally adopted educational

practices in line with local objectives to SI contexts. In SI, such requires extensive consideration, since the educational system itself still maintains a strong colonial legacy, of which ECE has become the most recent foreign addition.

It is widely evident that substantial development of kindies in MUP has increased since the introduction of the mandatory ECE enrollment policy. However, the underlying spectrum of factors affecting kindy functioning, and corresponding sustainability, highlights the danger of merely focusing on the establishment, and enrollment rates, of kindies. Extracted from comparative factors explored between Makiran researched groups in this study, the significance of the following barriers become apparent in the sustainable development of kindies:

1. Length of time since kindy establishment.
2. Level of external support received, and as such degree of local ownership taken.
3. Community confounding variables: most notably, literacy levels and religious denomination.

Beyond this, as is outside the scope of this study, are important *quality* indicators, which here have been deemed secondary to initial development and awareness building of ECE.

The greater challenge now remains as to how to address grander community-level variables preventing wide-scale development of sustainable kindies. This calls for looking past educational origins, policy, and practical implementation factors, as captured in this chapter's historical and descriptive characteristics of kindies. Therefore, the following two findings chapters will now proceed to analyze supplementary factors to kindy sustainability. This includes an exploration of ECE stakeholders' epistemologies, with regard to varied ECE learning environments (Chapter 5), and the gamut of locally perceived pressures directly bearing down on the sustainability of ECE

in MUP (Chapter 6). Finally, Chapters 4-6 will be linked together through a researcher-oriented analytical discussion in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 5: Re-Imagining Early Childhood Education – Context of Kahua

### 5.1 Introduction

Building on Chapter 4, this findings chapter extends the exploration of Solomon Islands (SI) early childhood education (ECE) origins, policy, and programming to the practical level of implementation in Kahua communities. Further, it refers back to the literature review (Chapter 2) in extending ideas of dominant Western-based ECE assumptions as realized in the remote island community context. Having laid these foundations in the preceding chapters, this chapter can now explore in greater analytical depth the contextual and cultural relevance of SI ECE, which is necessary to support the overarching research focus on program sustainability with its emphasis on cultural sustainability.

The first half of this chapter will analyze Kahua ECE in the arena of Western-dominant international research assumptions purporting universally *best* developmentally appropriate practices.<sup>48</sup> Despite emphasizing the need for context-sensitive ECE programs up to this point in the thesis, often differences among seemingly homogenous ECE settings, internationally, are concealed by research only grazing the surface of programs' features. To avert this, the chapter will then proceed from formal ECE to that of holistic ECE, as observed throughout Kahua communities. Accordingly, the second half of this chapter aims to illuminate underlying cultural ECE factors, as facilitated through the use of the Development Niche framework.<sup>49</sup> In exploring these concepts, this chapter draws heavily on interview and (participant) observation data, particularly to illuminate the Kahua people's epistemic beliefs about the nature of ECE and key

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<sup>48</sup> The section most significantly addresses supplementary research question #7 (Section 1.6) regarding the influence of the 'uncritical international transfer' of Western-dominant ECE research, policies, and practices on SI ECE.

<sup>49</sup> This section most significantly addresses supplementary research question #1 (Section 1.6) regarding microenvironments of early childhood learning throughout Kahua communities.

learning approaches and contexts. However, firstly, this chapter will now return to the literature in extending the review of Western-dominant ECE assumptions, before linking this to the SI ECE context.

## **5.2 Kahuan ECE in Arena of Western-Dominant Assumptions**

Internationally, many ECE programs dramatically resemble a universalized model. This is based on a dominant Western-perspective, with a decidedly specific discourse for “high quality” programs and practices for children from birth through age eight (referred to in this chapter as “young children”). Often these uncritical international transfers of Euro-American ideologies promote restricted policies and practices inclusive of rigid classroom routines, artificial child-centered learning environments, active play-based learning models, individualistic social orientations, and child-specific classroom artifacts (i.e. learning resources, child-sized furniture, soft flooring materials). This has resulted in a self-perpetuating set of practices and values. Arguably, these prevent recognition of, and efforts to reinvent, potentially more effective and relevant programs for the Majority World in line with local cultural knowledge systems and practices. For many cultures, including those in SI, these Minority World, often taken-for-granted, beliefs of best ECE practices are not necessarily relevant, largely based on their incongruence with a local early childhood learning ethos. For many Majority World societies, as evidenced here with SI, early learning has traditionally been embedded within children’s active involvement in daily meaningful practices throughout their communities. In many of these non-Western cultures, children are integrated in adult activities and therefore ensured engagement in the adult-world, at least as close observers. Within Kahua, children are present for nearly all events in the community, from work to church to recreation. Most prominently, in Kahua, throughout these contexts children are engaged

in observation-based models of learning (e.g. legitimate peripheral participation [Lave and Wenger 1991] and learning as apprenticeship [Rogoff 1990]).

It has been suggested (Rogoff 1990, Fleeer 2003) that Westerners view the modeling-observation learning style largely as a passive activity for children. However, this gives a disproportionate amount of credit to children (i.e. the observers) for the active attention they must dedicate to what they are observing and subsequently mimicking.

Furthermore, in those cultures that predominantly hold children responsible for their own learning through guided participation, children often develop more notable observation skills compared to their Western counterparts, who are typically involved in more explicit child-centered interactions (Rogoff 1990). In such societies, where children are embedded within the community, opportunities for them to observe practical real-world skills are abundant, as are opportunities to develop their skills through increasing participation over time. This provides an ongoing basis for children to develop their observational skills and mastery of community activities through repetition (Collier 1988, Briggs 1991, Stairs 1996, Chavajay and Rogoff 2002, Fleeer and Williams-Kennedy 2002). By opposing artificially constructed learning experiences created by adults, recognition may be realized for an alternative cultural approach to education through observation and embedded learning opportunities for young children. Thus, one can begin to recognize how the uncritical international transfer of Western child-centered learning approaches could ostracize some cultural groups. As a result, this potentially affects ECE classrooms' abilities to best serve the particular children in the context based on their familiar cultural modes of learning. This is not to imply that significant research has not been conducted on informal learning of children in such contexts. Yet, in contrast, what comes into question, in this chapter, is the dissonance in community ethos,

such as analyzed through cultural beliefs about child development, including learning and education. In turn, this dissonance may be breeding numerous ECE culture-related program sustainability barriers (Chapter 6).

Increasingly, a growing body of literature, largely from sociocultural early childhood researchers (e.g. Wenger 1998; Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999; Fler 2003; Gilliard and Moore 2006), has attempted to critically question these universalized Western-based early childhood assumptions, such as individualistic social orientations as opposed to more socially focused perspectives. From these has arisen an incongruence between taken-for-granted views of best ECE practices and relevance to cultures globally (see Rogoff 1990, 1998; Chavajay and Rogoff 1999; Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 1999; Goncu 1999; Mosier and Rogoff 2003; Correa-Chavez, Rogoff, and Mejia-Arauz 2005). Simply take, for example, how parents in different cultures socially orient their young children to the world. A stark contrast is observable between many indigenous groups who devote extended periods of time to open/outdoor environments of their communities, interacting with those passing by. In contrast, many Western world contexts frequently isolate young children for extended periods in separate rooms, engaging in artificial worlds of child-sized toys and structured interactions constructed by grown-ups. In the Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP) context, congruently to many other indigenous groups, family/community members carry young children around villages to all social and work activities. Doing so therefore allows children to be actively engaged by others in physical contact and have continued verbal reinforcements of their relationships to others. Observed in Kahua, as is similar to research with other small Pacific island cultures such as in Kaluli New Guinea and Samoan families (Rogoff 1990), caregivers model unsimplified utterances for young children to repeat to third

parties, guide their attention to notice others, and develop interactions for which they desire their children to respond.

Based on this section, one is led to question, has the reification of connotations as to what ECE *should be* limited the field to ideas of what Western-based researchers/practitioners deem “best practices”? And, has this thereby prevented space for cultural and contextual reinventions of such programs? Ultimately, this raises the issue of how this may potentially affect program sustainability as parents’ goals for their children are incongruent with program design and objectives. In order to explore SI ECE practices and programs, first it is important to more thoroughly examine how they fit with those in other Western-based and international contexts. Doing so will facilitate identification of the degree to which SI are, and are not, striving towards similar ideals, and as such potentially masking context and culture specific relevance.

### **5.3 Concealed Differences Among Seemingly Diverse ECE Settings**

In beginning to analyze the diversity of formal ECE settings internationally, presented first in this section is a prime example of a fundamental aspect to formal ECE in SI, illuminated through policy, curriculum, and programming. The following vignette undeniably describes an uncritical transfer of an international practice, embodied and spread the world over through a simple slogan: “Children learn through play.”

Understanding of the historical foundations to ECE in SI, such as presented in Chapter 4, are irrelevant to most rural Solomon Islanders, and the vast majority of ECE teachers for that matter. Yet, for those communities that have been reached by educational officers or non-governmental organization (NGO) employees, the lasting impact of awareness talks, which have formed community conceptions of formal ECE, are lucid: “Children learn through play.” Yet, acceptance of this concept is often contradictory when comparing spoken word with actual practices in local homes. For example, this includes a parental resistance to collecting bush materials as learning resources for inside the kindy and/or parents rousing their children outside for playing with such materials indoors. Both of these common practices

demonstrate a rejection of the notion that such materials could be of value to children's learning and more than just rubbish. From this, what becomes clear is that rote indoctrination (i.e. from awareness talks) is forming rural islanders' base justification for community-based kindergartens. However, as evidenced by community actions, this clearly does not have support to suggest even nominal internalized levels of understanding, or agreement with, such a concept. This is not to say that communities around the world that have also come to acknowledge "children learn through play" have an actual deeper understanding of such a concept. Quite often this merely remains a term for early childhood specialists, including those in SI (i.e. government and NGO), who must be in agreement unless they wish to be viewed as contradictory to the current "buzz" of child-centered play-based learning.

The above exemplifies a reification process that often results in the uncritical international transfer of slogans, such as "children learn through play." Similarly, the concept of child-centeredness has been abstracted in ECE, and as such, it has developed "an independent existence. It takes on the status of an object. We use the reified idea as a tool that changes our experiences of the world" (Wenger 1998:77). The danger here is in how these simplifications of complex understandings hide broader meanings. As such, these terms and slogans have become embedded within the early childhood community of practice, transcending time and cultures, thereby forming part of this education sector's history and dictating its predominant development.<sup>50</sup> In recognition of these surface level international transfers of ECE ideas, this section now turns to explore how valid such claims are within the Kahua context, as compared internationally to other ECE contexts and programs.

### *5.3.1 International ECE Comparability*

Cleghorn (2010, Cleghorn and Prochner 2010) demonstrates that kindergartens around the world share strikingly similar daily schedules, as explored through five geographically and culturally diverse programs (Table 5.1). Yet, after ethnographically exploring these culturally diverse settings, illuminations are revealed that simplified

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<sup>50</sup> Notably, these Western-based terms are used throughout this thesis as is congruent with the vocabulary that has become embedded in dominant spoken language within contexts of formal SI ECE.

analyses, such as of mere schedules of activities, conceal a great deal of diversity within ECE programs.

**Table 5.1** Comparison of International ECE Daily Schedules

| <i>Time</i> | <b>Little Lake</b><br>(Canada – First Nations)                              | <b>Tshwane</b><br>(South Africa)                             | <b>Sunbeam</b><br>(India)                             | <b>Calgary Head Start</b><br>(Canada) | <b>Montreal Preschool</b><br>(Canada) | <b>Toroa Kindy</b><br>(Kahua, SI)        |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 7:00am      |                                                                             | Staff arrival                                                |                                                       |                                       |                                       | Staff arrival                            |
| 7:30-8:00   |                                                                             |                                                              |                                                       |                                       |                                       | Pupil arrival                            |
| 8:00        |                                                                             | Pupils arrive                                                |                                                       | Hot breakfast                         |                                       | Free play                                |
| 8:10-9:00   |                                                                             | Independent activity                                         |                                                       | Circle time (using lesson plan)       | Arrival and outdoor supervision       |                                          |
| 9:00-9:30   | Arrival of staff and children                                               |                                                              |                                                       |                                       | Indoor arrivals                       | Prayer, songs, morning meeting           |
| 9:35        | Snacks (breakfast)                                                          | Breakfast                                                    |                                                       | Art center                            | Gross motor activity                  | Planned activity (school readiness)      |
| 9:45-10:35  | Morning circle, sweetgrass, prayer, greetings, songs, special announcements | Morning “rug-time”: greetings, devotion, weather, discussion |                                                       | Sand and water centers                | Learning centers                      | Snack                                    |
| 10:35-10:45 | School readiness                                                            | Story, music, movement                                       | Staff arrival                                         | Library center (story time)           | Morning circle                        | Bathe/play in river (weather permitting) |
| 10:50-11:05 | Gross motor (outdoor free play, weather permitting)                         | Developmental ‘rug-time’                                     | Arrival of children                                   | Nutritional snack                     | Teacher directed small group activity | Story time                               |
| 11:10-11:20 | Story time                                                                  | Pre-reading skill, pre-writing skill, number concepts        | Prayer, attendance, general discussions with children | Gross motor center (activity games)   | Snack time / show and share           | Songs, rhymes, and prayer                |
| 11:20-11:40 | Group work                                                                  | Lunch, rest                                                  | Whole group: music, chart, reading, number concepts   | Fine motor center manipulative skills | Teacher directed small group activity | Departure                                |
| 11:45-12:00 | Lunch                                                                       | Departure                                                    | Free play                                             | Free play until picked up by parent   | Closing circle; outdoor play          |                                          |
| 12:15pm     | Departure                                                                   |                                                              | Lunch                                                 |                                       | Departure                             |                                          |
| 1:00-2:00   |                                                                             |                                                              | Quiet time, stories, discussion, departure            |                                       | Daycare until parent pick-up          |                                          |

*Shaded cells represent teacher directed forms of instruction in daily schedules.*

(Modified from Cleghorn 2010:4)

In comparing Kahua kindergartens to those explored by Cleghorn and Prochner (2010), very similar usages of classroom time were identified. Cleghorn (2010) found that, of kindergartens analyzed, 37% of classroom time was scheduled as teaching-learning activities through the form of teacher-led instruction, while free play was scheduled on average for approximately 15 minutes (6%) of total time per day. Similarly, in this present study, approximately 38% of time was found to be scheduled as a form of teacher-led instruction in Kahua kindies, while, in the focal kindy of Toroa community, free play was scheduled for approximately 60 minutes (31%) of total time per day. However, on average, throughout kindies researched in MUP, free play was also found

to be scheduled as approximately 15 minutes per day, in line with the international comparisons (Table 5.1).

Likewise, seemingly similar classroom demographics are advocated for internationally, emphasizing small class sizes and age ranges, as reflected in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2** Comparison of International Early Childhood Classroom Demographics

|                     | Little Lake<br>(Canada First Nations) | Tshwane<br>(Africa) | Sunbeam<br>(India) | Calgary<br>(Head Start, Canada) | Montreal<br>(Preschool, Canada) | Toroa<br>(Kindy, Kahua, SI) |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Number children     | 12                                    | 30                  | 30                 | 24                              | 16                              | 30                          |
| Ages                | 5-6                                   | 5-6                 | 2-6                | 5-6                             | 2-5                             | 2-6                         |
| Teacher:child ratio | 4:12                                  | 1:30                | 2:30               | 3:24                            | 4:16                            | 2:30                        |

(Modified from Cleghorn 2010:5)

Notably, much remains concealed in simply reporting teacher-child ratios, such as rate of absenteeism, seasonal attendance changes, non-formally enrolled additional attendees, and influences of weather on travel infrastructure allowance for attendance. Take for example the Kahua average teacher-child ratio, as mentioned in Chapter 4. National SI standards for a kindy to be formally registered require a maximum teacher-child ratio of 1:15 (MEHRD 2008). Yet, in practice, many schools do not maintain this standard, often due to creating more flexible work schedules, such as in allowing one teacher to attend to garden/household duties while another teaches all the children. In interpreting this within the local context, taken into consideration must also be the greater degree of autonomy rural SI children hold in comparison to their Western counterparts, and therefore possibly greater cultural appropriateness of such practices.

### 5.3.2 *A Day at Toroa Community Kindy*

To give a better ethnographic sense of a typical day in a Kahua kindy than can be illuminated through the mere surface-level features in the previous subsection, the

following vignette, based on researcher observations, represents a morning at Toroa Kindy.



**Figure 5.1** Toroa Community Kindy.

It is 7:55am and the kindy has already come to life. Throughout Toroa village, one can hear the children's rhythmic beating of sticks on bamboo drums and the long-winded blows of conch shells. Kame, the sole kindergarten teacher (as her co-teacher has recently been married-off to the other side of the island) stands outside the leaf-hut classroom tying up ropes around timbers erected to form a swing set. A few children, donning knee length skirts (for girls) / shorts (for boys), t-shirts, and barefoot, move freely between the classroom and outside play areas. Other children continue to arrive with small tin pots containing banana soup or sweet potatoes for mid-morning snack. Automatically, they proceed to place them in the snack leaf-hut, adjacent to the classroom, before quietly going inside to observe the classroom atmosphere. Initially, they become independently engaged in some activity, choosing from the twelve classroom learning areas (art, blocks, books, crafts, dramatic play, manipulatives, music, physical education and health, sand and water, science, tradition and culture, and morals), which are predominantly filled with locally crafted resources. At 8am *sharp*, as Kame is one of the few proud owners of a watch in the village, she stands in the doorway to the classroom, clanging two pieces of heavy scrap metal together, signaling the beginning of kindy. This draws in the few children from the surrounding homes who have not yet arrived.

An average of 25 children are present daily, frequently with the addition of a few two-year-olds who wander in and out of the classroom from their homes neighboring the kindy. Daily, the children begin playing independently, moving between indoor and outdoor play-spaces, until slowly they re-establish their social relations and begin co-playing (for those 4-6 years old) and parallel playing (for younger children, 2-3 years old). There are clear social divisions within the classroom, as the five regularly attending eldest children (boys) assume superiority within the class and thus maintain priority to classroom resources. For example, younger children silently back down to these older boys who freely take toys away from them and occasionally lightly smack them on the side of the head in a disciplinary fashion, as is common of mothers throughout the village. These are not class "bullies," such as demonstrated by their

particular compassion for helping the youngest of children: unprompted these boys regularly assist those younger in re-dressing after bathing time and soothing them when upset.<sup>51</sup> Second in command in the classroom are three smaller groups of girls, aged 4/5, and finally independently playing younger children. This final age group is often more so engaged in observation of older children until they have free access to resources while older peers are involved with teacher-directed whole group activities, from which the youngest (2-3 years) often abstain.

By 9am, Kame alerts a few children that it is time to clean-up, who then spread this message to all the other children. Once clean, children directly proceed to sit on hand-woven mats Kame has placed on the ground for group time. While this is intended to be 15 minutes of whole class activity (as per curriculum), it typically lasts at least 30 minutes, as the children increasingly become agitated and thus disturb those around them (e.g. pushing, throwing stones from the pebble-covered floor, or moving about the classroom). This group time is interspersed with calm reminders, by Kame to the children, of behavioral expectations, which occasionally requires more firm regrouping, either verbally or physically. Firstly, Kame leads the children in an opening prayer. This is followed by roll call in which each child is called to a chart at the front of the room to find their name on a printed face card and turn it over to signify their attendance. Next, Kame leads the class in a recitation of “classroom rules” and “health kindy routines,” read in English and then explained in the vernacular by various children. Many of these routines reflect ECE programs around the world, such as most overtly epitomized with these English written charts of classroom rules:

*In kindy we raise our hands when we want to say something.  
...keep our hands to ourselves.  
...greet other children, our parents, our teachers.  
...use our words.  
...must never swear.*

Markedly, nearly all other classroom interactions are conducted in the Kahua language, excluding songs/rhymes/poems, which include English, Pidgin, and Kahua languages.

Subsequent to group time is a planned “school readiness” activity. Children are typically divided into groups by age and ability to engage in 10-15 minute activities, as Kame moves throughout all groups guiding and monitoring each child. Generally these activities involve numbers, shapes, patterns, letters, kastom crafts, rhymes in the vernacular, and kastom dancing. By 10:30am, after Kame and the children have cleaned up from the activity, the children independently proceed to sing a hand-washing song in Pidgin while Kame prepares a bucket of water outside the snack-hut for washing hands. After everyone has washed their hands with water and entered the snack hut, Kame selects one child to assist in reciting a prayer in the Kahua language. Then, while seated on the wooden-planked floor, the children open their tin snack-pots and begin eating and sharing food with others. Kame encourages, but does not force, sharing with the few children who have not brought snack, which the other children amicably oblige. As soon as children have had enough, often within 5 minutes, they re-cover their pots, rinse their hands in the bucket

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<sup>51</sup> This is very in keeping with traditional mens’ roles in the community, where although men typically demonstrate a superiority to women in public, such as in having the final say in matters, they are often quite nurturing to infants and toddlers, eager to carry/play/joke with them, yet less likely to support mothers/women in routine care for small children (i.e. toileting, bathing, feedings, etc.).

of water, and quickly remove all their clothing in the classroom. They then grab small hand-carved foot-long toy wooden canoes (especially boys) and proceed to run across the village to the river for bathing and playing. Kame remains at the kindy until everyone has finished snack before joining the children at the river, prior to which they play unsupervised.

After approximately 20 minutes at the river, Kame repeatedly shouts over the rushing sound of the water for the children to return to the classroom. Running back to the kindy, by which time they have dried from the hot sun, the children quickly re-dress, assisting the youngest with their clothing, and rush to lay on the woven floor mats in preparation for story time. Immediately, Kame transitions into orally recounting a story, which generally quiets the children. This is the only portion of the day where all the children remain quiet and sit still throughout the entire activity, lasting between 10 and 30 minutes. Occasionally other community members are asked to come share stories in the kindy since Kame is limited by the stories she can recall from memory. There are very few books in the classroom, none of which are in the Kahua language, as is the only language thoroughly comprehended by the vast majority of Kahua children prior to entering primary school. Kame's stories are typically kastom tales, but when those are exhausted, she resorts to Biblical ones.

Subsequent to the story, the remaining class time is devoted to songs, rhymes, and poems (in English, Pidgin, and Kahua languages). Typically, Kame accompanies the children with a ukulele and encourages their loudest involvement in unison. Finally, a closing prayer is said by Kame and the children are dismissed (between 11:15am and 12pm). Rapidly, they flee the kindy, after collecting their snack pots, to go play freely around the community while most others are either away working their gardens or at primary school until late afternoon.

Through this description of a typical day at Toroa Kindy, what becomes more evident than possible when merely looking at a daily schedule and classroom demographics are context and culture specific elements to the program. These include the integrated use of languages (Kahua, Pidgin, and English); the kindy's centrality in the community; culture-consistent interactions between children (e.g. fundamental Kahua Principle of sharing); and context-specific classroom learning areas and activities, largely constructed with bush materials. Yet, undeniably, classroom practices are heavily influenced by universal ECE ideas, such as through an academicization of curriculum, classroom routines, and school readiness activities (emphasizing English/Pidgin and formal education behaviors). To further extend this dissection of Kahua kindies to understand

their adaptability to the local setting, the following section will examine quality indicators across ECE contexts, from traditional to formal Kahua ECE, as juxtaposed with international standards.

#### **5.4 “Desirable” ECE Characteristics Across Contexts**

In proceeding, it is important to briefly address interpretations of “quality,” or as here termed “desirability,” indicators. This topic has recently seen substantial academic and development interest in contrasting Western-oriented international standards with those of the developing world. In considering children’s development more broadly from a sociocultural perspective, children are more than individuals and instead become embedded parts of the cultural and environmental context. Thus rejects much of Western child-centered curriculums and children’s centrality in the planning and implementation within ECE contexts. This argument is based on the notion that such an approach would no longer be congruent with the belief in the cultural-centrality of children to everyday life, as present in many Majority World contexts. Markedly, the focus of this study is not to redefine *quality* in the SI context, which is an extensive area of research in itself. Therefore, here these international program variables are differentiated by context-specific “desirable ECE characteristics.” Without comparing these characteristics across contexts and cultures it is not possible to understand the significance of cultural and contextual differences in ECE programs and approaches. Ultimately, these differences may affect program sustainability when predominantly community-based endeavors (Chapter 6).

General “desirable ECE” trends were identified in Kahua, based on participant observations, interviews, and international ECE literature. These can be seen as an

emergent range across contexts (Table 5.3) when comparing traditional Kahuan ECE approaches with those in Kahua kindies, and then general standards of programs and research internationally. Notably, this range of contexts, as displayed in the following table, is to be read horizontally to understand how the kindy is situated between desirable ECE characteristics of traditional Kahuan early learning contexts and those of the Western-world. Each vertical “indicator” is to be viewed independently across the range of contexts to see how kindies are implementing an integrated ECE approach, with regard to contextually and culturally defined desirability characteristics. No progression is to be assumed across the table, between contexts, with any one being superior to another. It merely presents differentiated current programmatic characteristics. Accordingly, this is not an evaluation scale or ranking tool. The “indicators” themselves are presented hierarchically with regard to their significance in the particular program context, as oriented from the Kahuan ECE perspective. Ultimately, these move outwards from the program environment itself to secondary factors, such as professional development and community involvement. As such, indicators are not to be regrouped, which would thereby conceal the range of differentiations they present. This is with regard to desirable characteristics at the programming level, not villager desirability perceptions, across traditional to Western contexts.

**Table 5.3** Desirable ECE Characteristics Across Contexts<sup>52</sup>

| <i>Indicator</i>                          | <b>Traditional Kahuan ECE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Kahua Kindergarten</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Trends/Standards of Western-Based ECE</b>                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Learning Orientation</i>               | Child-embeddedness.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Child-centeredness.                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <i>Social Orientation</i>                 | Interdependence, collectivism, responsibility, group-cooperation.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Individualism, autonomy, free-will, personal agency.                                                                                                                                                          |
| <i>Model of Learning</i>                  | Observation, modeling, independent practice, with unquestionable regard for authority figure. Increasingly adopting understanding of “play-based” learning.                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Active involvement in play-based learning with adults, scaffolding development, encouraging of two-way interactions, and questioning of authority figures.                                                    |
| <i>Purpose – Main Objectives</i>          | Preparation for traditional life, including values, culture (including spirituality through Christianity), and traditional subsistence-living practices.                                                                                                                   | Preparation for life, including culture, traditions, and Western knowledges (e.g. ABCs and 123s).                                                                                                                                | Support development of child, in preparation for next education stage (or provide “head start” for those regarded as at risk of not being developmentally on par with peers upon entry into primary school).  |
| <i>Inclusivity of Development</i>         | Emphasis on custodial care (social and emotional) with limited direct development of cognition.                                                                                                                                                                            | Whole child, inclusive of spiritual, moral, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.                                                                                                                              | Whole child, yet often lacking spiritual component (predominantly English).                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>Culture and Language</i>               | Near exclusive use of vernacular, with emphasis on local culture.                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Recognizes, values, and encourages local cultures and languages while introducing Pidgin and English along with formal school rhetoric.                                                                                          | Multi-cultural with instruction in national language.                                                                                                                                                         |
| <i>Social Development</i>                 | Share, cooperate, respect and accept others, develop friendships, take responsibility for own actions (notably particularly restricted due to language skills not yet fully developed).                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>Interactions</i>                       | Embedded interactions with all community members in practical, daily, real-life activities.                                                                                                                                                                                | Opportunities for interactions between children and teachers, with artificially-constructed activities reflective of both traditional and Western concepts.                                                                      | Universal notions of “high quality” Western interactional patterns between teachers and children, with scaffolding of learning through artificially-constructed activities.                                   |
| <i>Respect for “Authority”/ “Teacher”</i> | Fundamental cultural principle to express utmost respect for others: particularly those elder (e.g. teachers) and opposite gendered siblings/peers. Students relatively shy, apprehensive, courteous, and humble in their mannerisms in the presence of authority figures. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Respect for authority figures, yet often challenged by societies emphasizing expression of individuality.                                                                                                     |
| <i>Curriculum and Materials</i>           | Use adult-world resources to participate in practical, authentic, daily activities. Predominantly made of non-permanent, community-centered, and local bush resources.                                                                                                     | Curriculum and materials to suit the needs of children in SI, therefore embedded with local kastoms and values and resourced with local bush materials. Appropriate classroom structure, environment, and resources for context. | Manufactured, plentiful for classroom population, aesthetically pleasing and enticing. Predominantly permanent structures, separate from housing, with manufactured resources. Cognitively-driven curriculum. |
| <i>Professional Development/ Capacity</i> | Untrained but deeply experienced child-minders from early age.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Range from untrained to increasingly minimally-trained (i.e. Field Based Trained), and a few certified ECE teachers.                                                                                                             | Predominantly certified childcare and education workers/teachers.                                                                                                                                             |
| <i>Community Involvement</i>              | Whole community responsibility and engagement in developing children, in accordance with community familial/clan relations.                                                                                                                                                | Dependent upon whole community involvement and support for ongoing maintenance and functioning of infrastructure and teachers.                                                                                                   | Dissociation between ECE and whole community: parental support to limited degree, predominantly only those with children in program.                                                                          |

<sup>52</sup> Indicators are based on reoccurring themes identified in the literature reviewed, while the three categories of ECE analyzed are represented with broad overviews of corresponding “norms” in context.

As displayed in Table 5.3, by looking outside the predominant Western view of child-centeredness to SI society, where children are embedded in ongoing daily community activities as opposed to artificially constructed ones, one begins to identify the inadequacies of situating the child outside community cultures for ECE. However, as presented above, for many desirable ECE characteristics/indicators, Kahua kindies find themselves situated between traditionalism and Western-modernity (e.g. children's learning orientation, social orientation, model of learning, and social development). Further examination of the above table reveals significant integration of traditional and Western desirable ECE program characteristics in kindies. While the kindy often embodies a Western approach, it then additionally incorporates traditional Kahuan elements. For example, although the kindy takes a holistic approach to child development, much more significantly integral to the program is a spiritual component, which is often absent from Western program counterparts. Therefore, essentially, no aspect of traditional or Western elements listed is eliminated in Kahua kindies. Instead, they all become integrated into the kindy to varying degrees, with traditional elements often taking a secondary role to increasingly desirable Western academically-oriented ECE characteristics.

In comparison to other stages of education, ECE is generally the first major transition a child experiences into an institutionalized learning environment; and therefore, arguably, strong links must be formed between these contexts to facilitate children's smooth transitioning. Although not the research focus of this thesis, within the SI context, doing this could therefore allow for a richer and more sophisticated concept of "child-embeddedness," as opposed to "child-centeredness," in formal ECE. Having identified some prominent culture-specific desirability indicators (Table 5.3) to ECE across

contexts, this broad analysis will now be narrowed to solely the Kahua context in order to more specifically explore local epistemologies (i.e. beliefs about nature of knowledge and how it is created) and early learning microenvironments.

## **5.5     Predominant Kahuan ECE Beliefs and Corresponding Learning Microenvironments**

As extension of the above foundational differences between Kahuan approaches to ECE and those in dissimilar cultures and contexts, this section hones in on prominent ECE epistemological beliefs in various Kahua ECE contexts. This forms the base to the perspective that ECE programs cannot be mere international transfers; but instead, they require flexible adaptations in order to hold contextual/cultural relevance, and ultimately, be sustainable endeavors. To explore this, the following subsections are based on extensive observations and interviews, conducted throughout Kahua communities, to explore the variety of environments and approaches through which young children learn across the region. More in-depth accounts within this section are drawn from the research focal case study community of Toroa. This is due to the fact that Toroa was where the researcher spent the most extensive time and therefore was best able to triangulate participants' verbalized perspectives with her observational data. Furthermore, interviews conducted were semi-structured (Appendix A), therefore providing the basis for comparative data between participants. This allowed for findings presented here to be representative of predominant beliefs and perspectives across Kahua. Interviewees are not identified, and/or pseudonyms are used, to protect their identities. References, however, are made to participants' relation(s) to children and age to demonstrate the variety of informants and perspectives from which data was drawn.

### 5.5.1 Analytical Framework

In extension of the analytical framework outlined in Chapter 2, to analyze the data in this chapter, Super and Harkness' (1986) Developmental Niche was used as a structural framework. Accordingly, analysis drew on three distinctive yet complementary cultural conceptualizations of the child:

- Culture as an array of everyday *settings* in children's lives;
- Culture as a collection of *customary* practices; and
- *Psychological* realities of culture as constructed by caretakers' ethnotheories (belief systems) regarding children/family/child development.

Exploration of these allowed for the conceptualization of children's ECE, as determined by their daily culturally-structured landscapes. As presented in the following subsections, these were classified into, and analyzed through, five contextually-significant categories within Kahua communities: home, kindy, early primary school (Pre-class/Class 1), church/Sunday school, and the wider community. These contexts are situated in the child's micro and mesosystems, in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979).

Based on the Kahuan communal context and societal structure, "caretakers'" roles in supporting children's learning are spread across a range of contexts. As such, those involved with ECE are firstly familial/clan relations, yet secondarily also often serve the community roles of kindy/primary teachers, pastors, Sunday school teachers, chiefs, etc. This confines the "cultures" of customary practices and caretaker ethnotheories across ECE contexts to a more limited range than other international contexts of ECE.

Elsewhere greater distinctions exist in the people and cultures across more diverse ECE microenvironments than small, relatively isolated, Kahua communities. Therefore, the

following subsection presents overarching Kahuan ECE beliefs that span across microenvironments, before independent analysis of each microenvironment is analyzed.

### *5.5.2 Nature of Kahuan Knowledge*

The foundations to Kahuan ECE epistemologies reside in their beliefs regarding young children's development and knowledge formation. Parents/caretakers of young children in Kahua are strongly influenced by three institutions: tradition, religion, and civil society (as heavily structured by Western society). Religion sits in the middle of these three institutions as a bridge between what has been adapted from Kahuan culture and the values associated with many Western societies. For example, originating with the introduction of Christianity to SI, Kahuans have adopted a regional belief that intelligence has biological foundations. Many locals interpret this as gifts from G-d, which therefore strongly predetermine children's life-paths based on the particular natural gifts with which they are born. One mother and Sunday school teacher (age 52) expressed,

Everyone is different when they are born. Only G-d knows someone's character very well when they are small. Some characters are good and some are not. [...] When children do not do well in school, then they do not have the skills for other things. However, some people are naturally gifted for doing certain kinds of work, like carpentry.

Accordingly, not all children are believed to be academically inclined. Therefore, not everyone is thought to have been created to excel through education, and subsequently achieve formal paid employment. Great value, alternatively, is also placed on those who are good community leaders, possess strong maternal abilities, those masterful at working with their hands (e.g. constructing dwellings), etc.

Despite the above naturally perceived inclinations of humans, another strong regional Kahuan belief recognizes that all young children possess an innate internal drive to learn.

This is then thought to possibly correspond with the types of futures individuals are best suited towards. However, some parents suggest a caveat to this in how children's innate drives to learn can be detrimentally influenced by others. When reflecting on his son Weo's attendance at kindy, one father (age 31) stated,

Every day we ask Weo what he has learned in kindy, and every day he is happy to explain. However, when he is lazy to go to kindy, sometimes we rouse him for not going or force him to go. But when we forced him to go, then he would come home and would not share what he learned because he was not there learning for himself. *Learning is in the heart of the child, so it is only good if the child chooses for himself to go to school and learn.*

The above quote represents many Kahua parents' beliefs in the level of autonomy they give their children, particularly in the very early years of schooling. Associated with this is both not wanting to develop a negative disposition to learning for the child, nor sever familial relations, such as showing disrespect to the child. This is in accordance with the belief that around the age of eight, a child is generally thought to have sufficient knowledge of right from wrong, along with kastom knowledge, to largely be self-sufficient.

Despite children's preparation for self-sufficiency from a young age, parents are locally perceived as playing a critical role in children's development. This is particularly with regard to moral development, as this forms one of the most important aspects to the culture-specific development of Kahua children. As one grandmother (age 67) explained, parents must teach children morals, in line with the Kahua Principles and related *ramata* (i.e. operational rules). Yet, at the same time, she expressed that it must still be recognized who children are as individuals, with a free mind for how they choose to embody parents'/caretakers' teachings.

Parents must teach both good and bad things to children, but then it is children's choice of how they act. Sometimes they just follow the thinking of other stupid children, even if their parents have taught them otherwise. *Once they are 8-9-10 years old, then they know good versus bad, since everything is in their head by then.* Every child knows by that age, and they even know when they are younger, but some may not follow that knowledge in their actions. [...] G-d gave children a mind and will in their heart. They are born with emotion. At one or two years old, they are too small to know yet, but from parents' teachings, they will learn in the future. [...] If parents know the Master [G-d], then the child will not be stuck to the ways of the mother from when she was pregnant. The mind and will of each individual child will develop Christian family ways and characters.

This grandmother's account illuminates just how interrelated traditional parental teachings have become with externally introduced religion. With regard to religion, not only does this demonstrate the influence of the church on child-rearing, but it illustrates the degree to which Christianity has infiltrated Kahuan society: to the point of religious beliefs and teachings becoming fully incorporated into much of Kahuan culture and *kastom*. Further emphasized, through the above quote, is the immense degree of autonomy children are given, with regard to their development independent of adults, despite residing in tightly bound communities and being heavily guided by cultural rules and behavioral norms. Taking these broad Kahuan epistemological beliefs, the following section breaks them down further into five early childhood learning microenvironments.

### 5.5.3 *Microenvironments of Early Learning*

Suggesting that children are born with some predetermined path for their roles on earth, as reflected in their personal interest in particular learning areas, is not to say that people in Kahua do not play an important role in children's development. There is a strong Kahuan belief in the necessity of education for children's development, although this "education" can take a variety of forms, inclusive of a variety of knowledges.

Children can learn in any part of the community. They do not just stay in the home to learn. They *learn from anything they have, hold, touch, see, hear...* such as learning about nature from pigs and their piglets. From these experiences throughout the community, they learn what is both good and bad. [...] *Children have a natural interest to learn everyday*, and they are able to continue learning everyday because they do not just stay in one place. They learn to love and to do everything together, such as girls going swimming or picking nuts together, which is itself part of learning...about social life.

(Mother and Sunday School Teacher, age 27, emphasis added)

Learning throughout the community out of personal interest is one approach to learning identified locally within Kahua. But this only forms one component of an interrelated web of community learning microenvironments, identified by the researcher, as influential to the development of young Kahua children.

To better understand these features of learning in context, the following subsections will now explore the variety of knowledges and learning approaches present in varied Kahua microenvironments.<sup>53</sup> Emphasis is placed on kastom and culture in context through examples, which will later be linked with sustainability issues, as are central to the thesis.

### 1. Home

Continuing the exploration of knowledge in Kahua, firstly explored in this section is the home microenvironment. Although particular types of knowledge lend themselves to particular learning approaches between children and immediate family members, the most commonly observed and expressed approach was that of modeling-observation.



**Figure 5.2** Informal learning in kitchen, through modeling-observation of “hammering pudding,” while discussing the kastom of sharing the pudding with others once complete.

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<sup>53</sup> Notably, distinctions are not made here between types of learning (i.e. formal, nonformal, and informal) to avert restrictions on the variety of learning that occurs within each microenvironment (see Section 1.6).

A large component of local perceptions about the nature of knowledge is that which transfers in informal contexts, outside of institutional education. While formal learning institutions present general public knowledge that anyone has access to and a right to know, many informal learning contexts in Kahua are the settings for sharing more confidential information, such as between close family/clan relations. One historic example of this in the home was the traditional practice of parents waking their children in the wee hours of the morning (approximately 3am) to pass on particular kastom teachings. In present-day Kahua, families typically no longer maintain this exact practice. Instead, many fathers now use evening mealtime to lead their families in talks about kastom, during which, remaining unique to this time, is the transfer of knowledge solely for one's own children, in the absence of others. Such practices are not limited to direct teachings to children, as even parenting knowledge typically is expected to be shared by one's own mother and not other mothers in the community. This is depicted in the following vignette.

A mother watched on in critical amusement as another mother ate a significant amount of pig grease (i.e. fatty pork portions) at a traditional kastom feast. At the time, this woman eating the pig was breastfeeding and subsequently was bewildered as to why her few month old son became severely ill with diarrhea. The onlooking mother expressed (confidentially to the researcher) that the problem was consuming pig grease while breastfeeding, and she said that the woman should know better, instead of being just concerned with her own desires for this delicacy. Further, she stated that the other woman's mother should have taught her about the problems that such a diet would cause her infant. Nevertheless, the onlooking mother explained it was not her role to share such knowledge, which should be passed through one's immediate family.

As per cultural norms, the onlooking mother was not being impolite by keeping such knowledge, and her opinion, to herself. The alternative, of saying something to the other woman, would likely have been perceived as disrespectful. To further emphasize the nature of such knowledge transmissions, these two women were actually sisters-in-law, having lived adjacent to one another for over ten years. Yet, still, despite their familial relations through marriage and living proximity, it is believed that certain knowledge

should remain within one's immediate family. Other highly guarded knowledges shared closely within families include information of traditional remedies/medicines/birth control, and similarly, practices of Mauru (i.e. black magic).<sup>54</sup> Below is an overview of these and other prominent features of the home microenvironment.

**Table 5.4** Overview: Home Microenvironment

| <i>Customs of Child Learning</i>                                                                                                     | <i>Psychology of Caretakers</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>Learning Essentials (community identified) (Appendix D)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Immediate familial direct oral teachings and modeling; engagement of children in practical help to learn through genuine assistance. | Teaching of children begins in the home, where parents are believed to be the first teachers, before children attend kindy. "Teach him and he will go straight, such as not swearing. He will follow what it is that you tell him. Children do not have bad ideas in their own minds; they do not think themselves of what is not something good, such as they will just eat or hold anything. This is why it is so important for parents to first teach children in the home about what are appropriate and not appropriate things to do: children must be taught both the good and bad sides of things. Then in kindy, the teacher will repeat these teachings and tell the child more good and bad things. When children do something bad, it is important to use that experience to teach them so they will learn: tell him 'this is something good/bad to know'" (Father, age 43). | Practical Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household: cooking, sharing food, washings in river, sweeping</li> <li>Social: playing musical instrument, singing</li> <li>Traditional skills: crafts, building dwellings</li> </ul>                                                                                                         |
| Teachings emphasize oral confidential information and life skills through modeling-observation.                                      | "Parents must demonstrate everything so the child learns. Every time something is repeated over and over, children begin to learn. [...] Some children learn after hearing something just once, especially girls. Although boys learn when they hear something the first time, often they still do not follow. It is their choice to ignore. Children repeatedly try something until they know how to do it, or they will ask their mother for help if they are unsuccessful after a few tries." (Mother, age 31)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Specific Knowledges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer and spiritual life</li> <li>Kastom and kastom stories</li> <li>Communication skills</li> <li>Language: Kahua, English, Pidgin</li> </ul> Behaviors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperation</li> <li>Love</li> <li>Respect</li> <li>Sharing</li> <li>Swearing</li> </ul> |

## 2. Wider Community

While undeniably parents play an important role in children's learning and development around the home, much of the time children are not with their parents. Adults typically spend their days working their gardens (often a few hour hike away from one's home) while children generally remain in the village, either attending school, or for younger children, playing freely with their peers. Therefore, learning from peers through modeling is another significant influence on children's education. Children's "play" groups are generally inclusive of all age ranges, with the youngest being observers of older peers and the very eldest often assuming the roles of leaders and disciplinarians for

<sup>54</sup> With reference to these traditional knowledges, the vast majority of Kahua people do not openly admit to beliefs in them, predominantly due to their incongruence with the church [Christianity] and thus stigma attached.

the group. Culturally, once children reach approximately six years of age, it becomes inappropriate for them to play with opposite gendered peers and siblings.

Increasingly, many aspects of children's learning from peers are regarded disapprovingly by parents/guardians with the growth of Western influences and increasing village sizes. This is in comparison to previous decades/generations when only a few families resided in a hamlet or satellite community to a central village, where now often a dozen or more may live. One father (age 25) described these concerns,

Sometimes when playing children learn, but that is not true for every time they are playing. Children can learn by looking and hearing. For example, now all the boys are learning a new style, where they must wear new clothes because they see others doing so and like to adopt the ways of other children.

Parents frequently identify and negatively converse about the bad habits they believe children adopt from their peers, including fighting behaviors and culturally inappropriate language.<sup>55</sup> However, through observations of children's play groups, immense constructive knowledge is also informally transferred through these groups, whether it be through modeling-observation, pretend play, and/or ongoing opportunities for practice, as described below.

Learning to paddle a dugout canoe is a highly desired skill of young boys to learn. When older boys (approximately ages 9-13) paddle their canoes in the ocean, younger boys eagerly watch, waiting for any opportunity to assist the older boys, whether that be carrying the canoe to the water from the sand beach or swimming beside the boats while bodysurfing across waves. Occasionally, the older boys become frustrated by younger children in tow, but there is typically an observable pride in older children as they pass on their kastom knowledge and skills to younger children, such as allowing them to try paddling for themselves from time to time.

Regardless of the activity or children involved, the vast majority of learning throughout the wider village is based on modeling-observation, through which younger children observe elder peers/people until they feel capable enough to independently attempt a

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<sup>55</sup> These "bad habits" often originate from those who have viewed videos (such as during "fundraisers" where a generator and video player are brought to a village) or imported behaviors as observed in urban centers or local "troubled" families.

task, which is then repeated until eventually independently mastered. Rarely are children engaged in direct oral teachings within the wider community microenvironment.



**Figure 5.3** Unsupervised kindergarten children in the wider Toroa community, of mixed-genders and ages, silently making a “play” fire to cook ferns, based on modeling of mothers in the home.

In addition to peer learning, countless examples exist of all types of community members influencing the development of children. Culture, as is locally defined as the way of being and living in Kahua, is inclusive of local kastom and traditions, which are widely taught throughout communities. One particularly important aspect of Kahua culture, as well as significant learning opportunity for children, is kastom feasting.<sup>56</sup>

Attending a kastom feast provides the opportunity for families to share life updates and stories with one another. Feasts are also significant for children as they provide opportunities to know relatives from outside one’s own village and the specific cultural relationships/links to those people. Furthermore, during the multiple day event of communal feasting (due to the great preparation required of building a kastom house to hold the feast, gathering food and pigs, killing the pigs, baking the food, etc.) there are numerous opportunities for the sharing of kastom stories, kastom dancing, and songs in the vernacular, all of which provide important cultural learning experiences for children. Specific kastoms (i.e. behaviors), or Kahua Principles, to kastom feasts involve *respect* and *sharing together*. As one village chief explained, “Respecting one another is a kastom way to live in harmony and peace. Without respect there will be no harmony and real peace among people. Kastoms are passed on to children during feasts when parents and relatives show children how to be respectful of other people and properties.” Kastom feasts also allow for the passing on of traditional practices, such as crafts, in making carvings for the structural posts of kastom

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<sup>56</sup> Kastom feasts may be planned up to a few years in advance, between the feast holder, his family, and village leaders/chiefs, in order to have sufficient food in gardens and enough large pigs. The feast holder will invite people from his village, lineage group, and tribe, including relatives from around the island, to come and share in the feast.

houses, the carving of wooden bowls and coconut spoons to feast with, and the weaving of mats with coconut leaves.

Demonstrated in the above example is the extensive kastom knowledge children gain from observation, direct oral teachings, and embedded practical participation.

Additionally, below these are incorporated into an overview of the wider community microenvironment.

**Table 5.5** Overview: Wider Community Microenvironment

| <i>Customs of Child Learning</i>                                                                                                | <i>Psychology of Caretakers</i>                                                                                                                                                                                        | <i>Learning Essentials (community identified) (Appendix D)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Freedom to learn through play and practical work experiences throughout the community, often based on children's own interests. | "Now it is hard because children are influenced by other children. Before, there were not as many children, so children were just with their mom and dad, but now there are lots of other people influencing children. | Practical Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water: fishing, paddling canoe, diving, swimming</li> <li>Traditional skills: crafts, building, dancing</li> <li>Household: sweeping, washings in river, gardening, cooking/sharing food</li> <li>Social: playing games, singing, playing musical instrument</li> </ul> |
| Predominantly embedded learning opportunities in authentic experiences.                                                         | Communities should teach children when they are small so that they will grow up good, because like a tree, it is very difficult to straighten the trunk once it is already starting to bend over." (Father, age 59)    | Specific Knowledges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication skills</li> <li>Language: Kahua, English, Pidgin</li> <li>Spiritual life</li> <li>Kastom and kastom stories</li> <li>Planning</li> <li>Foreign culture</li> </ul>                                                                                      |
| Rarely involve direct oral teachings.                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Behaviors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Disobedience</li> <li>Fighting</li> <li>Love</li> <li>Respect</li> <li>Cooperation</li> <li>Sharing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |

### 3. Kindy

Summarizing a reoccurring theme throughout the village, with regard to the nature of children, a grandmother (age 67) and primary caretaker of her grandson said, "*Children are naughty until they go to kindy where they begin to learn.*" This is a somewhat controversial belief, based on the widespread Kahuan belief, with Biblical-origins, that parents are actually children's first teachers. Nevertheless, parents speak of numerous particular skills and knowledges developed in kindies, often related to behavioral issues mastered in the more structured institutional environment. This grandmother further explained that children are frightened when they first enter kindy, so they will sit down

quietly and listen to the teacher. Based on this learning that occurs in formal education, she claimed that children then bring it back to the home environment, which makes them better and more respectful people. For example, with regard to her grandson Haka, she explained how he had learned in kindy to say “good morning” to others as a polite greeting. One day, while playing in the river, he extended this to the community environment where he said it to an old man from another village walking past. His grandmother explained,

When this old man then went and told others that Haka greeted him, this made high [i.e. proud] of his grandfather, suggesting that he was responsible for raising such a respectful young child. After hearing this, I went to shake hands with Haka because he was the only child I knew who would say hello to a stranger when all the other children just laugh or do not talk to people passing through the village.

The grandmother claimed no responsibility for passing this behavior on to her grandson, fully crediting it to what he had learned in the kindy. By no means did she, or others, believe the kindy is capable of independently developing the whole children, for in other instances children learned culturally-unacceptable behaviors like “fighting” from peers in kindy.

With regard to local culture and kastom, the kindy provides many opportunities for children to deepen their understandings; however, this varies in degree within different kindies. For example, Toroa Kindy has a well resourced learning area devoted to traditional cultural artifacts for children to play with (e.g. wooden carvings: canoes, bowls, weapons), the teacher tells kastom stories daily (or invites people from the local community to share stories), and daily practices of Kahua Principles are encouraged (e.g. sharing of snack and classroom resources). Further, the teacher guides child-initiated play to reflect cultural activities (e.g. pretend play using stones and shells to represent peeling vegetables and then use of kastom bowls to bake in pretend stone ovens).

Notably, in kindies where teachers themselves have limited kastom knowledge, this is

thereby reflected in their classrooms by an inability to move beyond objectifications of culture through overt materials and stories to deeper comprehension levels in relating them to underlying kastoms for children. In summary, below is an overview of the kindy microenvironment.



**Figure 5.4** Contrasting approaches to learning in Toroa Kindy: (left) girl constructing a traditional oven shape out of local shells; (right) boys practicing writing the alphabet, implementing rote Western-learning.<sup>57</sup>

**Table 5.6** Overview: Kindy Microenvironment

| <i>Customs of Child Learning</i>                                                                                                                                                                                             | <i>Psychology of Caretakers</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>Learning Essentials (community identified) (Appendix D)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Integrated use of Western and traditional learning approaches, as dictated by the daily schedule/curriculum, ranging from Western play-based learning and rote memorization to traditional modeling-observations approaches. | “The foundation of children’s learning in kindy is through play with local resources, without which it is hard for them to school well. For example, with blocks they build houses, they learn about kastoms with wooden kastom spoons (coconut shells) because they only have Whiteman’s spoons in their homes, and they learn about weapons for fighting but they are informed that these are dangerous. Although the teaching manual suggests putting some cultural resources out for children in the dramatics learning area, such as knives and scrapers, as teachers we decided these items were too dangerous to leave out for children. Last year, we had bows and arrows in the classroom, but this year no longer because everyone was shooting each other. Similarly, there are no longer stones of different shapes and colors in the classroom because children were using them to shoot [i.e. throw at] each other. Thus, as teachers we must carefully select what fits the classroom, community, and children.” (Kindy teacher, age 27) | <p><b>Cognitive Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ABCs (early literacy skills)</li> <li>▪ 123s (early numeracy skills)</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Playing games</li> <li>▪ Swimming</li> <li>▪ Playing musical instruments</li> <li>▪ Singing</li> <li>▪ Dancing</li> </ul> <p><b>Specific Knowledges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prayer and spiritual life</li> <li>▪ Kastom and kastom stories</li> <li>▪ Communication skills</li> <li>▪ Languages: Kahua, Pidgin, English</li> </ul> <p><b>Behaviors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cooperation</li> <li>▪ Love</li> <li>▪ Respect</li> <li>▪ Sharing</li> </ul> |

<sup>57</sup> Notably, all children are engaged in a variety of activities throughout the kindy on a daily basis. These examples are not intended to demonstrate gender differences.

#### 4. Primary School (Pre-Class/Class 1)

Extending the formal education context of young children leads to primary school. In 2009, Toroa village opened their own “Extension Primary School” (initially with one teacher and two classrooms: Pre-class and Class 1<sup>58</sup>) due to the long difficult walk to the nearest primary school in the neighboring village. This situation is not ideal for the teacher, as she must go between the two classrooms throughout the day, simultaneously teaching both groups of children. However, the children benefit from the central location of the classroom in the village and the fact their teacher is a local from the village (as opposed to culturally and linguistically different teachers posted by the government throughout the province and nation). Therefore, although elementary curriculum does not have many specific ties to local kastom, having a local familial relation as a teacher facilitates her own incorporation of Kahua language and kastom into the curriculum. This thereby is used to enhance children’s comprehension of unfamiliar academic concepts and/or languages (English/Pidgin).



**Figure 5.5** Toroa Community Extension Primary School, Class 1 classroom, with additional younger children sitting in as “observers” for lesson.

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<sup>58</sup> Approximately 25 children regularly attend, which is not enough to warrant another teacher according to provincial education authorities.

Class runs weekdays, from 8am until 1pm, with children arriving at 7:30am to perform “classroom maintenance” (e.g. weeding around school). This reflects community kastom values of cooperation and fellowship, as well as links with the church in maintaining a clean environment. The majority of class time, however, is then largely devoted to passive rote learning activities. Typically, text is written on one blackboard, which the children then copy into their government supplied notebooks, while the teacher attends to the other class, and so on back and forth throughout the day.

The table below further summarizes this microenvironment.

**Table 5.7** Overview: Primary School Microenvironment

| <i>Customs of Child Learning</i>                    | <i>Psychology of Caretakers</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <i>Learning Essentials (community identified) (Appendix D)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher directed instruction through rote learning. | “When children finish kindy, they must go to further their education in primary and secondary school, until they have a job, such as a teacher or nurse, in order to benefit their families. There [primary school] they will learn the necessary skills to be able to count, ABCs, and identify classroom resources. But not everything is good about primary school. Children are good and bad people because kastoms are being lost due to mixed-gender schools. Most children are growing up in school now. Before they stayed home learning about culture and kastom, and now they learn differently in school” (Father, age 59). | Cognitive Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ABCs (early literacy skills)</li> <li>▪ 123s (early numeracy skills)</li> </ul> Practical Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Playing games</li> <li>▪ Singing</li> </ul> Specific Knowledges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prayer and spiritual life</li> <li>▪ Communication skills</li> <li>▪ Foreign culture</li> <li>▪ Planning</li> <li>▪ Languages: English, Pidgin</li> </ul> Behaviors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cooperation</li> <li>▪ Love</li> <li>▪ Respect</li> <li>▪ Sharing</li> </ul> |

### 5. Church / Sunday School

The final early learning microenvironment identified in Kahua communities is that of the Church / Sunday school, as described below.



**Figure 5.6** Toroa Village Sunday school children learning Christian song in English.

On a typical Sunday morning, the village of Toroa is active from 5 or 6am when the first church (SSEC) bell (i.e. WWII aircraft scrap metal) is “rung,” signaling young children from kindy age through Class 6 to wake and go to church for Sunday school. There, Sunday school teachers implement rote learning practices with children for engraining Biblical stories and memorizing verses of the Bible. Typically, Sunday school involves singing songs to praise the Lord (predominantly in English: 84% of time), guidance on how to pray, donations of food and money (used as a fundraiser for the Sunday school program), and separating into age groups for Bible teachings through “Memory Verse” lessons. Most significant are these Bible stories and memorization of specific verses, which are said to then stay in the minds of children throughout their lives, guiding them in everything they do. Meanwhile, the rest of the village also begins to wake and prepare breakfast. An hour later, after Sunday school has finished, a second church bell is rung, signaling everyone to go and wash in the river (clothes and bodies) and eat breakfast, before a third and final bell is rung, calling everyone to church service around 9am. However, in line with “Solomon Time,” inevitably the majority of attendees arrive 15-30 minutes late, during which the pastor postpones the beginning of service until a sufficient number of people have strolled their way into the church, with children often carrying younger siblings and arriving separately from their parents.

Through these Sunday practices, with regard to culture, not only do children learn religious-specific knowledge, which has been adopted as “local culture,” but also instilled in them are cleanliness practices, Kahuan “valuing” of time, and children’s levels of autonomy yet responsibility for young siblings. Table 5.8 provides further summary of this microenvironment.

**Table 5.8** Overview: Church Microenvironment

| <i>Customs of Child Learning</i>                                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>Psychology of Caretakers</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>Learning Essentials (community identified) (Appendix D)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rote memorization of Bible stories, songs, and verses; modeling prayer.                                                                                                                                                | “Sunday school and church are important in the lives of children. The Master sees children as very important. Jesus said to all children ‘come to me,’ so you should not dislike children. Therefore, children must be taught to know the Master. For example, “Memory Verse” teachings – children will think about them at a future time, and they will remember, because they will have memorized them when they are young, so they will stay with them long into the future. When they grow up, they will remember back to what to do or not and think back to those Memory Verses when they may do something wrong. [...] Songs also help children to learn about G-d. If a child does not come to Sunday school, then the Sunday school teachers should go talk to the child and pray with him. It is the teacher’s responsibility to talk to non-attending children and their parents, just as it is the responsibility of the pastor to talk to those who do not attend church – although when he did, it did not make a difference.” (Mother and Sunday school teacher, age 42) | Practical Skills:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Recitation of religious songs at evening gatherings, “family church” services in the home, daily morning/evening church services, weekday evening Sunday school and chorus practice, and Sunday morning Sunday school. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cooking and sharing food</li> <li>▪ Singing</li> </ul> Specific Knowledges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spiritual life: prayer, Bible, “Memory Verse”</li> <li>▪ Language: English, Pidgin</li> <li>▪ Communication skills</li> </ul> Behaviors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cooperation</li> <li>▪ Love</li> <li>▪ Respect</li> <li>▪ Sharing</li> </ul> |

Having established the variety of contexts in which Kahua children learn throughout their villages, the following section will progress this analysis to comparisons between

them. Due to the overarching focus of this thesis on cultural aspects of kindy sustainability, the analysis below will focus on the (dis)equilibrium of the above microenvironments in relation to the kindy, with an emphasis on kastom.

#### *5.5.4 (Dis)Equilibrium between Learning Microenvironments*

From the different Kahuan early learning microenvironments, as explored above, a number of strong elements of consonance and dissonance were identified between them. Relating back to the beginning of this chapter, in comparing SI ECE with international literature, Toroa Kindy teacher Kame explained a constant state of dissonance in teachers' experiences,

You must follow child-centered learning, as opposed to following teachers' interests. But in doing this, I do not think children will learn if you just follow their interests. It is hard to make children sit down to listen and learn, when sometimes they just want to follow their own interests. For example, at the end of the day, although it is in the schedule to sing songs, I will first ask the children if they want to sing, but even though they reply yes, sometimes they will not sing then. Also, it is not always safe to let children follow their own interests, yet that is what we are taught we must do [in FBT]. For example, all the children are very interested in climbing trees, but this is dangerous as they could fall and get hurt. When you explain this to children, they are not interested and do not listen. Many days in kindy, Danisa [3-year-old girl] does not like to stay in the classroom, so she leaves to go walkabout the village and climb trees. If she were to get hurt, I worry that her parents would come to me because I should have been looking after her and all the other young children in the kindy, but then I must just explain to parents that I have to follow the thinking of all the children, so it would be difficult for me to stop them from leaving the classroom.

Kame clearly explicates her sentiment, as reflective of many Kahua/MUP kindy teachers, in the constant state of mental discord they face. Not only individually do they struggle between how they are told to teach and the cultural child-rearing techniques that were previously instilled in them, but also they must continually address discord when unsatisfied parents confront their teaching practices. Often parents still unaware of the "learning through play" approach criticize teachers for wasting time and not genuinely teaching children. Without shared understandings of program objectives and approaches to achieve these, inevitably community-wide support necessary for these programs' ongoing functioning is greatly challenged.

Further dissonance between the kindy and other community cultures, in other early learning microenvironments, can be seen when drawing comparisons with region/prayer and primary education.

In kindy, children must pray three times a day – beginning, snack, closing – but they only do so because their teachers were taught during teachers’ training that they must.

(Kindy chairman, age 38)

In kindy we are told to teach through play, but in primary school they focus on reading and writing, which does not fit our culture.

(Kindy teacher, 27)

While the above quotes demonstrate clear enactment of ECE policy and curriculum by kindy teachers, the interviewees’ tones expressing them convey the cultural dissonance between these settings. Both prayer and play are presented as mandated kindy activities, enforced through ECE teacher training and curriculum and enacted by teachers. However, these concepts are not deeply understood means to the ends of holistic child development through kindy. They are predominantly practiced in accordance with community expectations/norms and rote reenactment. As such, neither reflects deep beliefs of communities or teachers in such practices, thereby raising surface-level consonance between environments but underlying dissonance in fully enacting such practices. This is not to imply value judgments on traditional culture or formal ECE programming, thereby ranking one as superior to the other, but merely is a presentation of their incongruence.

As stated earlier, three main institutions govern Kahuan society: kastom, church, and civil society (i.e. government, including education). Education, as depicted in the exploration of early learning microenvironments, is in a transitional state between traditional and Western societies (Table 5.9). Therefore, aside from the inherent dissonance in the current culturally evolving education system, of remaining significance is understanding education in relation to church and kastom. To situate the importance

of education, it must first be compared alongside the fundamental community priority of Christianity.

Everything must come after G-d. G-d must be put first and then everything else should follow. Education should not be put before G-d – religion – which is acceptable because G-d has already given wisdom for everyone: “Seek he first the Kingdom of G-d and all these things shall be added unto you” [Bible quote] when you need anything.

(Mother and Sunday school teacher, age 38)

Likewise, in priority given to religion over education, for many Kahuans, *kastom*, as is in many ways synonymous with Christianity in terms of values, also takes precedence over formal education. “Church with *kastom*: these two go together without one being better or more important than the other” (Father, age 42). Furthermore, exemplifying this, a mother (age 34) stated,

They [parents] must make them [children] to attend prayer every morning and night so the Master [G-d] keeps them from being too naughty. Here, *kastom* and prayer go together. Some people do not go to church, and then when they grow up they are wild, like animals, and it becomes hard for them to go near the church. These people then have no heart to help each other: *kastom* and church both teach to have a heart for loving others.

Nevertheless, it is recognized that dissonance also prevails between the cultural foundations of Christianity and traditional *kastom*, as explained by a community pastor (age 37),

There are some differences between the church and *kastom*. For example, if you make someone cross, *kastom* says you must give that person financial compensation, but as for Jesus – blood prayer will cleanse. It is up to each man to decide whether to use *kastom* or church for each situation.

It is through the incorporation of religion and *kastom*, and their recognized slight elements of dissonance, into all early learning microenvironments that culturally desirable child development can be fostered, therefore contrasting the pure uncritical adoption of international models of ECE.

Beginning this study, it was presumed that particular Kahuan learning microenvironments would be distinctively, locally sustained to varying degrees. However, significant cultural change was found to be dramatically affecting all Kahua

learning microenvironments. Arising from analysis of the five microenvironments of ECE was a spectrum of factors involved in approaches to early childhood learning (Table 5.9). This is similar to the spectrum of traditional ECE and Western-based dominant ECE trends of desirable program characteristics (Table 5.3), wherein the kindy was situated in the middle. However, based on the preceding microenvironments explored in this section, the spectrum depicted in Table 5.9 displays early learning across a single context: Kahua communities. The spectrum depicts the span of approaches to learning ranging from more traditional approaches in the wider community to an increasing degree of Western learning influences at the opposite end of the spectrum in primary schools:

- Traditional wider community learning approaches, although still prominently evident in the home, begin to change as parents start preparing children for kindy and formal schooling, as well through more direct teachings of kastom to children in the home.
- Kindy then advances this to incorporate more Western learning approaches in preparation for children's transition to primary school, while still bridging back to the home and community microenvironments. This is observable through predominant use of the vernacular as language of instruction, use of local resources for learning materials, and overt teachings of kastom.
- Church and Sunday school link back to community, largely through language<sup>59</sup> and communal practices, while teachings are distinctly imported from the West. However, in many ways, some teachings (i.e. Biblical values) are also similar to

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<sup>59</sup> Services are conducted in the vernacular, despite reading Bible passages in English, except for those of Roman Catholic denomination for whom the Bible used is translated into Kahua language.

traditional values, and over time, due to devout beliefs, Christianity has become a component of locally perceived present-day culture.

- Primary school is situated at the extreme end of the spectrum, towards a Western learning approach. To a great degree, classroom pedagogy, materials, routines, curriculum, etc. are virtually indistinguishable from Western classrooms.

Although the language of instruction is supposed to be English, as per the national curriculum, there is still room for further movement along the spectrum. For example, the vast majority of these classrooms are conducted in SI Pidgin due to insufficient English skills of both teachers and students for English to be the sole language of instruction.

This spectrum of early learning in Kahua microenvironments, as depicted below (Table 5.9), notably identifies and arranges five microenvironments by the degree to which they incorporate Western and traditional learning approaches, based on prominent objectives identified across microenvironments. This contrasts how the microenvironments have been presented thus far in this section. Previously, they were ordered successively building outwards from the home microenvironment, which was deemed to have the strongest influence on young children as they begin to transition through the other ECE microenvironments.

**Table 5.9** Spectrum of Early Learning Approaches in Kahua Microenvironments<sup>60</sup>

| <i>Spectrum of Approaches to Learning</i> | Primary School<br>(Pre-class/Class 1)                                               | Church /<br>Sunday School | Kindy | Home                                                                                                                                      | Wider Community |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
|                                           |   |                           |       |                                                                                                                                           |                 |
| <b>Objective</b>                          | Extrinsic motivation to learn: preparation for future schooling and paid employment |                           |       | Intrinsic motivation to learn: preparation for life; kastom/tradition/subsistence                                                         |                 |
| <b>Approach to Learning</b>               | Rote learning, memorization                                                         |                           |       | Legitimate peripheral participation (observation-modeling)                                                                                |                 |
| <b>Learning Model</b>                     | Theoretical, abstract, practical                                                    |                           |       | Practical, personalized                                                                                                                   |                 |
| <b>Thrust</b>                             | Towards change and independence                                                     |                           |       | Towards conformity and interdependence                                                                                                    |                 |
| <b>Ownership of Knowledge</b>             | Public, commodified knowledge                                                       |                           |       | Private: belongs to families, tribes, and lineages                                                                                        |                 |
| <b>Source of Knowledge</b>                | Western; scientifically and formally documented information                         |                           |       | Traditional; kastom beliefs, values, skills, and practices                                                                                |                 |
| <b>Learners' Personal Orientation</b>     | Openly competitive, low autonomy                                                    |                           |       | Quietly competitive, high autonomy                                                                                                        |                 |
| <b>Questioning by Learners</b>            | Actively encouraged and practiced                                                   |                           |       | Discouraged and regarded as challenge to experts' authority                                                                               |                 |
| <b>Social Context</b>                     | Information-oriented, focus on individual achievement                               |                           |       | Individual-oriented, emphasizes unity, stresses interdependence, foundation in significance of understanding and respecting local kastoms |                 |
| <b>Language of Instruction</b>            | English, Pidgin                                                                     |                           |       | Vernacular                                                                                                                                |                 |
| <b>Learning Resources</b>                 | Manufactured materials                                                              |                           |       | Local bush materials                                                                                                                      |                 |

Each learning environment can be viewed with particular distinctions across a spectrum of learning approaches, origins, goals, etc. Yet, fundamental to them all was found to be the underlying (desired, even if not always fully realized) cultural values (as also significantly reflected in local religious beliefs) and Kahua Principles: respect, love, fellowship, and knowledge of kastom. Therefore, although there is a strong perception that local cultural knowledge is being lost in Kahua, it still remains a strong foundation to all early learning interactions throughout the villages, regardless of the specific early learning microenvironment. This will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter 6.

Notably, community support for early childhood learning microenvironments demonstrates greater community support in each of the four independent

<sup>60</sup> Modified and expanded from Teaero's (2002:80) work on Kiribati Indigenous education.

microenvironments (i.e. wider community, home, church, and primary) in comparison to community support for the kindy. This can be associated with greater shared understandings of approaches to learning in these other microenvironments in comparison to those of the community in relation to the kindy. It is through these overtly observable deeper shared understandings, which have developed over longer periods of time, that have allowed for the creation of states of equilibrium between externally introduced ideas and internal cultural beliefs and practices. For example, acceptance of formal primary school evolved as communities placed less priority on children working in subsistence gardens, and eventually this evolved to a desirability preference for children to attain higher education, out of long-term desire for employment and wealth (Chapter 4). However, with the enduring dissonance between SI ECE curriculum, which emphasizes children's learning through play, and community cultural beliefs and objectives largely only recognizing a narrower more academic understanding of formal education, this thereby is creating a state of disequilibrium. As a result, this is affecting the necessary community support and involvement required for these community-based programs, and therefore ultimately kindy program sustainability. Yet, here it is argued that if communities could be better made aware of the local cultural elements involved in the kindy, this could be used to bolster support in a shared program objective, and as such diminish the dissonance between "caretaker psychologies" believed here to be largely responsible for kindy unsustainability. The same effect could potentially result if communities came to accept the notion that children learn through play, which would thereby eliminate much dissonance between belief systems and could allow for the growth of greater kindy support.

## **5.6 Concluding Chapter Remarks**

Contrary to much previous research, which has argued that sociocultural backgrounds of individuals bound their origins of learning, motivation, and identity (McCaslin and Hickey 2001, McInerney 2004, Summers 2006), SI ECE presents a marked countermovement outward from the traditional institutional culture of education itself. In holistically analyzing the data in this chapter, a dramatically different premise arises than in previous Pacific educational research, more congruent with the work on culture as related to neocolonialism and globalization. Instead of education systems adapting to local cultural contexts, in this chapter, early childhood learning has been seen on a spectrum of increasing international transfers of Western-based “desirable” ECE characteristics. In extending these findings to the kindergarten context, this study found that ECE epitomizes a transitional institution between the home and community (i.e. traditional practices) and the church and formal education sectors (i.e. imported institutions from the West). However, observed in this chapter of Kahuan learning microenvironments has been a general trend away from the traditional home/community-based model and values of learning, as associated with *kastom*, to that of modernity, through the church and formal primary education.

Despite the overarching influence of Western-based ECE policies and practices visible in broad international program comparisons, in the SI, underlying this remains significant context and culture sensitive program elements: the fundamentals of the Kahua Principles. As will be explored in the following chapter, with a societal backlash movement of cultural reinvigoration, a generational countermovement is subsequently emerging in Kahua ECE microenvironments. This is deemed of great significance, where on the surface level one can observe an intergenerational cultural decay, as

exemplified through changing local epistemologies to maintain equilibrium with newly introduced kindy objectives. Yet, underlying (yet to be fully realized), the kindy holds the potential of cultural reinvigorator in return as it continues to simultaneously integrate traditional practices. Therefore, ultimately, fundamental to the sustainability of community-based ECE initiatives could be a dependency on this community-level reinvigoration of culture. For, this could generate a state of equilibrium in community-wide support and cooperation over shared beliefs regarding kindy approaches to learning, thereby potentially facilitating ongoing program functioning and sustainability.

## **CHAPTER 6: Building on Living Traditions in Understanding Kindy Sustainability**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Building on Chapters 4 and 5, this findings chapter hones in on the analysis of data collected in Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP) to further understand issues of cultural and contextual kindy sustainability. It begins by exploring living traditions in Kahua through the evolving concepts of learning and culture in context. This progresses an understanding to subsequently focus on the sustained integration of global ideologies influencing Solomon Islands' (SI) traditional approaches to learning. Through this, there is an elucidation as to how they are, and are not, integrated into SI early childhood learning contexts, as aligned with locally defined aspirations for young children.<sup>61</sup> Finally, this gives rise to an analysis of influences on the sustainability of community-based kindy programs, predominantly in light of the degree to which these programs fit the larger local culture and context.<sup>62</sup> This chapter builds on the previous (findings) chapter's identification of the cultural and contextual relevance of early childhood education (ECE) to the SI and Kahua contexts, as well as the significance remote communities are placing on education, beginning in early childhood. Therefore, the presentation of findings in this chapter aims to further illuminate why kindergartens in Kahua continue to struggle to be sustained by remote communities, despite strong values locally being congruent with these ECE programs.

Wenger (1998:8) writes,

Learning is an integral part of our everyday lives. It is part of our participation in our communities and organizations. The problem is not that we do not know this, but rather that we do not have very systematic ways of talking about this familiar experience.

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<sup>61</sup> This section most significantly addresses supplementary research question #3 (Section 1.6) regarding ECE stakeholders' beliefs in the nature of knowledge and learning in early childhood.

<sup>62</sup> This section most significantly addresses supplementary research question #4 (Section 1.6) regarding community characteristics affecting the cultural and contextual sustainability of Kahua kindies.

Therefore, this chapter will now explore early childhood learning in remote SI villages in a more systematic way, beginning with culturally situating learning and eventually resulting in an analysis of how this affects ECE program sustainability through barriers at the community level.

## **6.2 Learning as Situated in Local Context**

To understand contextually relevant and sensitive formal education in SI, it is imperative to explore the evolving concepts of learning and culture in the specific context. The following subsections present a progression, as identified by the researcher: from locally defining learning, to understanding how these concepts are locally believed to be evolving in line with cultural changes, as influenced by formal education and religion. Finally, it culminates in the identification of the *kindy* as a potentially critical institution influencing the future evolution of culture.

### *6.2.1 Defining Learning in Kahua*

There are two distinct types of learning within Wainoni. In the local Kahua language, these are known as *ramantenia* and *hagasuria*. The distinction here is made between the former referring to *kastom* teachings that form the “commandments,” or “laws,” which guide one’s life and interactions with others in Kahua. In contrast, *hagasuria* refers to more general life skills/knowledge teachings, such as those learned in formal schooling. However, before these two aspects of learning can be explored in greater detail, they must be situated in the principles that form the basis, at least traditionally, of life for the Kahua people. As mentioned in the preceding chapters, these are known as the *Kahua Principles* (introduced in Chapter 1; Table 6.1, as applied to early childhood learning).

The Kahua Principles are comprised of four overarching local Kahua cultural values, which provide the basis for how the Kahua people are to behave and interact (i.e. *hemoti*: sharing together, *herongogi*: asking, *hemakuani*: care, and *hekarigi*: discussion). Underlying these unwritten, long-standing, locally defined traditional principles are deeply rooted obligatory Kahua practices of respect, love, and compassion for others. Additionally, the Kahua Principles give rise to *ramata*, which are the traditionally unwritten specific operational rules for how the Kahua people must lead their lives. These “principles” remain near exclusively an orally transpired tradition, unwritten until the past few years through the work of the grassroots Kahua Association (KA). Nevertheless, their traditional understanding as a set of principles to guide daily life, and inclusion in direct and indirect teachings to children, are imperative. As such, these are not merely underlying values labeled and formally applied to local culture for the purposes of this thesis. In present-day Kahua, specific knowledge regarding these principles is quickly diminishing, such as an awareness of the specific vernacular terminology used to express each of them. However, the fundamental actions addressed and enforced through them still provide firm basis for daily human interactions throughout the region. With regard to young children of kindy age (approximately 3-6 years), at present, they are not yet aware of the specific names of each principle, nor that there exists this set of “principles.” Therefore, parents and teachers present these ideas, unofficially, as “laws” for the Kahua people, just as children are familiarized with “rules” in the kindy classroom that everyone must follow. These cultural principles are summarized in the following table, as applied to early childhood learning.

**Table 6.1** Kahua Principles

| Application of Kahua Principles to Kahua Early Childhood Learning Contexts <sup>63</sup> |                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Principle                                                                                | Translation                                         | Interpretation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Hemoti                                                                                   | Sharing together                                    | Children must share everything (e.g. during snack time, children are reminded to share their food [i.e. bananas, potatoes, taro, etc.] with other children/teachers, especially those who have not brought snack for the day).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Herongogi                                                                                | Asking                                              | If there is anything a child would like, s/he must ask first (e.g. ask the teacher to leave the classroom to “go to sea” to toilet).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Hemakuani                                                                                | Care                                                | Children must respect other people’s property by taking care of it, whether the owner is present or not (e.g. during bathing time, children are not to steal other children’s trousers; children are not to knock down someone’s block constructions).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Hekarigi                                                                                 | Discussion                                          | Everything must involve dialogue and discussion with others (e.g. teacher will approach children during free-play to engage in discussion about what they are working on).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <i>Ramata</i>                                                                            | <i>Kahua “operational rules” to guide behaviour</i> | <p>Ramata are inclusive of a process for discussion and the types of behaviors required to maintain respect. Traditionally, ramata are taught and applied at family levels, but they are also taught in a less formal manner within the kindergarten. They emphasize how to live a good life by understanding what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.</p> <p>Significant Kahua ramata kastoms (all rooted in expressions of <i>respect</i><sup>64</sup>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Females must wear skirts, not trousers, unless under skirt (for protection and discreetness while moving around, such as during work and play).</li> <li>✓ Females may not be seen by their brothers when walking/talking alone with another man (other than uncle/father), and vice versa, until s/he is set to wed (begin practicing in early primary school years).</li> <li>✓ Females must never dry their clothes on the roof, or at a level above chest height, where men may walk under (including if the timber on which the clothing is hung extends to a higher point than a man’s shoulder-level).</li> <li>✓ Females and males must play games separately, especially when involving physical contact and playing with siblings (beginning in early primary school).</li> <li>✓ When a female enters a room of males, she must fold her skirt in-between her knees (so not see-through) and walk gently.</li> <li>✓ A female must not sit on a branch, or climb trees, above where her brother is walking/sitting (e.g. branch over road).</li> <li>✓ A female must not stand on a level above her brother (e.g. stand in home where brother may walk beneath; be seated on a higher stair than brother).</li> <li>✓ No harsh language may be used.</li> <li>✓ No stealing.</li> <li>✓ No fighting with or hurting others.</li> <li>✓ Love everyone: welcome any visitor into one’s home for a visit, betelnut, food, and place to sleep/stay.</li> <li>✓ Share food with friends/neighbors/strangers (most notably when making pudding or feasting) and eat together.</li> <li>✓ If one makes someone else cross or breaks ramata, s/he must pay compensation, and/or such justifies physical punishment (e.g. whipping), which would otherwise be considered breaking a kastom.</li> </ul> |

<sup>63</sup> Based on researcher’s cumulative interviews and observations in Kahua.

<sup>64</sup> Respectful behaviors most significantly refer to those towards elders and between brothers and sisters. Terminology of “brother” and “sister” are inclusive of all “cousin-brothers/sisters,” according to Kahuan kastom.

Arising from these principles are the Kahua communal fundamentals revolving around *respect*. On the surface level, through specific *ramata*, it would appear as though equality between genders is significantly deficient, with harsher and more restrictive rules and punishments borne by women. However, within the local culture, such *kastoms* are so deeply embedded and engrained in the Natives' minds, essentially from birth, that an unconscious violation would be rare, for these are the bedrock fundamentals to all contexts and aspects of Kahuan life. Accordingly, arising from extensive researcher observation, it became apparent that they must not be viewed as overly restrictive or unfair. For, historically these have been the liberators of a harmonious collective society. This is not to say that all people in Kahua fully agree with, or abide by, them. Such is reflected in the locally perceived breakdowns of respect, and thus locally drawn associations with the loss of Kahuan culture. Therefore, although traditional learning (*ramatenia*) historically held the greatest significance in Kahua, through oral teachings and modeling of behaviors, this can be seen as in decline. This increasing loss of traditional knowledge is being replaced by a preference for formalized learning in schools of largely Western academic knowledge (*hagasuria*). Furthermore, even traditional practical *hagasuria* (teachings), such as how to plant certain crops, are no longer being taught in many instances in preference for children to focus on formal school teachings. Nevertheless, many related *ramatenia*, such as the sharing of these (cooked) crops with others, remain evident, not in oral teachings but through modeling of these long-standing obligatory behaviors. Here, a shift has been identified in the predominantly practiced and valued style of learning from traditional oral teachings and modeling to those of Western more passive rote learning (reflective of Chapter 5 findings). However, before any analysis can be made regarding current

challenges facing present-day educational initiatives, it is essential to understand the evolution of these local perceptions.

### *6.2.2 Local Perceptions of the Evolving Kahua Culture*

This section will explore the Kahua people's evolving perceptions regarding their local culture, based on participant-observations and interviews conducted throughout the Kahua region. It is widely recognized that culture, in general, continually evolves in whatever the context. For example, in Melanesia, most notably culture is defined as an evolving lived experience, as opposed to an abstract term in other societies (Roland 1991, Clammer 1995). Therefore, in order to determine the impact of such changes over time, it was deemed imperative to base this experience on local perceptions, which account for local development goals and values placed on traditional beliefs and practices.

#### *Symbolic Cultural Evolution: Western Material Influences*

One of the most lucid illustrations of change, observed and recounted, in Kahua is the dominant local perception that increasingly women are beginning to wear trousers in the region. At the community level, one kindly chairman expressed his view on this changing aspect of culture as,

Kahua culture has changed over time by Western world lifestyle influences affecting Kahua society today. For example, girls wearing trousers. In fact, Kahua culture and the church taught that girls should wear skirts only. This practice of girls wearing trousers has undermined Kahua Principles of hekarigi and herongogi. The influence of girls wearing trousers has a widespread influence in Kahua society and could become devastating to those good Kahua cultural values, such as of reasonable clothing to wear. For example, 1 – All women/girls will be seen as males because only men can wear trousers; you will not differentiate. 2 – Brothers and sisters will not respect each other; they could use the same trousers any brothers or sisters wear. 3 – Boys or girls could steal trousers from anywhere.

A fundamental ramata requires that females must wear female clothing (i.e. not trousers), which was later reinforced by the arrival of Christian missionaries. Any case of women

not wearing skirts displays an overt symbol of disrespect to the vast majority of other Kahua people, regardless of age, gender, or status. Markedly, overt violations to this are occasionally committed by a few Natives who have spent extensive time outside the region, in urban centers, and have accepted and adopted Western styles. It must be understood that this is not an issue of materialism, as undeniably Kahuan fashion has changed over centuries, where for example textiles are now exclusively worn. Yet, what is at stake are the fundamental values to Kahuans, most notably underlain by the deepest forms of respect. This is why, from the above quoted kindy chairman's perspective on changing culture, he refers to the principles of asking (herongogi) and discussion (hekarigi). For, without consensus on such dramatic cultural change, a lack of reverence for others is unacceptably demonstrated. Taking the issue of wearing gender and culturally inappropriate clothing, this most significantly violates a demonstration of respect to opposite gendered siblings (immediate family and cousin-siblings). Arguably, not abiding by this decays the underlying fundamentals to societal structures, such as protecting inter-gender interactions (e.g. promiscuity and impure thoughts encouraged through non-conservative apparel).

Not only does this respect-related change refer to adult females at the community level, it is also very much an issue within the kindy. In Kahua culture, girls and boys are separated for discussions about certain issues, such as what clothing is appropriate for girls to wear and how they should move and sit in said clothing. In reiteration, ramata holds that *all* females, including girls, should wear female clothing (i.e. skirts, with trousers underneath [in more recent decades] due to the often thin/see-through fabric, as well as for "protection" purposes when older). Culturally, mothers "should" teach their young daughters about this in the home. However, some mothers have chosen not to

edify this to their girls by the time they are of kindy age, at which point some kindy teachers then feel responsible for enforcing this message/kastom within their classrooms.

This is depicted in the following vignette based on kindy observations:

In Toroa Kindy, the teacher felt obliged to address a group of exclusively girls regarding culture and gender appropriate garb. At the end of the morning, after dismissing all the boys, she huddled the girls in a small circle inside the classroom and very softly broached the subject with them. Meanwhile, the boys gathered beneath a nearby hut, sending one representative at a time to spy in the classroom window in an effort to try and hear what “secretive” information was being shared with the girls. However, repeatedly, with every attempt, they were roused away by the teacher. This clothing issue initially arose over the course of a few weeks when the boys in the classroom increasingly would point to girls, during seated group times, who were sitting open-legged, exposing their private parts. This was done unintentionally by the girls due to not yet implementing the proper traditional way women are to sit in Kahua: typically by folding one’s skirt between her legs, which are folded beneath her or to the side. The boys would point at the girls and call out to each other saying, “lookem video blo olta gele.” (Often Kahua children used these Pidgin terms, as opposed to the vernacular, as these are words they have acquired through overhearing others in the village. Yet, typically, these children do not yet speak Pidgin. The meaning implies “look at the girls” [where pointing], as in watching/staring at a video on a screen.) The following day after the teacher’s talk, every girl wore trousers (i.e. shorts) or panties under her skirt to kindy. For the beginning of that day, each folded her skirt between her legs while seated; however, such care was forgotten over the course of the day as the girls reverted to their less-conscious playful ways. Further, most of the girls only owned a single pair of panties/trousers, which were subsequently being washed the following day, and thus the effect was not completely lasting. However, over the following weeks, the girls slowly began to develop an ongoing awareness of sitting more discreetly with care, aided by ongoing verbal reminders in private and modeling by the teacher.

Drawing from this kindy classroom example, based on the mere few hours a child spends in kindy each week (approximately 3 hours/day and 3-5 days/week), it is unsurprising the length of time required to develop and ingrain such kastom practices in children from solely within the classroom. Therefore, local Kahua efforts to reinforce cultural practices are, arguably, predominantly only achievable when also supported within the home and surrounding community, where children spend the majority of their time. Some parents, however, do not have the means to buy their daughters panties/trousers. A few other parents, who have attained higher formal educations, and therefore who have spent time in urban centers, believe girls wearing trousers is a just cultural change.

Therefore, these parents are not concerned with buying or demanding that their girls wear trousers. Further, other parents believe it is acceptable for their young girls to wear trousers until the age of kindergarten completion. One mother, for example, walked her daughter to kindy daily in a skirt and then changed her into trousers solely for the time she was inside the classroom. This was a practice the kindy teacher deemed unacceptable; yet, culturally, she was unable to confront the mother about it, as doing so would overstep the judgment of the parent. Nevertheless, beyond kindy age, nearly all females exclusively wear skirts. Furthermore, extensive claims are made by females as to feeling highly uncomfortable and disrespectful if they, or their female peers, do not wear skirts, such as required by some secondary school physical education programs. This demonstrates a pivotal component of material cultural evolution. From an external feminist perspective, this could be interpreted as reinforcement of female cultural oppression when enforced through teachings in the kindy. Contrastingly, locally, when confidentially interviewed, the widely supported belief between genders maintains that this is a beneficial kastom practice to continue, which ultimately reinforces the utmost importance of *respect*.

It is important to note that kindergarten is a pivotal time for children in beginning to practice Kahua kastoms. For example, this is when both genders continue to swim naked together in the river daily and are still allowed to play with their opposite-gendered peers/siblings. Yet, typically, upon entry into Preparatory class, such practices begin diminishing as *ramata* start to be more strongly enforced throughout the community. This is in line with an underlying belief that by approximately age eight children have reached a concrete stage of mental development for knowing right from wrong when it comes to their behavior and following of ramata.

### *Education Influences on Cultural Evolution*

Much of the change occurring in Kahua has also been locally ascribed to Western learning (e.g. formal schooling). This is reflected by one female kindy teacher's remarks, expressing a commonly made association with change throughout Kahua,

Kahua culture has changed over time because of Western learning. Nowadays, people send their children to primary schools, secondary schools, as far as universities overseas out from our Solomon Islands' society. They are influenced by Western style, like watching videos, television, movies, etc. When they return home, they just live in Western style, not our traditional culture. When Western style comes in, it convinces people that they do not need to think highly of our culture.

As a result, the predominant Kahua perspective holds that current society is being affected by the ongoing incorporation of Western learning approaches and values, due to people's increasing lack of respect for each other and others' property. Overtly, as addressed in the previous subsection, this can be observed through a change in material goods, such as attire. More underlying, this is largely influencing Kahuan behaviors, as epitomized in lacking regard for community elders and care for others' property. Ultimately, a lack of respect is associated with a lack of love and compassion for others, which is the pinnacle fundamental of a still largely maintained communal lifestyle in Kahua. Therefore, as a result, social problems are arising in communities, thereby causing divides among community and family members. Further, increasingly, over generations, strife due to land disputes is growing as resources become progressively more limited, as a result of rapid unsustainable population growth (Chapter 4).

Essentially, these changes can be associated with a shift from collectivist ideologies to those of individualism, as encouraged through the evolving education system (Figure 5.9). This is altering educated Natives' demeanors towards personal preferences over regard for traditional communal kastoms and practices. Take for example the SI *wantok* (literally "one talk") system of obligatory kinship relations. Customarily, those of a

shared “blood/tribe” or “language” were required to share freely and support one another. However, this is slowly evolving into practices of disregard for less well off and/or hardworking relatives in favor of individualistic beliefs: recognizing one’s own hard work for one’s own personal benefit.

In addition to formal education, arguably, changes to informal education are also affecting Kahua culture, as noted by a female young adult,

Kahua culture has changed over time because old people before did not develop like today. Before, people had to give advice to their children, but today people ignore what the old people advise them about. Also, some old people before did not think highly about culture, and that is why they did not pass it on to their new generations. Old people do not do their part for children today by passing on everything they know. Before, old people had to follow the four principles for their children to understand, and when they got old, they would pass them on to another generation and so on.

As a result, many traditional skills are increasingly being lost over generations. For example, locals’ use of bush resources to create household items is declining. Instead, many Solomon Islanders are opting for, and as such becoming dependent upon, manufactured goods, and thereby a cash-based society. Furthermore, as alluded to in the previous examples, there is an ongoing decline in the intergenerational transmission of the Kahua Principles. As a result, cultural fundamentals are being lost, thereby giving rise to external influences’ growth, and locally, negatively perceived impacts on communities.

It could be argued that internationally most cultures locally perceive significant change over time, when in reality, such changes are often exaggerated and actually occur over many generations. However, undeniably, an influx of external influences is increasingly reaching the once isolated Makiran communities, both with the numbers of outsiders coming into the region and numbers of Natives leaving the island for extended periods of time (i.e. for education and paid-employment). Conspicuously, the associated migration

of ideas coming and going from the island is decidedly one-sided, with local knowledge and skills being lost to incoming foreign ideas and practices. However, the actual human movement cycle is that of “circular migration,” wherein the vast majority of Makira (and SI) Natives’ ultimate desire and reality is to return to their villages during their senior years to fulfill traditional leadership roles, broaden cultural knowledge, and immerse themselves in traditional *kastom*. Within the coming decades, this could create an interesting resurgence of traditional knowledge and wisdom as those who have left their heritage villages for extended periods in urban centers (for which very few associate with as truly their “home”) eventually return. Upon returning, potential realizations may occur regarding the extensive loss of what once was, as it has rapidly changed with those more readily circularly migrating to and from the village, predominantly for education and short-term employment.<sup>65</sup>

At present, in summary of Kahua interview responses regarding the changing Kahua culture, as one young mother expressed, “The ways of Kahua are being lost, as people here are adopting new wisdoms and understandings from Whiteman, as a result of the education system.” As more youths from rural communities increasingly enroll in secondary school, they often have their first opportunity to move away from home whilst attending boarding school. Thus ignites this cycle of importing Western ideas and values, resulting in social issues, due to incongruences with traditional *kastoms* and culture.

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<sup>65</sup> This notion has been referred internally in SI as “recurrent waves of cultural revitalization” and externally as “*kastom* movements” (Gegeo 2001:496). This is contrasted by research, such as Crocombe’s (1999), describing Polynesian “straight,” or “linear,” migration, or as is also often referred to in the developing world as the “brain drain.”

### *Educational Perpetuator to Intergenerational Cultural Decay*

In examining the broader culturally significant issues related to the education sector, it is imperative to further acknowledge the knock-on effects of post-kindergarten educational social issues. While attending secondary school, youths are often exposed to people of different cultural groups from throughout the Solomons, either while studying in a different province or while having students from other provinces studying with them in MUP. Elders within Kahua suggest that islanders in other parts of the Solomons are losing their traditional culture at a faster rate than those in Kahua. Furthermore, Makirans, and Kahuans in specific, are recognized throughout the Solomons for more strongly maintaining traditional lifestyles. At times, this has resulted in derogatory references about Kahuans, such as being “backwards,” from people in other provinces.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Kahua elders maintain that these other cultural groups suffer from a more significant loss of *respect* (the universal, traditionally fundamental, component of Solomon society) and this is transferring on to Kahua youths. They argue that youths then bring these ways back to their villages, thus creating local social problems (e.g. lack of respect, kwaso [i.e. alcoholic homebrew] drinking, laziness, etc.). In turn, younger children then begin replicating what they see their elder siblings modeling for them.

An additionally notable social problem, amongst youths regarding cultural change, is pregnancy out of wedlock, which is culturally and religiously deemed unacceptable in Kahua. Locally, this is seen as a large social problem arising in secondary school students. It has been ascribed to mixed-gender settings, particularly during school socials, and youths no longer under the close watch of parents and networks of relatives

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<sup>66</sup> The widely recognized perception of MUP as less developed amongst SI provinces is substantiated by its on average lower levels of educational achievement, economic opportunities/wealth, and standards of living (e.g. bush versus permanent structures). However, internally, many Makirans maintain that this is not a detriment, and eventually, Makira's strong maintenance of traditional values will propel their success beyond that of what other provinces are capable of achieving. Nevertheless, some Makirans independently aspire to the standards attained within other provinces, at a minimum for the betterment of their own immediate families.

in their villages. Anecdotally, this is having a significant impact on female enrollment rates in secondary schools, both due to parents' resistance to send girls away to school fearing promiscuity and girls needing to drop out of school as a result of pregnancy. Consequently, this looks poorly for the girls' families and results in obligatory financial compensation to be paid to all their brothers, including "cousin-brothers."<sup>67</sup> Here, it is suggested that these young unwed mothers have lost some of their traditional cultural practices and values while away from their villages for secondary school education. Relating back to early childhood matters, subsequently, these mothers are raising the newest Kahua generation with this lacking respect and understanding for traditional Kahua culture. Within this thesis, the researcher has termed this as a cycle of *intergenerational cultural decay*. Markedly, this is not to impose a value judgment on Kahuan cultural evolution, yet merely denotes the regionally perceived decline between generations in traditional culture-specific knowledge.

### *Religious Influences on Culture*

It would be imprudent to think that education alone has led to such a loss of traditional Kahuan culture and practices, as most notably the foundation of SI education is linked to the church, as was introduced through missionaries. Since the introduction of the church, some kastoms have come into question, with a dissonance between these two most prominent governing bodies over the Kahua people. This is notably more so than the level of significance that governmental law plays in the daily lives of remote villagers, where its presence is essentially non-existent. While some "laws" are locally interpreted as being shared between the church and traditional kastom, such as

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<sup>67</sup> Additionally notable, regarding gender enrollment differences, is the long-term investment mentality in children, where some maintain the belief that investing in a girl's education is less valuable to a family, as eventually she will wed into another man's family, after being bought for a brideprice. Thus, a financial investment in educating one's daughter would either be lost, or, if she were to attract a higher brideprice (such as a result of her higher educational achievements), this typically would equate with a greater degree of ownership over her by her husband and his family. This would thereby grant them more freedom to work the girl harder and keep her from ever returning to her own family, as is deemed acceptable in recuperation of their great investment.

forbidding the wearing of trousers by women, others are contradictory, such as regarding the chewing of betelnut (a mild narcotic), which varies between church denominations.<sup>68</sup>

The majority of people in Makira have come to accept a balance between tradition, church, and modern (external) influences. As observed in this study, arguably, much of the degree to which groups of people choose to stray from the strict guidelines of the Bible and church appears to correspond with the degree of religious observance in their community's church denomination and religious following. For example, within Makira, Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) communities maintain the strictest church rules, and as a result, community members typically maintain those stricter guidelines for all aspects of their lives. Contrastingly, in general, Roman Catholic communities have been observed to have more relaxed church rules, as reflected in their more accepting community and bodily "dirtiness" tendencies (e.g. poorer community upkeep, smoking, chewing betelnut). Therefore, although increasingly Kahuans as a whole have chosen to act more free-mindedly in accepting what life practices they believe are acceptable, in balancing personal, religious, and traditional ideologies, largely the degree of choice is associated with local community member belief-norms. Therefore, here it is suggested, communities that on the whole have devout church congregations, actively maintained kastom practices (e.g. feasts), or strong collaborative natures, perpetuate these tendencies, so long as the majority are involved. However, for those circularly migrating from villages, this often introduces shifts in majority groups, and as such, declines in such religious and traditional practices in preference for others acquired in external contexts. For example, while betelnut chewing is not accepted by South Seas

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<sup>68</sup> Makiran church denominations of Seventh-Day Adventist, South Seas Evangelical Church, and Living Word do not allow the chewing of betelnut, which is contrasted by Anglican and Roman Catholic churches that do allow its chewing. However, the sharing of this fruit is of great traditional cultural significance to be given to strangers upon their arrival at one's home out of hospitality while waiting for the preparation of something more substantial to be cooked, as well as when passing people while traveling due to its effect of suppressing hunger and increasing alertness (as mild stimulant).

Evangelical Church (SSEC) and SDA churches, such habits are widely practiced in urban centers and often return to communities with locals once they have formed such habits externally. Eventually, this spreads to others who have remained in remote villages.

In taking the example of the church and values taught through G-d's word, although in speech many Kahua people express great religious devotion, through their actions there is often a slight divergence. The following incident between a mother (Maryson) and her five-year-old son (Tonis) depicts religion's influences on parental teaching practices:

Maryson reaches for her Bible during our interview to cite some of her favorite Bible proverbs. Meanwhile, her son, Tonis, returns to the house, having had his hair all cut off by his "mother" (i.e. Aunt) next door, because it was infested with lice. Tonis proudly looks at his new haircut in a small handheld mirror, with a big grin on his face, causing Maryson to pause from reading Bible proverbs to gently pull outward on his ears, commenting on how big they now look without his hair. As she then returns to referencing proverbs, Tonis takes a clothing scrub brush and begins to brush his head, to get out any remaining lice from the bit of fuzzy hair on his head, onto a white sheet of paper. He quickly realizes he is no longer receiving his mother's attention, so he moves next to her and begins brushing out his hair into the open page of the Bible in her lap. She yells, "Siiii!" (a common call to stop children from misbehaving) and firmly pushes him away, then returning to reading a proverb on how children must be loved and taught through words.

As exemplified in the above vignette, even devout Kahua people, thoroughly familiar with "G-d's word" from the Bible and vigilant about practicing this on a regular basis, still do not always enact such exemplar practices of love and teaching, as they speak of, towards children. Thus demonstrates, in simple terms, a gap between Natives' internalization of religious teachings with those of traditional ingrained practices, such as child-rearing. Universally, this is common, with regard to the dichotomy between spoken word and practice. However, notably, this is also reflected in the overlap between embodying and enacting religious ideals as well as traditional culture. Markedly, as also noted in Chapter 5, both have predominantly become locally

associated with Kahua kastom, such as is exemplified in the congruence between “G-d’s word” and the foundations to the Kahua Principles (i.e. love, respect, and compassion for others).

### *6.2.3 Kindy as Vehicle to Reinvigorate Local Culture*

Locally perceived and observed changes are occurring in Kahua, as actualized through the loss of traditional cultural knowledge, practices, and, most fundamentally, *respect*. In the preceding subsections, these changes have been traced through Western material influences, education, and religion. In light of these, this subsection will now suggest that kindergartens could serve as an important context for the reinvigoration of local culture and kastom. Such a suggestion has arisen from three levels: grassroots (i.e. interviews with kindy staff and committee members), SI ECE policy and programs (Chapter 4), and the researcher’s observations.

Cultures and the values they embody are continuously assaulted by powers of standardization and globalization, which in the process often “homogenize, dilute, and relegate diverse cultures to ornamental or marginal positions in the modern world” (Power 1992:16). The wide scale effect of this in relation to SI children’s development can be seen through the spread of languages and their associated cultures (predominantly English) and technology (most notably mass media and the values of individualism, consumerism, and self-gratification). The impact of these standardizing forces, and the effects of their dilution of cultures, is arguably most evident in smaller non-Western cultures, such as those in SI. In recognition of these global influences, and the resulting changes they are causing to Kahua culture, the proposal that ECE programs are one potential avenue to begin reinstalling local kastoms, values, and practices could counter

the effects of this *international homogenization* and the interrelated concept of *intergenerational cultural decay*. Notably, supportive changes are also evident in SI ECE curriculum and Pacific islands' education development in general.

As a result of the present generation of parents' lacking kastom knowledge to pass on to their children, as has been portrayed in this thesis as an epidemic of *intergenerational cultural decay*, including village elders and regional cultural experts in the kindy to assist in teaching young children could potentially mitigate this issue. Accordingly, this could provide the foundation on which to rebuild these fundamental kastom principles and knowledge in the local culture. Notably, this is not to imply a reversion to historic traditional times, and as such a re-tribalization of the Kahua people. Instead, this suggestion arises from locally expressed perceptions of societal improvements through regeneration of a strong cultural identity, which can then be integrated with, as opposed to overpowered by, external knowledge and belief systems. As one Kahua grandfather (and kindy chairman) expressed,

Good Kahua cultural values are quickly fading away due to Western world lifestyles. Such styles are sure enough to dominate Kahua culture in not a very long time. Kahua leaders should not ignore what is needed to address this issue. I recommend kindy school as a first ladder to step forward in education. It is where a traditional leader, a government leader, or a church leader is shaped for the best future and betterment of our nation the Solomon Islands.

When questioned about the potential of kindies to support local cultural knowledge development in children, he went on to explain,

Kindy schools can be used to strengthen culture because I believe that is where kastom and culture can strongly be taught because children from ages three to six years have an open brain to take in good things or bad things. For example, 1 – Village chiefs must participate in teaching kastom ramata and cultural practices in kindy; 2 – Female teachers must set an example in kindy; 3 – Pastors must also participate in the teaching and tell the children how to honor G-d in wearing clothes.

Similarly, from the perspective of a female kindy teacher,

Parents and kindy teachers should talk mainly for three-year-old children in the kindy about culture. Parents teach their children in the home before they go to kindy class because kindy teachers are second teachers. They tell them to respect each other and love each other. [...] Parents and teachers should cooperate together to build the strength of children in our culture. Parents and teachers must talk in a proper way, and also, their actions towards children should show about respect and love.

A potential way to do these, as expressed by her male kindy teacher colleague, include,

The kindy should only use traditional learning. Chiefs should come to talk about our kastoms and culture. People should think highly of our four principles. People should only use Kahua language, not mixed with Whiteman's language, in order to pass traditional learning from generation to generation.

These statements from Kahuans directly working in the kindy environment provide grassroots' ideas regarding the potential value and practicality of establishing greater ties between ECE and local Kahua culture. Yet, notably, each of these participant suggestions comes with the caveat that such a use of the kindy to reinvigorate local culture demands a community effort, not exclusively achievable by kindy teachers and committees.

Based on locally identified perceptions when exploring the kindy's potential to support Kahua kastoms, kindies will henceforth be conceptualized as *community-encompassing initiatives*. This highlights the potentiality of traditional community social networks, thereby making wider community participation a less abstract foreign idea. As locally expressed, yet is also true for many Western-perspectives, as both are rooted in Biblical foundations, parents are believed to be children's first teachers. However, within SI, this notion of first teachers extends to a wider network of tightly bound communities of relatives, who are directly involved with, and guide, all local children's development. This is also often inclusive of kindy teachers, who are typically directly related to their students. Thus creates a smaller step away from the home/family for teacher-student relationships, in contrast to most Western contexts. These relations emphasize

community-wide shared visions for supporting children's development, inclusive of kastom knowledge. Nearly all community members are deeply invested in the children's (their relatives) lives, both inside and outside the classroom, both at individual and community levels. Therefore, community-wide support for the kindy could be regarded as an extension of roles currently assumed by the network of relatives serving as "first teachers" in the lives of all village children. Based on this, it becomes imperative to explore what local goals and aspirations the Kahua people hold for their children in the short- and long-term, as a community of deeply invested teachers/parents/relatives in children's lives, community-wide. Only then can the potential of sustained kindy programs as cultural tools be understood.

### **6.3 Kahuan Early Childhood Learning Ethos**

#### *6.3.1 Kahua Early Childhood Education Rationales*

In light of local suggestions to use the kindy as a vehicle to reinvigorate local culture, one must explore how locally these programs are more widely rationalized. At present, Kahua communities are predominantly responsible for establishing and maintaining their kindies. In order to understand potential difficulties to these initiatives, which require immense community collaboration and ongoing support, one must begin by understanding how such programs fit with local understandings of, and future aspirations for, children enrolled in them. Therefore, it is necessary to initially identify what, if any, motivation(s) communities have for supporting such programs. Thus begs the question, in addition to the significance of education in context (Chapter 5), "What is the purpose of kindy in Kahua?" This was analyzed through exploring local perceptions of SI educational policy objectives (MEHRD 2008:2), stating that children must "acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes for meaningful participation in

Solomon Islands' society.” In line with the fact that this policy states that these educational objectives are to be of contextual-relevance, locally, the predominant Kahuan perceptions of these policy terms were as follows:

- *Skills*: technical knowledge (e.g. carpentry)
- *Knowledge*: acquired through education (e.g. reading and writing)
- *Values*: benefits received from achieving good work (e.g. teaching, nursing, agriculture work)
- *Attitudes*: characteristics of a person (e.g. love, kind, respect)

Although these local interpretations are incongruent with international standards on which the policy was founded (and, furthermore, standard English dictionary definitions), they did provide the foundation to the following local rationales:

I think education is the key. For example, to be a pilot or doctor, you must know how to read and write. One cannot be a professional without education. I also think that kastom and culture is another key factor for meaningful participation in SI society. For example, to be a politician, you must know best about the Solomon Island people's kastoms and cultures...otherwise your political leadership will crush against kastom and culture of the SI people.

(Male, Runaga Village)

In our society, education is needed in order to improve development and the standard of living...Meaningful participation requires that people become trained as a nurse, doctor, carpenter, mechanic, electrician, etc...Even dropouts can develop skills in carpentry, life skills, Bible studies, [sewing] machine maintenance, by going to rural training centers. Even skills of value are playing sports because then people can go to other provinces and countries to play.

(Female, Pa'a Village)

As demonstrated by these two representative general community members, formal education, beginning in kindy, is seen as part of a long-term process, with the eventual goals of developing specialized skills to facilitate personal, familial, and/or national advancement.

To explore the local ethos more broadly, Table 6.2 provides an overview of short- and long-term holistic goals that participants ( $n=284$ ) in Kahua focus groups ( $n=32$ ) identified as desirable for their children.

**Table 6.2** Kahuan Aspirations for Children

| <b>Short and Long-Term Prioritized Goals for Young Children in Kahua</b><br>(Derived from open-response focus group discussions, followed by stone-rankings of most significant goals.)              |                                     |     |              |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------|------------|
| <u>Goal</u>                                                                                                                                                                                          | <u>Community-Member Perceptions</u> |     |              |            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Women                               | Men | Female Youth | Male Youth |
| <b><i>Childhood: Short-Term</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                  |                                     |     |              |            |
| <b>Holistic:</b> Personal development of inner self (e.g. self-confidence)                                                                                                                           | 13%                                 | 10% | 4%           | -          |
| <b>Education:</b> Successful completion of kindy as preparation for further education, beginning with primary school                                                                                 | 4%                                  | 7%  | 11%          | 14%        |
| <b>Spiritual:</b> Development of strong understanding of Christianity and relationship with G-d                                                                                                      | 4%                                  | -   | 15%          | 8%         |
| <b>Kastom:</b> Concrete development of Kahua culture and kastom knowledge (including development of behavioral qualities of respect and cooperation)                                                 | 17%                                 | 11% | 11%          | 19%        |
| <b>Support Community:</b> Care for, and helping of, others in village                                                                                                                                | 13%                                 | 10% | 7%           | 8%         |
| <b>Gardening:</b> Development of knowledge in subsistence farming for livelihood                                                                                                                     | -                                   | 2%  | -            | -          |
| <b>Prevention:</b> Militate against development of “rascal” behaviors (through good character building to counter peer-pressure encouraging social disobedience [e.g. drunkard])                     | -                                   | 5%  | -            | 5%         |
| <b><i>Future: Long-term</i></b><br>(including continuation of development in short-term goals)                                                                                                       |                                     |     |              |            |
| <b>Employment:</b> Obtain good education through secondary school to secure paid employment, in order to financially give back support to parents/family                                             | 21%                                 | 31% | 30%          | 32%        |
| <b>Skill Training:</b> Attend rural training centre to develop technical skills (e.g. carpentry, sewing, mechanics) for those who have not completed secondary school yet still need paid employment | -                                   | 2%  | -            | 3%         |
| <b>Leadership:</b> Develop the skills to be a good community leader (e.g. obtain position as village chief)                                                                                          | 19%                                 | 10% | 15%          | 5%         |
| <b>Church Work:</b> Involvement in church leadership (e.g. Sunday school teacher, church committee, women’s fellowship/band leader, pastor/catechist)                                                | 8%                                  | -   | 7%           | 5%         |
| (Based on Kahua Focus Groups [Appendix A.3]: Wards 12 and 13, 9 villages, 284 participants, 32 focus groups)                                                                                         |                                     |     |              |            |

Notably, whilst children are young, community members across all focus groups placed greater significance on children’s development of kastom knowledge and behaviors of being supportive towards their community, as opposed to emphasizing formal education.

Yet, in the long-term, achieving a prominent position in the community, either through a leadership role or paid employment, received the vast majority of emphasis, which were noted as requiring a solid education. This was inclusive of formal higher education, nonformal continuing education in rural trainings centers for dropouts, or informal education acquired through village life.

In reiteration, a foundational locally expressed premise to this thesis was found to hold that kindies have the potential to reinvigorate Kahua culture and kastoms (Section 6.2.3). This was then supplemented by locally defined primary early childhood goals for the concrete development of Kahua culture and kastom in light of a locally identified decline in such knowledge transmission (Table 6.2). Based on these findings, this chapter will now proceed to more overtly explore factors affecting the sustained development of community-based kindy programs in MUP. These will be analyzed under the implied focal kindy program objective, in this study, as facilitator of cultural regeneration.

#### **6.4 Challenges to Kindy Sustainability in Makira-Ulawa Province**

##### *Researching Program Sustainability in Context*

Shifting this chapter's focus from an exploration of subsurface social and cultural factors influencing education in Kahua, the second half of this chapter will now relocate this discussion in the context of program cultural and contextual sustainability. For many communities around the world, particularly those in remote locations, community-based programs provide an important service delivery system, yet there remains limited knowledge about how best these programs can be sustained (Lerner 1995, Fazey et al. 2010). This is particularly the case for community-based ECE initiatives (Fleer 2003, Ball and Pence 2006). In this thesis, program sustainability has been defined in terms of

the capacity of a program to continuously respond to community issues while maintaining focus on original program objectives. This is inclusive of the original population that the program was designed to serve, in which ultimately continued benefits are provided to the target population regardless of particular activities delivered (Mancini and Marek 2004). In these terms, kindies in MUP are facing many significant barriers preventing them from being effective sustained programs.

Although sustainability is a Western concept, it was collaboratively investigated in this study, drawing on both internal and external perspectives of such kindy-related sustainability experiences. In light of the fact that external pressures (e.g. national policy) are enforcing the establishment of, and attendance at, kindergartens throughout the SI, exploration of the concept of sustainability is essential and locally relevant. In no way does this discredit the significance of situating this study predominantly from the perspective of practical program implementation at the grassroots level due to the local, widely recognized and accepted, imperative of maintaining such initiatives in children's best interest. A balancing act between internal and external ideologies has been experienced for thousands of years on Makira, as increasingly outsiders have imposed concepts on Natives, such as those more recently imposed by the development community (e.g. sustainability). This has led to Western-concepts, such as sustainability, being both locally articulated and relevant conceptions. As one Kahua research participant likened to the locally important and symbolic *Cassava leaf*, kindies will only be able to function at their maximum potential once each strand of the leaf, as represented by key stakeholders, is *working together* as a whole: provincial/national governments, NGOs, churches, kindy teachers/committees, and individuals in the community. Drawing on another local metaphor arising during a Kahua focus group

discussion, many people fail to support their community kindly as required because, like a *Long Bean*, while they do receive the messages/awarenesses in one end, what they have heard quickly goes out the other end with *no implementation or action* ever occurring. Taking these metaphors draws the externally derived concept of sustainability into locally relevant terms. The Kahua people have long maintained certain practices, as well as adapted others to meet changing times and circumstances, thus making the actual sustainment of an initiative a deeply understood traditional practice.<sup>69</sup>

With regard to kindly sustainability, one kindly chairman asserted,

Kindy is important for the future of the whole community. We must have *one aim as a community to support* this community project – one mind to do something – otherwise laziness causes problems with lacking support, as has happened in other communities.

Therefore, emphasized here thus far in this section have been local interpretations of sustainability elements, including collaboration, awareness, and ownership of shared understandings and efforts. In order to understand the basis on which villagers drew these conceptions, one must step back to examine the variety of perspectives influencing these perceived challenges to sustainability.

To incorporate different perspectives, drawing on different levels of local expertise and overarching knowledge, this study implemented a variety of approaches to allow for the emergence of contextualized understandings of barriers currently facing MUP community-based kindies. The following sections provide an overview of these barriers from three levels of perspectives: grassroots villagers; a locally formed ECE panel of

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<sup>69</sup> With regard to the highly culturally significant practice of kastom feasting, these have evolved over centuries, such as in the practices of supplementing now more limited kastom foods as a result of crop diseases. For example, presently, the traditionally significant staple root crop for kastom feasts called “taro,” used in making the infamous “Six-Month Makira Pudding,” must be increasingly substituted due to extensive disease affecting this crop. Nevertheless, most significantly, what has been sustained in this kastom is the epitome of maintaining family/clan/tribe relations and heritage story preservation.

experts (who previously served as research assistants [RAs] at various stages of the study); and the highest level of ECE stakeholders, including (national and provincial) SI government and World Vision (WV) Makira (Table 6.3).

**Table 6.3** Sources of Kindy Barriers' Data

| Method                                          | Villages Sampled                                                                                                    | <i>n</i> Villages     | <i>n</i> Participants                                                                                                     | <i>n</i> Groups |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Kahua (Villages) Focus Groups</b>            | Wards: 12 & 13                                                                                                      | 9 (+ 1 pilot village) | 284 (135 male, 149 females)                                                                                               | 32 focus groups |
| <b>Makira (Villages) Focus Groups</b>           | Wards: 5, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20                                                                                | 6 <sup>70</sup>       | 161 (84 male, 77 female)                                                                                                  | 18 focus groups |
| <b>Makira Kindy Committee/Teachers Surveyed</b> | Wards: 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20                                                                        | 52                    | Each kindy committee inclusive of approximately 6 members                                                                 | 52 surveys      |
| <b>Makira ECE Expert Panel</b>                  | Wards: 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20                                                                        | Based on 52 visited   | 2 kindy teachers (female)<br>1 kindy chairman (male)<br>1 WV program coordinator (male)<br>1 WV general consultant (male) | 1 panel         |
| <b>SI ECE Stakeholder Forum Meeting</b>         | Representative of villages throughout MUP and Guadalcanal Province, including urban centers of Kirakira and Honiara | N/A                   | 32 key stakeholders (plus 63 kindy teachers)                                                                              | 1 forum         |
| <b>Researcher Kindy Observations</b>            | Wards: 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20                                                                        | 30                    | Researcher-centered                                                                                                       | N/A             |

This wide incorporation of diverse early childhood stakeholders' perspectives demonstrates the researcher's dedication to a collaborative research approach. Additionally, it was necessary to supplement these perspectives with researcher-centered methods to strengthen validity. This was achieved by not solely relying on participants' spoken words, but through enabling comparisons to observable practices, thereby allowing for greater depth and reliability in findings presented. At the end of this section, an overview across these perspectives, inclusive of the researcher's additional observation and interview data, is presented in exploring the range of challenges facing MUP community-based kindies sustained implementation and development (Section 6.4.4).

<sup>70</sup> Originally planned to carry out research program in ten villages, but due to perilous weather and sea conditions, this had to be narrowed to six. However, the other four villages were still involved in interviews and merely excluded from community-wide focus group activities.

### 6.4.1 Kindy Barriers: Perceptions from Grassroots' Perspectives

At the grassroots level, through focus group activities, participants identified barriers through open responses (Appendix A.3.6 - Kahua Focus Group Activity 2), which are presented below as the frequency of overall barriers identified by gender/age group (Table 6.4). Additionally, participants subsequently used stone-rankings to express the level of significance each barrier was perceived as having in their community's overall kindy functioning.

**Table 6.4** Grassroots' Perceptions of Kindy Barriers

| Barrier/Challenge to Kindy Functionality<br>(Appendix E: Participant Responses<br>included in Barrier Categories) | Frequency<br>(% of barriers identified by<br>participant group) |            |                    |                      | Significance<br>(% of overall stone ranking scores<br>by participant group) |             |                    |                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|----------------------|
|                                                                                                                   | Men<br>%                                                        | Women<br>% | Male<br>Youth<br>% | Female<br>Youth<br>% | Men<br>%                                                                    | Women<br>%  | Male<br>Youth<br>% | Female<br>Youth<br>% |
| <b>Community</b>                                                                                                  | <b>36</b>                                                       | <b>51</b>  | <b>36</b>          | <b>57</b>            | <b>41.2</b>                                                                 | <b>60</b>   | <b>52</b>          | <b>57</b>            |
| ▪ Lack of Cooperation (Disunity/Laziness)                                                                         | 20                                                              | 26         | 24                 | 27                   | 19                                                                          | 30          | 28                 | 32                   |
| ▪ Lack of Community Awareness ("Illiteracy") <sup>71</sup>                                                        | 1                                                               | 2          | 4                  | -                    | 2                                                                           | 3           | 13                 | -                    |
| ▪ Lack of respect for Kindy Property (by Drunkards)                                                               | 1                                                               | 4          | 2                  | 3                    | .2                                                                          | 3           | 1                  | 2                    |
| ▪ Lack of Financial (or in kind) Support for Teachers                                                             | 14                                                              | 19         | 6                  | 27                   | 20                                                                          | 24          | 10                 | 23                   |
| <b>Kindy Committee</b>                                                                                            | <b>10</b>                                                       | <b>6</b>   | <b>-</b>           | <b>3</b>             | <b>6</b>                                                                    | <b>4</b>    | <b>-</b>           | <b>2</b>             |
| ▪ Lack of Cooperation (Weak/Inactive)                                                                             | 10                                                              | 6          | -                  | 3                    | 6                                                                           | 4           | -                  | 2                    |
| <b>Teachers</b>                                                                                                   | <b>11</b>                                                       | <b>18</b>  | <b>15</b>          | <b>17</b>            | <b>12</b>                                                                   | <b>19</b>   | <b>23</b>          | <b>16</b>            |
| ▪ Lack of Trained Early Childhood Teachers                                                                        | 10                                                              | 6          | 6                  | 3                    | 11                                                                          | 4           | 14                 | 3                    |
| ▪ Lack of Support from (Lazy/Weak) Teachers                                                                       | 1                                                               | 12         | 9                  | 14                   | 1                                                                           | 15          | 9                  | 13                   |
| <b>Infrastructure</b>                                                                                             | <b>21</b>                                                       | <b>18</b>  | <b>17</b>          | <b>25</b>            | <b>19</b>                                                                   | <b>10.6</b> | <b>9</b>           | <b>25</b>            |
| ▪ Lack of Resources (Bush)                                                                                        | 1                                                               | 8          | 2                  | 11                   | 1                                                                           | 7           | 1                  | 11                   |
| ▪ Lack of Resources (Manufactured)                                                                                | 7                                                               | -          | 2                  | 3                    | 6                                                                           | -           | 2                  | 2                    |
| ▪ Lack of Proper Location for Kindy House                                                                         | 6                                                               | 8          | 4                  | 3                    | 4                                                                           | 3           | 0                  | 2                    |
| ▪ Lack of Sufficient Kindy House/Classroom Maintenance                                                            | 7                                                               | 2          | 9                  | 8                    | 8                                                                           | .6          | 6                  | 10                   |
| <b>External Assistance</b>                                                                                        | <b>16</b>                                                       | <b>6</b>   | <b>22</b>          | <b>-</b>             | <b>18</b>                                                                   | <b>6.2</b>  | <b>16.6</b>        | <b>-</b>             |
| ▪ Lack of Provincial Government Support                                                                           | 6                                                               | -          | 9                  | -                    | 8                                                                           | -           | 8                  | -                    |
| ▪ Lack of National Government Support                                                                             | 3                                                               | 2          | 2                  | -                    | 3                                                                           | 4           | .6                 | -                    |
| ▪ Lack of World Vision Support                                                                                    | 6                                                               | 2          | 7                  | -                    | 4                                                                           | .2          | 4                  | -                    |
| ▪ Lack of Kahua Association Support                                                                               | 1                                                               | 2          | 4                  | -                    | 3                                                                           | 2           | 4                  | -                    |

(Based on Kahua Focus Groups [Appendix A.3]: Wards 12 and 13, 9 villages, 284 participants, 32 focus groups)

Overall, the greatest locally perceived barrier to sustained Kahua kindies was challenges facing communities: most notably, *lacking cooperation* and *financial support*. However, significantly more women/female youths raised issue over *lacking cooperation*, whereas, in contrasting men and women (excluding female youths), men expressed greater issue

<sup>71</sup> "Illiteracy" was locally defined in Kahua to include both one's reading/writing ability and general intelligence. Therefore, lacking community awareness pertaining to ECE was regarded as an "illiteracy" of how to support kindies.

with *insufficient financial support* for teachers. This is reflective of the majority of community sentiment in general. Typically, men, as the more recently recognized “breadwinners” (since the transition towards a cash-based economy, increasingly over the past few decades), are financially minded. Contrastingly, women continue to support family and the community as a whole, more typically through non-financially compensated generosity and cultural responsibility (e.g. producing excess food and feeding community workers and/or visitors), as virtually obligatory *kastom* duties.<sup>72</sup>

Furthermore, in contrasting male and female focus group responses, women were more apt to refer to teachers as being *lazy/weak*, whilst men focused on teachers’ *lack of training* as barriers. As self-identified by many Kahua women, and men, despite duties being shared between genders, it is widely accepted that a greater bulk of daily duties are bore by women, leaving men generally responsible for larger-scale manual labor and family finances. With women’s greater number of responsibilities, this requires multitasking and extensive time management skills, thereby, as suggested here, associating their focus group responses with an emphasis on teachers’ work ethic (i.e. laziness). Contrastingly, men, who are more apt to engage in greater periods of non-work social interaction throughout the day, identified training as a barrier, placing greater emphasis on formally developing skills as opposed to work ethic. This is congruent with more men attending vocational training programs than women, who often are not afforded such opportunities, nor believed to need such experiences, as the skills for their work (i.e. wife, mother) are informally developed from childhood.

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<sup>72</sup> Notably, this does not negate the financial contributions women make to the family, such as increasingly through baking, second-hand clothing sales, and sales of staple edible goods (e.g. salt, instant noodles), but their contributions are generally not to the same degree that men assume. Increasingly, Kahua culture and gender roles are shifting into alignment with historically traditional Western gender roles: males seeking economic opportunities outside the home, whilst women predominantly care for children, gardens, and the homestead. This is in contrast to traditional Kahuian subsistence livelihoods.

Also notable in focus groups, female youths (who consisted of a large pool of potential future kindy teachers) gave no recognition to inadequate *external assistance* barriers. This is associated with their limited awareness, due to their remote isolated locations, of what is involved in the formal ECE profession, and as such, the national/provincial support programs and assistance being developed. Nevertheless, across research focus groups, top barriers were consistently associated with the community. Most significantly, this included lacking cooperation, which was followed by the considerably less frequent and significant barriers regarding financial concerns.

#### *6.4.2 Kindy Barriers: Perceptions from Mid-Level Stakeholders' Perspectives*

In an effort to create a more participatory collaboration with locals in analyzing and understanding some of the research findings, two expert panels were established: one held at a forum meeting, including key ECE stakeholders from the provincial/national government and WV ( $n=32$ ), and another group of Indigenous Kahua people with various significant stakes in ECE ( $n=5$ ) as kindy teachers, a chairman, parents, and NGO employees. This latter group further developed their local ECE expertise while working as RAs at different stages of this study. From this latter group, a priority ranking of barriers to ECE in Kahua was developed, drawing on all data that they were involved in collecting (i.e. focus groups, interviews, and observations). Through dialogic driven interpretations based on their additional local perspectives and understandings, this panel helped compile the following ranked-list of barriers (Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5** Mid-Level ECE Stakeholder Perceptions of Kindy Barriers

| <b>Rank</b> | <i>(% each of overall barriers)</i> | <b>Barrier</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1           | (9.4%)                              | ▪ Lack of financial support for teachers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 2           | (8.7%)                              | ▪ Lack of community cooperation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3           | (8.1%)                              | ▪ Lack of financial support from provincial government                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 4           | (6.8%)                              | ▪ Lack of proper sanitation (i.e. fresh water and toilets)<br>▪ Lack of regular (or sufficient number of) visits to rural kindies from MUP ECE Coordinator                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 5           | (6.1%)                              | ▪ Insufficient training for kindy teachers (most significantly, lack of courses being run and places available for those interested in enrolling)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 6           | (5.4%)                              | ▪ Lack of manufactured resources to support children's learning and teachers' bookkeeping (e.g. paper, record books, pencils, markers)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 7           | (4.7%)                              | ▪ Lack of community awareness about ECE<br>▪ Lack of collaboration between kindy chairmen and their committee members<br>▪ Long distance for children to travel to kindy<br>▪ Lack of respect within community for kindy property from drunkards<br>▪ Lack of local bush resources for kindy house construction; shortage of time to complete construction<br>▪ Lack of support from WV: perception of "withdrawn" support                                              |
| 8           | (4.1%)                              | ▪ Lack of organization within community for working with external assistance<br>▪ Lack of (financial) support from the Kahua Association<br>▪ Lack of sufficient education in communities: illiterate in reading/writing/thinking<br>▪ Lack of receipt of entitled benefits in form of grant from national government despite being registered kindy<br>▪ Lack of parental support for their kindy-aged children (e.g. making snack, washing clothes, walking to kindy) |

(Based on prioritization stone-ranking activity with Makira ECE Expert Panel after completion of fieldwork: 5 "experts" who also served as RAs; visited 52 kindies in MUP wards 5, 12-20)

The "Makira ECE Expert Panel," reiterated many of the barriers identified by focus group participants, which they had helped facilitate. While agreeing on many of the most significant barriers as being financial support for teachers and community cooperation, they placed more prominence on issues such as sanitation, community awareness, teacher training, and manufactured teacher resources to support classrooms. Essentially, they were able to raise issues that general community members would be less knowledgeable about due to their greater degree of removal from the primary observable features of, and primary demands directly placed on, community members. In its totality, this list of barriers (Table 6.5) provides a comprehensive overview of all key challenges facing Kahua community-based kindies. Arguably, this reflects a local yet more critical prioritization than possible from disillusioned general community

members. However, a degree of dissociation between barriers remained after completing this exercise. Although support for teachers and community cooperation ranked highest, associated factors such as community levels of awareness/education/literacy and direct support for children attending the kindy ranked among the lowest of barriers. And thus, in order to account for the potentially greater degree of correlated barriers, as well as policy-related standards/requirements beyond the scope of many villagers' understanding/involvement with the kindy, including this panel, the following section presents highlights from a forum meeting inclusive of upper-level official ECE stakeholders.

#### *6.4.3 Kindy Barriers: Perceptions from Upper-Level Stakeholders' Perspectives*

As a final stage of the study, whilst in the field, it was deemed imperative to present these (at the time) preliminary findings about barriers to kindy functioning throughout MUP to key stakeholders. This was necessary to both provide an environment to express the voices of rural villagers to more powerful ECE stakeholders at the provincial and national levels, as well as to provide these superior ranking officials with an opportunity to respond to the frustrations being voiced by rural villagers. This was conducted in the form of a two-day stakeholders' forum meeting, held in the Provincial capital of Kirakira, September 2009, working in conjunction with WV Makira and the MUP Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD) ECE Coordinator. Forum participants additionally included Makira Provincial Government and Ministry of Education officials, National MEHRD ECE official, Guadalcanal WV Literacy Team (set to begin ECE support programs in Guadalcanal Province), Guadalcanal ECE Coordinator, and kindy teachers and committee members from throughout MUP. Table

6.6 summarizes the forum meeting proceedings, while highlighting key themes that arose.

**Table 6.6** Early Childhood Stakeholder Forum Themes

| Theme                          | Summarized Meeting Proceedings (paraphrased)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Specificity of Kindy Awareness | <p>The meeting was opened by the MUP Minister of Education (MoE), who reflected on his experiences of developing kindies on his outer island to Makira of Ugi,</p> <p>“Culture inside the <u>kindy classroom and home are very different</u>. In kindy, children are more respectful, such as in the ways they name teachers, pray before eating, and wash hands before and after eating. Moms and dads must be taught, too, because if a child starts picking up rubbish as a child in the house, then they will grow up to be rubbish, such as copying some bad music lyrics. [...] G-d gave humans 100%, but we are only using 20% of what he gave us. Thus <u>every single person must take training to better support early childhood education</u>.”</p> |
| Financial Illiteracy           | <p>Following this, he pledged his <u>assurance for a fiscal increase</u> towards the ECE sector of the ministry for the following year: 2010. In response to this, WV Literacy Project Coordinator for Guadalcanal Province asserted that in actuality, initially, the <u>high percentage of illiterate adults must be addressed</u>, which she then noted that ECE could simultaneously reduce by teaching both children and adults. This idea was then further expanded by a religious leader who stated that <u>literacy must work together with culture</u> based on modernization: some <u>aspects of culture must not be lost, such as good values</u>, without which the island of Makira has no foundation. Thus, he stressed the</p>                  |
| Cultural Significance          | <p><u>importance of building up language and culture</u> through kindy teacher training, emphasizing respect, culture, and Makiran kastoms. Subsequently, he asserted that these trained teachers should then return to their communities to instruct and encourage/invite others in from surrounding villages into the kindy to prevent the further loss of culture.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Support for Morale             | <p>Final remarks for the morning session allowed for the MUP ECE Coordinator to address the highlighted challenges and expand on continuing difficulties lying ahead. She explained that ECE is a newly born division of the MEHRD, in the past 13 years, during which time most “Field-Based Trained” (FBT) <u>teachers have not been recognized within their communities</u>. She went on to explain that this has created low working morale for teachers when not receiving support or a salary from their communities, which ultimately leaves children the “victims.” She acknowledged that many other challenges affect the quality and running of community kindies, including</p>                                                                     |
| Secondary Challenges           | <p><u>difficulties in resource making</u> without giving communities proper supplies/tools (e.g. paint/varnish) to make the most attractive resources to motivate children’s learning. Also challenging, she stated, is the <u>quality of health and hygiene</u> with no proper sanitation and water supply in most villages, which plays an important role in</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                           | <p>children’s learning process. In concluding, she stated that children “deserve quality learning and a quality standard to bring up the lives of everyone.” Yet, despite identifying these difficulties and a “determined heart” to improve the situation, she maintained that it was not possible to begin supporting these children with the current lack of funding available for ECE in the province (e.g. to even finance regular visits to villages).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Financial                 | <p>However, concluding the session, this warranted a response from the MoE who claimed, <u>“Money is not the problem: the problem is to organize.”</u> stating that culture and education are in a “marriage” for children. Thus, he said, as ECE stakeholders, those in attendance at the meeting must create <u>a vision for the future</u>, just how G-d began with a vision, instead of just waiting and expecting things to happen based on a “free-handout mentality,” which increasingly leads to dependency over time.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Grassroots Ownership      | <p>Additionally, in attendance for some forum sessions, were kindy teachers and committee members from around MUP, who had the opportunity to address the group. While many struggles were expressed, many participants also chose to strongly emphasize strengths and benefits regarding their kindies and communities. One kindy committee member stated, “When parents, teachers, committees, and church organizations <u>see the importance of education</u> for the future of kindy children, <u>all of us in the community shall uphold the needs that the kindy requires.</u>” Despite challenges faced, another kindy chairman emphasized the <u>immense noticeable effects since the establishment of a kindy</u> in his community: from children experiencing less difficulty in</p> |
| Grassroots Sustainability | <p>primary school after going through kindy, to children sharing hygiene and nutrition lessons learned in kindy back in their homes with their families. In concluding, he stated, <u>“Policy and support will come eventually,</u> but we have already learned through experiences with our children that they must go through kindy school to succeed.”</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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From this forum meeting summary (Table 6.6), a variety of trends were identified, which built upon one another. Although they did not all necessarily receive participant consensus, they did catapult the discussions towards locally perceived drivers of kindy implementation and sustainability success. Ultimately, this can be seen as layers of development in supporting kindies’ sustainability, which demonstrates levels of priorities to be addressed. Yet, arguably, eventual necessity to fully tackle all barriers will be required. Over time, barriers’ impacts on kindy functioning will likely increase as local understandings of program demands and quality, potentially, correspondingly

increase. Therefore, arising from this forum discussion, the researcher identified three prime layers for progressing kindy sustainability, which are currently seen as barriers:

1. Support → Morale

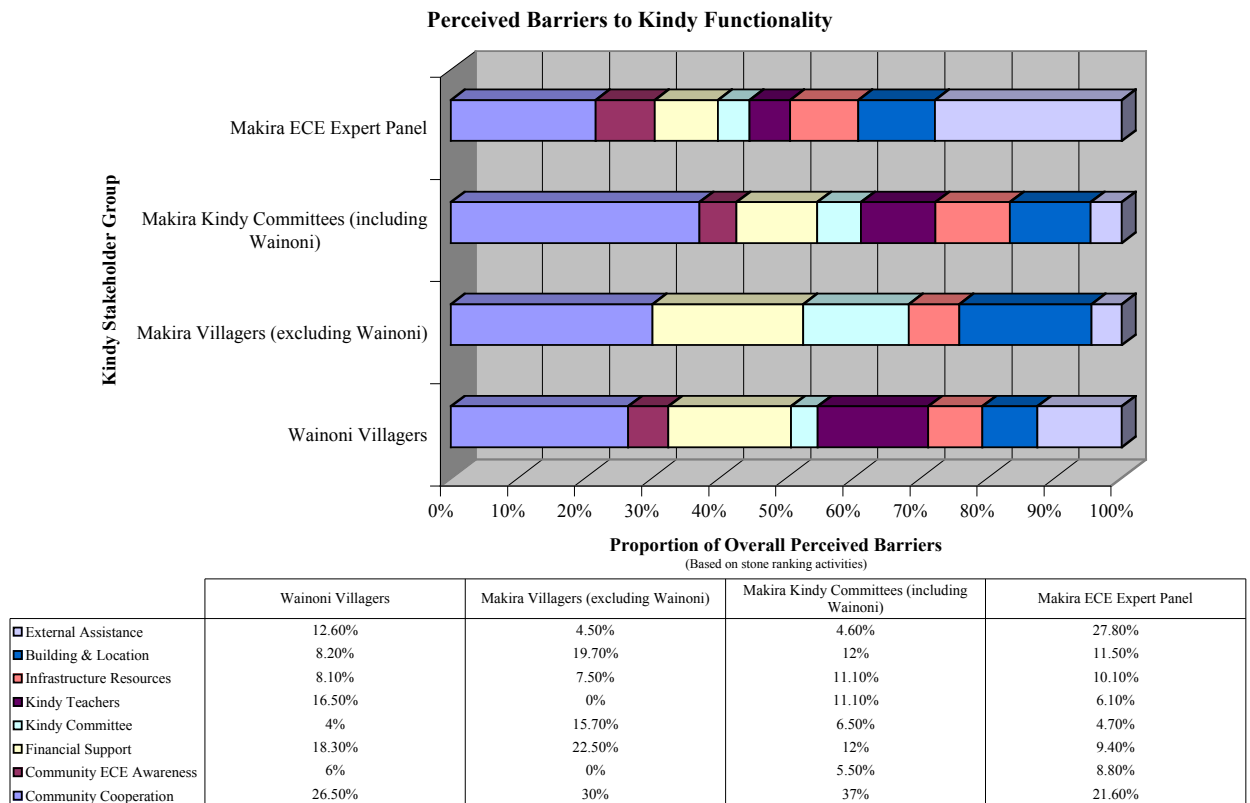
2. Awareness → Ownership

3. Policy → Finance

Within this progression of suggested sustainability, the researcher deduced from forum discussions that initial grassroots' support must be bolstered to increase teacher morale while external support remains limited. As initial community support begins to wane over time, arguably, further awareness of ECE must be provided community-wide to increase local understandings and belief in the value of ECE. Here, it is suggested that this must be inclusive of community responsibilities towards the initiative to advance local ownership-taking. Eventually, larger-scale financing and policy are suggested to be required to support and guide long-term sustainable high quality programs on a large-scale, as the SI is so choosing to do. Nevertheless, as in keeping with local *kastoms*, eventually arising out of forum participants' discussions was that strengthening support from the grassroots is of utmost significance, after which, and only subsequently to avoid complete dependency, external support could most effectively be introduced as reinforcement.

#### *6.4.4 Compilation of Stakeholders' Perceptions of Kindy Challenges*

In compiling overall perceived challenges to the establishment, maintenance, and regular functioning of community-based kindies, Figure 6.1 depicts differentiations between ECE stakeholder groups.



**Figure 6.1** Perceived barriers to MUP kindies across stakeholders.

Within the above compiled findings, there are three predominant groups in which barriers fall: *resources*, *awareness*, and *people as agents*. Of these, the vast majority of perceived barriers were accredited to the variety of “people as agents” across stakeholder groups. More specifically, in analyzing Figure 6.1, Makira villagers (GCRRP [Girl Child Reading and Rescue Project] Phase II) presented different barrier perceptions than other stakeholders, markedly excluding identification of “community ECE awareness” and “kindy teachers” barriers. This could be associated with their most recent involvement in the GCRRP to build community-wide understanding about ECE and support required for kindy teachers. Contrastingly, over time, in Wainoni (i.e. GCRRP Phase I), these messages have faded in the minds of villagers, who received similar WV teachings three years prior. Also notable is the substantially greater significance the

Expert Panel placed on needing more external support, as compared to villagers. This was particularly true for those included in Makira communities, excluding Wainoni (i.e. GCRRP Phase II), who were still taking greater community-ownership of their more recently initiated kindies. A comprehensive analysis of this compilation of stakeholders' perceptions of kindy challenges is more thoroughly deconstructed in Appendix F.

#### *6.4.5 Counterbalances to Sustainability Challenges*

Despite the extensive number of perceived barriers affecting community-based kindies in MUP, a number of kindies included in the study did provide cases of supportive factors to sustained program functioning. These were deemed equally, if not more, important to note than challenges, in light of the urgency to achieve wide scale sustained kindy programs.<sup>73</sup>

Finances were typically referred to as the greatest challenge faced by kindies in many communities, but in reality, this is not entirely the case. Take for example villages in the Western region of Kahua that dot the Eastern side of the Warihito River. There, land is predominantly flat and fertile, particularly for growing relatively large plantations of coconut and cocoa trees, which are then dried, floated down the river to sea (markedly, easier than travel by foot required in many other villages), and sold in the nearby provincial capital of Kirakira (facilitative as these are the nearest villages in the Kahua region to the provincial capital [i.e. markets]). As a result, there is significantly more cash flow in this area. This is further evidenced by substantially higher salaries for some kindy teachers, such as in one village where the two teachers are each paid SBD\$250<sup>74</sup> fortnightly. In comparison, the average Kahua kindy teacher fortnightly salary is

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<sup>73</sup> This is due to the 2008 national policy requirement that all children attend three years of kindy prior to entrance into primary school (MEHRD 2008).

<sup>74</sup> Exchange rate at time of fieldwork (2008-2010): 1 USD [United States Dollar]  $\approx$  7 SBD [Solomon Islands Dollar]

SBD\$22.63, with 48% of teachers receiving nil. Yet, as a result of the lucrative copra and cocoa industry, such higher salaries are less enticing to teachers locally, as they would be elsewhere, due to the alternative means of making sufficient income relatively easily. Thus demonstrates that money is not necessarily the most relevant solution to kindy barriers for all communities. Further, although Kahua is rapidly beginning to move towards a cash-based economy, with a quickly increasing emphasis on materialism,<sup>75</sup> for the vast majority all food and building materials can still be grown in local gardens. Store bought goods are merely unnecessary luxuries (e.g. rice, salt, tinned fish, biscuits, etc.), aside from a few clothes bought secondhand and possibly a bit of kerosene for a lantern in the house. Markedly, due to the high population growth rate in Kahua (est. 2.7% annually), this is likely to change in the near future with a strain on natural resources. Such is already the case in MUP political wards 15 and 16 (i.e. two small outer islands), where there is no longer enough land for all families to solely depend on subsistence lifestyles, and thus they must supplement their local resources with staple foods like rice.

A further example of a community demonstrating that finances are not the root challenge to the kindy can be found in the central Kahua inland bush community of Maniono (20-30 minute hike from coast). There, income-generating activities are very limited and no support for ECE has been received from WV, as a result of poor working relations on a previous project. However, this community has managed to maintain an independent kindy since the early 1980s. A former untrained primary school teacher has masterminded a vision for the school, based on his dedication to children in the surrounding communities. Due to its inland location, and as such poor soil fertility and

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<sup>75</sup> To the surprise of many parents, locally, some children are even refusing to attend school without “nice” clothing or a new pencil.

difficult terrain, education is locally claimed to hold a higher value with the very limited alternative means to locally make money. Therefore, to support this, the kindy headmaster has developed his own kindy program, teaching approach, and curriculum.<sup>76</sup> Subsequently, he has attracted untrained kindy teachers from other Kahua communities to come and learn while no other “Field-Based Training” (FBT) sessions are currently available. Through his ongoing long-term dedication to the school, this has transpired to the community. Consequently, here it is suggested that they have developed a deeper understanding and support for the kindy, in comparison to many other surrounding kindies and communities. This facilitates understanding the long-term community support of this kindy, and thus, its success and sustainability in the absence of external support or financing (further analysis - Chapter 7).

Other demonstrated factors that have supported the sustained functioning of MUP kindies, as identified in by focus groups, included:

#### *Children*

- ✓ **Children:** Children’s personal interest to attend kindy, further demonstrated by persistent questioning of parents and teachers when kindy is not operating.

#### *Parents*

- ✓ **Parental School Support:** Parental support in encouraging children to attend kindy regularly and provision of breakfast before and snack to take along to school.
- ✓ **Parental Home Support:** Some parents support children’s learning outside school hours by practicing 123s, ABCs, pencil holding, etc. in home.
- ✓ **Kindy Parents’ Support:** Parents with children in kindy often more supportive than those with no children of kindy age.

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<sup>76</sup> This kindy headmaster has grouped children by ages and recruited numerous community-members as teaching staff, thereby allowing for small teacher-child ratios. As per curriculum, he designed a weekly rotation schedule between classroom learning areas with structured learning activities. This is in contrast to the FBT-taught approach implemented in nearly all other MUP kindies, in which children freely access classroom resources in a less structured manner. Furthermore, the headmaster of this kindy has developed his own training program for his classroom staff. It is based on informal information received about ECE after seeking advice from the provincial ECE Coordinator in the 1980/90s and ongoing consultation with a nearby primary school headmaster.

### *Teachers*

- ✓ **Love:** Teachers commitment to continue working despite no pay or support in kind because they have a “big heart” for children in community.
- ✓ **Capacity:** Multiple kindy teachers in the community allows for rotation of turns during the week, so that teachers have enough time for their families and garden work.
- ✓ **Resourcefulness:** Making due with what is available (e.g. untrained women teaching “kindy” out of their homes in light of lacking community support to build kindy houses).

### *Communities*

- ✓ **Literacy:** Communities increasingly working together: vast majority of youths are relatively literate while many elders remain illiterate, suggesting community cooperation is increasing as education levels increase.
- ✓ **Leadership:** Strong leadership in community as foundation for seeking support from villagers on an ongoing basis and driving the success of a sustained kindy program (often embodied in strong kindy chairman).
- ✓ **Population:** High population growth rate guaranteeing sufficient numbers of children to attend kindy in future years.
- ✓ **Resources:** Abundance of local bush resources for community to construct classroom and materials.
- ✓ **Church Community:** Despite poor general community support, church leaders and regular church-goers provide strong support showing great concern for the kindy.

### *Government*

- ✓ **Primary School:** When registered under the local primary school, have access to more manufactured resources.
- ✓ **Policy:** National policy requiring three years attendance at kindy before primary (as enforced by primary school headmasters): demands that parents send children to kindy and that communities support their ongoing functioning.
- ✓ **Ongoing Training:** Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) offering extension Summer Course in MUP to previously trained FBT teachers.

As expressed within the thesis title, “Community-Based Learning in Solomon Islands: *Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas* Influencing Program Sustainability,” many of the challenges facing the establishment and ongoing regular functioning of kindies in rural MUP are not based on inability to implement programs, or disinterest in ECE, but instead are rooted in dilemmas encountered. These dilemmas, or challenges, preventing

sustained functioning are occasionally contrasted by the above elements, suggested to be supporting sustained programs. Furthermore, take for example the dilemma of financial management:

Most communities are keen to offer their children the best, affordable, opportunities to facilitate their future success (markedly, this takes on a variety of local interpretations – Table 6.2). However, due to predominantly subsistence lifestyles and already strained finances with limited cash flow (based on local interpretations of best spent limited finances), the Kahua people are challenged by issues of how to allocate use of time, money, and offerings of support in kind. Such is the case regarding kindy teacher support. Teachers know they must allot time to work their own gardens when their communities cannot offer sufficient financial, or in kind (i.e. garden assistance or food contributions), support. Often, this is attributed to families already struggling to provide enough time and resources to solely meet their own needs.

Likewise, regarding a dilemma over time management:

Many community members face a dilemma when kindy meetings and awareness speakers are planned in their villages. Villagers are inundated with community commitments, such as church groups and primary school maintenance, which typically take precedence over kindies. Further, communities are bombarded with awareness programs continuously coming through the region.

Consequently, villagers find difficulty in making time to attend everything while still completing subsistence tasks. Further, in being inundated by information, community members maintain that they cannot remember everything taught nor put it all effectively into practice. Therefore, they face the dilemma of whether or not to allocate time from their already busy lives to attend

meetings/awarenesses, despite anticipating no significant personal benefits from their attendance. Moreover, fundamentally, their attendance is often merely to present an image to outsiders of a cooperative and supportive community.

Addressing kindy sustainability in MUP is deeply intertwined with these and other contextual and cultural dilemmas. Nevertheless, as presented in this chapter, notable examples in the region demonstrate the potential for achieving wider-scale program sustainability.

## **6.5 Concluding Chapter Remarks**

Barriers to ECE in MUP are not limited to those identified by participants and the researcher in this chapter. Issues of post-colonialism, post-conflict, globalization of education, smallness of scale as a nation, remoteness of rural villages, and wide cultural and linguistic diversity, all presently also affect ECE on provincial and national levels. However, for those teachers and communities in the minority who continue to dedicate themselves to their students, much hope remains for the capacity of Makiran communities in ECE. Despite immense challenges to kindergartens, as explored in this chapter, these few noteworthy teachers and communities demonstrate the potential necessary for community-based kindies to receive sufficient local ownership. That is, until eventually, potentially, greater external support becomes a reality to help sustain such initiatives. As one ward 13 WV model kindy teacher explained,

Parents and communities do not always cooperate, which makes teachers' hearts feel like giving up, yet they do not. [...] I love my work, so in my heart I do not give up on the future leaders of tomorrow. It is [salary] nothing to worry about. It is just important for me to teach all my relations [relatives] in the community. So, I cannot give up.

This commitment was further expressed by another kindy teacher who stated, “I do not worry about money. Children are an investment in our future doctors, leaders...an investment in the future of not individuals, but our nation as a whole.” From these

teachers' remarks, it becomes apparent that those within Kahua, who have deeply come to understand the significance of ECE, maintain a dedication to the cause. Such teacher commitment has been attributed to both the opportunity to locally support the development of future Kahua generations, as well as nationalistically by seeing a broader contribution to the SI as a whole. Markedly, this presents a dramatic shift in Native psyche. Traditionally devoted clan members once maintained allegiance to familial support and obligations through the wantok system of obligatory kinship ties. As presented in this thesis, this is currently locally perceived as being in decline. Therefore, debatably, here this is suggested to now be evolving towards practices of *nationalistic reverence* and *individualist development aspirations*.

Since becoming an independent nation merely three decades ago, three institutions have been revered as guiding the lives of Solomon Islanders: kastom, church, and civil society. The latter of these has most recently been introduced and is generally regarded as the weakest of institutions (Rohorua 2007). Yet, if properly developed and sustained, civil society has the potential to progress nationwide development, through unity, inclusive of educational initiatives. However, much of the potential in this, as explored here within Kahua, remains linked to the maintenance of traditional values and practices. As has been presented in this chapter, and the two previous findings chapters, communities that have maintained strong communal ties, traditional values, and religious devotion, were found to be more capable of fostering communal initiatives in support of ECE, and as such, more sustainable kindies. Contrastingly, prominent beliefs that finances and external support are the fundamental factors required to facilitate program sustainability have been outshined by practical examples demonstrating that low cost, locally constructed and supplied, kindies are achievable and sustainable Kahua

community-based initiatives. Notably, this does not speak to the quality of such programs. This is merely an analysis of the initial stages of putting these programs into place in a nation where understandings of such a level and form of education are only beginning to develop.

Linking back to the beginning of this chapter, in its exploration of learning in context and the influence of evolving culture on this, one can begin to clearly see how the erosion of the Kahua Principles has directly borne on the challenges facing many communities in establishing, maintaining, and sustaining kindies. This has been observed in the erosion of the foundational Kahua kastoms of love, respect, sharing, and cooperation. Throughout Makira there has been a rapid growth in the number of kindies, over the past four years, as new communities continue to build classrooms after observing what others have accomplished, as well as becoming aware of the new national ECE policy (Chapter 4). Yet, whilst an overall effect of kindy development has been observed throughout the province, its longevity has often been short-lived. Take for example one WV declared “model kindy,” which more so serves as a model of lost traditional interactions and relationships than an exemplar early childhood learning environment. The building of this particular kindy has been halted due to extreme discord between two groups of people. This can be attributed to the kindy’s location on a primary school campus, located between two communities lying in two different political wards. As a result, without clarity as to which community the kindy specifically “belongs,” villagers on both sides are unwilling to make contributions that would be beneficial to children other than those from their own village. For example, each community took responsibility for sewing and erecting their own side of the kindy roof, but subsequently many parents were unwilling to make classroom resources,

arguing that children from the other community would use them. And thus, the kindy stands empty and non-functioning. Such discord contradicts each fundamental Kahua Principle – sharing together, asking, care, and discussion – all underlined by a lacking love and respect for the other community and their children. In light of this, the researcher posits that in terms of traditional communal practices, a breaking of kastoms is occurring in the establishment of many Makiran kindies, which locally equates to program failure and nationally equates to program unsustainability.

A decidedly cultural foundation to ECE has been taken in this chapter, which is in line with the focus of this thesis and supported by local priorities to reinvigorate Kahua kastoms, as embodied by the Kahua Principles. This is based on what has been termed here an *intergenerational cultural decay*, as has been widely negatively associated, by locals, with increasing unfavorable external influences on Kahuan society. Taking this foundational justification to the sustainable development of kindies, in association with long-term employment/leadership goals for children (requiring formal educations) and national ECE policy requirements, the exploration of local challenges facing ECE becomes critically significant. Arising from SI ECE stakeholder groups in this chapter were key barriers relating to morale, awareness, finances, and cooperation. These were found to thereby be affecting kindy functioning and sustainability with regard to teacher/child attendance, collaborative community support for resource making and teachers, grassroots ownership-taking of programs, and fundamental community-wide understandings to believe in and continually support such initiatives. Based on these prime barriers identified, Chapter 7 will now proceed with a more thorough overarching analytical discussion of kindy sustainability. It will additionally further be linked with historically significant and influential factors (Chapter 4), as well as the comparative

application of kindergartens to other community-wide ECE microenvironments (Chapter 5).

## CHAPTER 7: (Researcher's) Cumulative Analytical Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

In compiling the preceding findings chapters (4-6), this analytical discussion chapter will now illuminate the researcher's key evolving ideas post-fieldwork. Previous chapters incorporated significant elements in line with the collaborative nature of this study.

Contrastingly, this chapter explores the *researcher's* critical voice in cumulatively analyzing key concepts related to cultural and contextual influences on early childhood education (ECE) program sustainability in Kahua, Solomon Islands (SI). While the study originated as a collaborative endeavor, ultimately, this proved limiting without increased historical, sociocultural, and underlying critical analysis by the researcher, based on her ethnographic experiences and extension of the literature reviewed.

Therefore, this chapter provides space for the researcher to separate herself from participants. Nevertheless, incorporation of long-standing lenses inclusive of Kahuan Indigenous values remains of high significance, as emphasized throughout the thesis.

Woven throughout the previous three chapters, which will emerge as key themes in this chapter, are concepts that must be linked together to provide understanding and analysis of the fundamental program sustainability issues at stake:

Chapter 4 – Situating and analyzing the historical and contextual origins and progression of education in SI;

Chapter 5 – Identifying and analyzing the diversity of Kahuan early learning microenvironments and related belief systems; and

Chapter 6 – Exploring and analyzing cultural evolution, and integration with education, as foundation to kindy sustainability.

Within these chapters, the researcher used a decidedly sociocultural-ecological lens to explore the focal research question: “What factors have influenced the cultural and

contextual sustainable development of Kahua community-based ECE?” To facilitate this, she deemed it necessary to begin with historical influences for understanding how these factors have evolved to what are now present-day challenges to kindies. In doing so, it became apparent that the kindy represents a microcosm of what has been occurring on a wider societal level. This is inclusive of challenges facing community-wide endeavors and cultural evolution, as observed in the Kahua region and across Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP).

To refocus the grassroots’ premise of this study, in entering the cumulative analytical discussion of research findings, presented below are local reflections. These were put forth by Kahuan voices, raising their perspectives in reiteration of the current state of regional community-based kindies:

[B]oth the national government and provincial governments must take into serious consideration and pay attention to the cries and struggles by our rural people, especially in setting up kindy schools and their need for financial assistance. [...] [G]overnment leaders should adhere [sic] that the future of Solomon Islands depends entirely on education. It is clear and sure enough that kindy schools are a foundation or channel to reach tertiary and university educations, in our hope to have doctors, pilots, philosophers, scientists, or whatever you name it.

(Runaga Village, Kindy Chairman)

[K]indy teachers have big work to do because all children must go through three years of kindy ever since the government made that rule before children can go up to primary school...but what about us [teachers]? We do important work in the kindy without any pay...The government should support every kindy teacher throughout the world because kindy is the foundation of education...kindy children are leaders for tomorrow. The Kahua Association should also help to promote the children in Kahua, to teach them about our culture in Kahua. Also, teachers should teach children about Kahua culture to develop them for their future because when the old people die they will take on those positions like chief in the community.

(Toroa Village, Field-Based Trained, Kindy Teacher)

[M]any times Kahua people are just like a baby who wants to drink a coconut but no one can make it for him/her, so s/he cries and cries but nothing happens. The national government, provincial members, NGOs, and Kahua Association must support kindies in one way or another and take more consideration of people in rural communities. They must consider our kindies to make sure our kindy teachers are paid by the government and also provide trainings for untrained teachers. People must put concern on awareness to people who do not understand kindies. People should know that the foundation of education is early childhood.

(Pa’a Village, Untrained, Kindy Teacher)

From these local perceptions of ECE in Kahua, one is reminded of a few recurring themes raised throughout the findings chapters, as related to kindy sustainability:

- Insufficient external financial support;
- Lacking awareness of kindy's significance as the educational foundation for future generations of Solomon Islanders;
- Dependency-building as opposed to ownership-taking of such initiatives; and
- Potential to begin reinvigorating culture through such formal educational contexts.

Above are surface-level factors regarding the establishment, implementation, and maintenance of kindies, as arose from grassroots stakeholders. However, these provided a limited understanding of the current situation, as far as participants were able to overtly contribute to the study. Consequently, this demanded greater analysis, as will now be presented. Firstly, the researcher identifies the variety of dilemmas that arose throughout the thesis. Subsequently, this leads the researcher to return to historical underpinnings of the study in revisiting Marching Rule, kastom, and culture in ECE. Through this analytical discussion, the researcher raises new understandings of the reification and objectification of Kahuan kastom at the societal and then kindy levels. The second half of the chapter is then devoted to program sustainability dilemmas, as explored through the notion of “championing the vision for ECE.”

## **7.2 SI ECE Dilemmas: Expanding Historical Elucidations**

This thesis is embedded with numerous problematic dichotomies, interrelated and often underlying (Table 7.1). Fundamental to these dualities are their required, and arguably beneficial, integration in ultimately addressing the sustained development of community-based kindergartens in Kahua.

**Table 7.1** Spectrum of Thesis Dichotomies

|                            | ←-----                                                                                                                                                               | -----→                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ECE Stakeholder Objectives | Local early childhood developmental/educational values, emphasizing extrinsic development goals in preparation for future education, employment, and material wealth | Governmental policy driven programs, frequently in line with universal trends and agendas, emphasizing intrinsic holistic development |
| Societal Development       | Traditional kastom                                                                                                                                                   | Western modernity                                                                                                                     |
| Economic Development       | Subsistence livelihoods                                                                                                                                              | Knowledge-based society / Cash-based economy                                                                                          |
| Social Orientation         | Collectivism                                                                                                                                                         | Individualism                                                                                                                         |
| Cultural Change            | Maintenance, Revitalization                                                                                                                                          | Evolution, Decay                                                                                                                      |
| Educational Ideologies     | Culture and context specificity                                                                                                                                      | Universal developmentally appropriate practices/standards                                                                             |
| Classroom Environment      | Locally sustainable                                                                                                                                                  | Externally dependent on manufactured imports                                                                                          |
| Development Drivers        | Externally-driven, Mystically-deserved                                                                                                                               | Internally-driven, Outwardly-endeavored                                                                                               |

Notably, the above dichotomies are not to be perceived as linear progressions away from tradition, but are much more cyclical and variable in personal interpretations and executions. Therefore, to address these evolving issues, one must return to where the exploration of educational development began in this thesis: the arrival of missionaries (late 1800s) and colonization (British establishment as Protectorate over the islands:1893). Amongst evolving historical factors influencing what are now local epistemologies regarding ECE in Kahua, the *cargo cult movement*<sup>77</sup> (Allan 1950, Herlihy 2003) has been presented in this thesis as one of the most influential factors, during the past century, in the reformation of Kahuan identities and society. The following subsections will further elucidate these influences.

<sup>77</sup> Elsewhere, this has been referred to as a reaction to deprivation (Cochrane 1970), a politico-economic movement (Burt 1982, Worsley 1968), literacy efflorescence (Laracy 1983), a quest for identity (Guidieri 1988), a nationalist movement (Alasia 1989), and a counter hegemonic discourse of resistance (Keesing 1992).

### 7.2.1 Revisiting Marching Rule

As initially identified in Chapter 4, a potential origin to Kahuan ECE stakeholder belief systems links education to the cargo cult movement. However, in order to understand the deeper influence of this movement, beyond local present-day predominant perceptions presented as “education as cargo” (Chapter 4), a brief critical expanded historical review is necessary. The cargo cult movement on Makira developed roughly between 1946 and 1952, where it was predominantly known as *Marching Rule* (in English). Originally, within SI, it spread from Malaita Province as *Maasina Ruru*, as referred to by locals. Situating this movement, one must return to the time shortly after the declaration of the SI as British Protectorate (1893), which was the commencement of increased globalization overpowering, both by local choice and external imposition, traditional practices and values. Contrastingly, predecessor to this, missionaries (especially Roman Catholic) were more accepting of a balance between religion and tradition, in addition to natural overlaps between the two. Consequently, it was during this time leading up to WWII that locals became resistant to the imposition of external artificial authority structures incongruent with Indigenous cultural leadership configurations. And thus, finally, with the arrival of Marching Rule, Natives began to rise up against Protectorate governance, and in many instances Whiteman in general.<sup>78</sup>

This post-WWII political movement was predominantly an Indigenous effort to counter feared appropriation of custom land by inimical external forces, such as colonizers and as spurred by visions of WWII-related land acquisitions in other provinces.

Subsequently, the movement has been attributed to what precipitated a comprehensive

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<sup>78</sup> Notably, a distinction was made between British and Americans, the latter of whom were accepted as saviors to the Solomons, as evidenced by their favorable relationships (i.e. American occupation during WWII and extensive sharing of “cargo” - cigarettes, tinned food, calico, etc.). Contrastingly, the British were viewed as oppressive colonizers. Such is how myths developed that Americans would one day return with shiploads of cargo, mystically passed on from SI ancestors now residing in America (Allan 1950).

resettlement of the population from the bush to coastal hamlets (i.e. to protect land and, for some, await arrival of “cargo” – Chapter 4). Additional notable instigators and contributing factors to the movement, as of significant relevance to this thesis, include (Allan 1950, Keesing 1992, Akin 2004)<sup>79</sup>:

- Desire for better schools including government policy extending education beyond the sole responsibility of Christian missions;
- Disregard for Indigenous customs by colonial administration, as was instigator in reviving a more unified selection of Indigenous values and practices (i.e. unified front against potential invaders); and
- Islanders’ perceptions of insufficient funds being provided for their social welfare development.

But debatably, as argued here by the researcher, of greatest significance throughout the southeast SI was Marching Rule’s organization capacity in unifying what were once disparate cultural and religiously differentiated groups. Through this unification, customs were objectified, and as such, experienced a resurgence.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, Makira continues to reflect the physical and social changes that occurred during the time of Marching Rule, as epitomized in population distribution (i.e. dividing and filling coastal land), and of most relevance to this thesis, the *reification* and *preoccupation with custom*. For, it was during this time that Natives were encouraged to promote the continued collectivization and regimentation of villages and the formalization of instruction in Indigenous custom. This was largely in an effort to create a unified front in protecting from potential external threats.

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<sup>79</sup> Numerous other anthropological scholars have explored the origins, developments, and outcomes of the Marching Rule movement raising diverse themes of analysis: economic movement (Belshaw 1947, Worsley 1968); Whiteman envy with Christianity as a means to their cargo ends (Allan 1950, 1951); American dream (Fox 1967) beyond that of cargoism with a realization that ongoing colonial oppression was preventing the harmonious American lifestyle in SI; status (Cochrane 1970) which contradictingly argued that cargo was not merely a means to ends but more deeply related to Indigenous status perceptions.

<sup>80</sup> Unification of cultures during this period was realized through the codification of *Marching Rule Law*, which integrated traditional norms and contemporary aspirations.

In extension of the instigators of Makiran development cited above, it is recognized that a number of the very same themes that arose during Marching Rule could be associated with what here the researcher is terming a new *Educating Rule*. As explored in Chapter 4, education has become a new means to an end, whether that be material and/or status related. Correspondingly to Marching Rule and cargo cults, these educational means-ends have arguably been based on unrealistic linear progression beliefs of education leading to employment and financial prosperity. Likewise, the preoccupation with *kastom* (i.e. SI Pidgin term emphasizing external redefinition as opposed to historic traditional *custom*) during Marching Rule was never completely realized in leading to a reification through unification of diverse tribes' traditions and customs. As a result, Indigenous cultural complexities and uniqueness has declined.

Extending this to present-day ECE, arguably national intentions to integrate “local *kastoms*” into kindies can never be fully realized when such local cultural elements were diluted years ago, and further continue to be objectified in many present-day classrooms. Therefore, the great emphasis on integrating culture into Kahua kindies can be associated with two main factors: 1) the lasting effects of Marching Rule (e.g. codification and unification of cultures on Makira), and 2) notions of education as cargo (i.e. awaiting external “delivery” to drive “long-deserved” development). However, before exploring this further (Section 7.2.4 and Chapter 8), it is imperative to first reflect on the concept of *custom/kastom* itself.

### 7.2.2 Reification of *Kastom* in Kahua

In continuing to analyze the dilemmas influencing ECE program sustainability, it is essential to now step away from dominant conceptions of *kastom* by Makirans, presented

thus far in the thesis, and take a more critical perspective. During the Marching Rule movement (c.1946 - c.1952) entered the strong notion of *kastom*. As defined in Chapter 1, this SI Pidgin word, as translates to *custom* in English, has come to denote a deeper concept in SI than its English counterpart. It refers to “ideologies and activities formulated in terms of empowering indigenous traditions and practices, both within communities of varying levels of inclusivity, and as a stance toward outside entities” (Akin 2004:300). Yet, arguably, the term is incapable of actually encompassing the diversity of cultures in the South Pacific or SI, as in accordance with its origins in the reification of custom during Marching Rule. Instead, as Akin (ibid) goes on to suggest, it is culturally empty and merely a *reinvention* of traditional culture. These arguments originated with Keesing (1982) and Tonkinson (1982),

Kastom not only illustrates the process of mystification; it shows how abstract symbols can derive power precisely because of their vagueness and vacuity. That urban sophisticates and mountain pagans can find meaning in kastom attests to the potency of contentless symbols...Their very abstractness and lack of precise context allow a consensus that would otherwise be impossible...kastom is something everyone can share a commitment to because it is vaguely conceived, indefinable, and open to such diverse constructions.

(Keesing 1982:299)

Despite the over-extension of this concept to such diverse groups, *kastom* has undeniably been influential in Melanesia for over sixty years. In present-day, kastom has evolved to largely a political concept and symbol of locally conceived *cultural decadence*. As evidenced by interviews with those in MUP, over this time, the concept has developed into widespread vocalization expressing frustration and regret with the ongoing decadence of traditional values and practices. Here, the researcher has suggested that this can be traced back to the period of Marching Rule.

Notably, throughout the 1980s and 90s, anthropological literature centering around the reification of Melanesian *kastom* surged (Philibert 1986, Babadzan 1988, Linnekin 1992), as it *constructed* new custom identities of Pacific Islanders. Largely as a result of

anthropologists' work in reifying kastom, by making it more prominent in research than Melanesians ever revered it, this thereby further distorted authentic cultural significances. As such, the very essence of claiming this present study is focused on Kahuan kastom (i.e. culture in context), as related to ECE sustainability, could be perceived as flawed by the very nature of this externally heightened term. This, therefore, calls for more transparent acknowledgment of the interactive relationship between kastom and culture, as continuously evolving and mutually interacting concepts, to counter this objectified notion of Pacific culture as kastom. Accordingly, as suggested and implemented in this thesis, in understanding present Kahuan culture, consideration must be given to both the integral role of kastom ideological influences on daily life and Indigenous perceptions producing the local cultures.

Further notable, within SI, application of this study's findings regarding *kastom* contradicts Akin's (2004) work, as referenced above, in which he draws the ideas from research on mountain-dwelling Kwaio people of Malaita Province, post-Maasina Ruru. He presents the Kwaio as developing a heightened sense and practices of hegemonic kastoms, as shaped by a rejection of modern and Christian sentiments. Markedly, this Kwaio development is presently widely recognized by locals throughout SI. However, contrastingly, the Kahua people of MUP, as depicted in this thesis, can be seen as more thoroughly integrating tradition, kastom, modernity, and Christianity. This thereby demonstrates an acceptance of homogenizing forces, both internally and externally, although to varying unequal degrees. Extending ideas about kastom, with closer contextual and cultural relevance to the Kahua people, Scott (2007:119) writes, with regard to Arosi (Western Makira),

In ways that extrapolated indigenous norms and practices from everyday life and subjected them to regimes of mission-style pedagogy, what Arosi cast as the revival of custom generally took the form of explicit schooling in social forms and values, treated as discrete types of transferable knowledge.

Similarly, but in Eastern Makira (i.e. Kahua), here it is suggested that this gave rise to the strengthening of what have today become the overt fundamentals of the Kahua Principles and Kahua kastom. These most likely formally developed during Marching Rule. Through this, as also reflected in Arosi (ibid), Kahuan's placed significant emphasis on behavioral norms, stressing cooperation and social cohesion. In line with these, as associated with the Kahua Principles, and ultimately program sustainability, are salient values to garner a harmonious society of respect (particularly for elders):

- Rules guiding traditionally appropriate behaviors (i.e. ramata, especially for women and for those unwed, courting, and married);
- Guidelines for hospitality, reciprocity, sharing and giving (e.g. contributions to marriages, treatment of visitors); and
- Principles for participation in communal work.

These connections between historical events and kastom practices, epitomized by the Kahua Principles, are completely obscured in present-day Kahua society where overt awareness of now objectified kastom is virtually nonexistent. Instead, what remains of traditional culture is further objectified to prevent greater extinction of such knowledge. Arguably, the essence of this is clearly embedded in the kindy's attempt to incorporate local culture into the classroom, yet typically largely only in objectified reification of traditional cultural practices and resources/materials, as will be explored in Section 7.2.4.

### *7.2.3 Epistemic Specificity in Context Specific Pacific Education*

Recognizing the continued significance of kastom in the Kahua people's cognition and conduct raises insights into their perceptions of education. Kastom is not limited to observable cultural features of cooking, behavior, attire, etc., but instead extends deeply

into Indigenous values, beliefs, and mere existence. As such, kastom has become an important consideration for supporting formal education, and therefore not simply an externally imposed concept that hinders local expression and development. Accordingly, this is in alignment with the researcher's belief that personal epistemology and approaches to learning are deeply rooted in individual's sociocultural and familial environments. This is supported by previous research suggesting that learning and identity are tied to one's sociocultural background (McCaslin and Hickey 2001); and as such, approaches to learning must be adapted to students' cultures, contexts, and social worlds (Flinn 1992, Mugler and Landback 1997, Phan and Deo 2008).

Within the Pacific region, in particular, the unique cultural and societal values that remain in the reification of kastom create a regional ethos of local ideologies and philosophies. These have been suggested to shape the perceptions and epistemologies of teaching and learning processes (Phan 2007, 2008). Unique to this region, as reflected in Chapters 4 and 5, are Pacific peoples' societal values, which accentuate the significance of tradition and informal approaches to learning. Although in a state of transition, central regional values to learning (Ninnes 1991, Teaero 2002, Nabobo-Baba 2006, Phan 2008), as reinforced in this study based on observations in Kahua, include:

- Respect for authority and elders;
- Collectivist beliefs;
- Non-questioning approach to learning (i.e. knowledge is accepted as truth and either learned through rote methods within formal schooling or traditional observational methods within the wider community); and
- Comfort in the status quo (i.e. any counter action or belief would be regarded as disrespectful or disobedient to elders/authorities).

And therefore, to have a strong upbringing in line with traditional practices, and as such an unconditional acceptance of knowledge as passed down from authorities, has

generally been considered positively as a cultured upbringing. This is not to say that culture's influence on learning and knowledge is static or a direct product. As explored in Chapter 5, there are multiple intertwined cultures influencing SI ECE, from an institutional culture within formal education, to varied cultures in informal and nonformal community learning microenvironments, and the cultures of diverse remote small islands unto themselves.

In extension of the Literature Review (Chapter 2), despite the variety of different cultural influences, and efforts to unify culture during Marching Rule, geographically the nature of the SI has still provided a large buffer to local cultures, in their remote isolation. This has assisted in the maintenance of traditional beliefs and values for the nature of knowledge and how this is achieved (i.e. local epistemology). Despite enduring numerous historical influences pressuring cultural change, the growing influence of globalization and a cash-based economy have driven the most rapid recent changes in Pacific societies. These were identified as significant influences on Kahuan education development in giving rise to greater significance placed on formal education, as precursor to paid employment, as necessitated by shifts towards a monetary-based society. Most notably, this is altering fundamental values in Kahua, thus creating a dichotomy of epistemological beliefs regarding the regional society. This is observable in transitions from a collectivistic society, which emphasizes honor, respect, and communal pride, to an individualistic “deteriorating” society, increasingly focused on materialism. In turn, this study found locals’ perceptions to be shifting to regard rapidly decreasing levels of respect throughout communities as correlated with an increase in educational attainment. These societal dilemmas over traditional practices influencing SI education are further analytically discussed below.

#### 7.2.4 Codification and Objectification of Kastom in ECE

Rationales for the resurgence of traditional practices (i.e. kastom) in SI, and throughout Melanesia for over sixty years, can be associated with a variety of interpretations. Most commonly identified by the researcher in this study has been a local frustration in society's falling prey, as opposed to adequately adapting, to modern external influences. Using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (1979), the development of education, and ECE in specific, within the SI can be seen as a microcosm for what has been happening on the exosystem to Kahuan society/culture and macrosystem in Solomon society. Through increased incorporation of Western-ideologies, initially introduced in this thesis as the arrival of the church, and more integrally through formal education, an objectification of kastom can further be seen as an effort to circumvent anxieties of this encroaching modernity to SI.

The case of shifting approaches to learning in varied microenvironments (Chapter 5) stands as a concrete example in alterations to Kahuan epistemologies. These illustrate a move from the traditional emphasis on *ramatenia* (i.e. teachings related to kastom beliefs and practices) being replaced by that of *hagasuria* (i.e. teachings related to general knowledge), as executed through Western forms of learning at church and in formal education. Observed in what is essentially a spectrum of Kahuan learning microenvironments is a general trend away from the traditional home/community-based model and values of learning, as associated with kastoms, to that of modernity, through the church and formal education. However, with a societal backlash movement of cultural reinvigoration (Chapter 6), as seen through the codification of kastom, a generational countermovement has been emerging. This is deemed of great significance in this thesis, where on the surface level one can observe an intergenerational cultural

decay, but underlying (yet to be fully realized), the kindy, as has been suggested (Chapter 6), holds much potential as cultural reinvigorator. Furthermore, arguably, fundamental to the sustainability of community-based initiatives is a dependency on this community-level reinvigoration of culture for generating community-wide support and cooperation in shared beliefs as led by culturally-congruent inspirational leaders. Nevertheless, the SI approach to incorporate local culture into ECE must be critically analyzed to understand how this is practically being realized, as explored below.

### *Objectification of Kastom in ECE*

Having embarked on this study to explore research questions relating to context and culture influencing ECE program sustainability, it is important to understand how truly fitting these formal education programs are to local contexts/cultures. As observed in Chapters 5 and 6, the majority of teaching/learning practices, verbalized beliefs regarding learning, and aspirations for children in Kahuan ECE microenvironments relate to objectified versions of kastom. Accordingly, while teaching tools, such as songs, stories, and material resources may present surface-level cultural relevance, their underlying implementation for the transpiration of learning and cultural reinvigoration are variable. On the exterior, some kindies appear fairly stocked with traditional learning resources (e.g. wooden carvings, grass skirts, and warrior shields) for children in accordance with SI ECE curriculum and guidelines for one of the twelve classroom learning areas (i.e. “Tradition and Culture”). However, presence of such resources does not necessarily equate with their intended use, as per SI ECE policy and curriculum (MEHRD 2008, 2009). The following comparison of two kindies’ incorporation of traditional warrior practices demonstrates the variable objectification of *kastom* in ECE. This is an expanded vignette of kindies initially referenced in Chapter 5.

All day, the children of Toroa community had been watching adults and youths from the village and surrounding areas come together in Toroa to clear a piece of land covered with large old trees. This site, adjacent to the kindy, was where a new classroom was to be built for a rural training center. During this time, the children observed ongoing cooperation between all villagers, from young to old and of both genders, working together towards a united goal. Subsequently, the following day in kindy, a few children selected war shields, from the “Tradition and Culture” classroom learning area, with which to play. These shields are wooden carvings, 3 1/2 feet long, with long rounded handles that curve and fan out towards the top shielding end, which were traditionally used to protect oneself in battle. Shields were not a resource regularly used by the children (never previously observed by the researcher). Nevertheless, three children each took a shield and went to a large log in the outdoor play area. There, they began “chopping” at the log, just as they had watched adults do the previous day. Almost immediately, other children who saw them followed suit, and an additional six children took the remaining shields from the classroom outside. As all nine children stood on the log, “whacking” the shields against it and the ground, the teacher repeatedly called out for them to stop, stating that those were not axes. Notably, locally carved axe handles, as the children had observed adults using the previous day, do look strikingly similar to the lower handle portion of the war shield. Eventually, after calling out a few times, the children listened to the teacher and returned the shields to the classroom. However, because the teacher was unaware of the shield’s name, or how it had been properly used, no authentic kastom knowledge was transpired to these children regarding the traditional item. Therefore, it merely fulfilled the requirement for resources in the “Tradition and Culture” learning area, despite not meeting the primary curriculum objective of instilling kastom knowledge in children. This is not always the case though with regard to kindy kastom teachings. For example, Natagera village on Santa Ana Island (ward 15) is one of the most widely recognized villages in MUP to maintain kastom practices; and there, kindy teachers frequently facilitate authentic kastom learning experiences with children. For example, regularly, children are told about and enact warrior welcomes, along with adults, such as for outsiders to their village. During these, young boys are dressed in traditional warpaint and taught how to wield these war shields, while girls are donned in grass skirts and taught to share various flower and fruit neck adornments out of hospitality.



**Figure 7.1** Contrasting approaches to teaching kastom in kindy: Toroa Kindy “misuse” of war shields as axes (left); Natagera Kindy teacher and children practicing traditional warrior welcome, while wearing warpaint and wielding war shields (right).

The above contrasting examples depict a significant difference between kindies. While one merely satisfies the requirement of providing an environment inclusive of *kastom* relics, albeit objectified, the other overtly uses them as teaching tools to develop children's understanding of culture and traditions, and as such cultural-identities. Nevertheless, traditional values and associated practices, such as *sharing*, are highly evident across Kahua kindies (e.g. sharing of food during snack time). Drawing on these objectified implementations of *kastom* in MUP kindies, the following subsection ties this together with the preceding subsections.

#### *7.2.5 ECE Dilemmas Summary*

Taking the ideas derived from the Marching Rule movement, and the reification and codification of *kastom* in Makira, lasting effects remain strongly evident throughout Kahuan society. This in particular is a prominently related feature to the development of formal ECE: environments, curriculum, practices, and classroom ethos. For as Swatridge (1985:149-150) writes, “Education has been both a cargo cult – a road to European gnosis – and an antidote against the naïveté of cargoism.” Simultaneously to driving an educational means to financial ends linear progression belief, education has developed the critical consciousness of a nation to understand the ludicrousness of cargoist beliefs, post-WWII. However, possibly, the lasting effects of Marching Rule on *kastom* have remained obscured. Accordingly, locals continue to be subjected to chasing Anglo-American dreams (i.e. education = employment = material wealth) without realizing these origins to their ongoing intergenerational cultural decay, and as such, diminishing sense of cultural identity. Consequently, the second half of this chapter now turns back directly to understanding kindy sustainability in light of the ongoing “dilemmas” facing Kahuan ECE, and society.

### 7.3 Recrudescence of Sustainability

In recognition of the identified enduring significance of kastom in Kahua, despite its changing nature over time, brings one to address the question of how kindly sustainability is being influenced and can be improved. This comes in light of kindies being viewed as an avenue to instill kastom knowledge in children, yet severely noted challenges to their ongoing functioning. In a recrudescence to the issue of sustainability (Chapter 6), much of what became evident in the study of Kahua community-based kindergartens was their relevance to widely universal community program sustainability elements. As Mancini and Marek (2004) suggest in their model of community-base sustainability, these often include: leadership competence, understanding the community, demonstrating program results, strategic funding, staff involvement and integration, and program responsiveness. However, it is the *context-specificity to program functioning* that becomes of utmost significance in SI. Key components of ECE sustainability elements identified in this study are categorized below and expanded in Table 7.2.

- Program cultural fit;
- Local leadership and governing congruence with traditional hierarchical structures;
- Professional development augmented for remote contextual and cultural barriers; and
- Fundamental scaling-up of ongoing grassroots' awareness to bolster community ownership-acquisition. Markedly, to be in accordance with local learning styles and cognitive capacities to ensure widespread meaningful impacts.

**Table 7.2** Key Community-Based Kindy Sustainability Elements

| <b>Key Sustainability Elements</b>                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Outcomes</b>                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Understanding, Sensitivity, and Relevance to Local Context</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incorporation of vernacular language, traditional kastoms, and cultural leaders/elders</li> <li>▪ Safe and suitable infrastructure, preferably made of local bush materials and renewable resources (i.e. buildings, indoor/outdoor resources)</li> <li>▪ Program fit to local culture, needs, and resources available</li> <li>▪ Attractive and enticing program for both parents and children</li> <li>▪ Program responsivity to evolving context</li> <li>▪ Sufficient number of qualified staff from local regional context (native or long-residing)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Increased Program Sustainability: Cultural, Environmental, Financial, and Social.</b> |
| <b>High Level Community Support, Cooperation, and Ownership-Taking</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community-wide ECE awareness</li> <li>▪ Commitment to ECE agenda</li> <li>▪ Ongoing monitoring, yet support and trust in quality and effectiveness, of kindy and staff</li> <li>▪ Collaborative involvement in planning, development, implementation, and maintenance of program</li> <li>▪ Vision for supporting young children and their families through participation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                          |
| <b>Strong Competent Local Leadership</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community member who “champions” (Ball 2006) the vision, planning, and implementation of community-based kindy</li> <li>▪ Seeks political/organizational will to provide funding for trainings and programming</li> <li>▪ Encourages community support for making capital, and in kind, expenditures necessary for creating hard infrastructure and supporting operating funds and materials</li> <li>▪ Engages community members in design, maintenance, and use of program</li> <li>▪ Initiates and brokers relationships between home community and other communities/organizations/stakeholders</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                          |
| <b>Good Governance</b>                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dedication to sustaining both program and community vision for the future</li> <li>▪ Participation of traditional authoritative structures (e.g. chiefs)</li> <li>▪ Strong community-level organization and administration by kindy teachers, committee, and community leaders</li> <li>▪ Direct input by program staff (e.g. allocation of funds for manufactured resources)</li> <li>▪ Effective use of external networks, such as grassroots associations and other education sectors</li> <li>▪ Strategic funding, and/or support in kind, for kindy and teachers (short and long-term)</li> <li>▪ Between all levels stakeholders (i.e. provincial/national governments, NGOs, grassroots): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear shared vision</li> <li>• Clearly defined roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Effective collaboration</li> <li>• Effective open-communication</li> <li>• Coordination of short and long-term planning</li> <li>• Demonstration of program results</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |                                                                                          |
| <b>Support and Professional Development for Staff</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For kindy teacher and committee members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate appointment of locals to staff positions by community</li> <li>• Ongoing professional development, monitoring, and mentoring</li> <li>• Sufficient financial, or in kind, support to motivate, sustain, and retain</li> <li>• Confidence and leadership training to overcome cultural barriers (for both gendered teachers in garnering community-wide respect and support)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                          |

The above findings illuminate that community-based initiatives are influenced significantly by two distinct categories: 1) the local community and context (i.e. top two category rows in Figure 7.2) and 2) leading stakeholders (i.e. bottom three category rows in Figure 7.2). Of greatest significance across these stakeholder groups was found to be community *ownership-taking, awareness-building, cooperation-maintenance, and local “champions” for the ECE vision*. Without these elements, kindies are likely destined to suffer the consequences of community-disunity and ultimately unsustainability as grassroots endeavors, as reflected in MUP case study kindies. Most significant, as embedded throughout the key sustainability elements (Table 7.2) was the element of “champions.” This term was drawn from Ball’s (2006:97) research on Canadian First Nation ECE, which revealed “the significant and pervasive role played by a community member who ‘championed’ the vision, planning, and implementation of early childhood programs.” This is reflected in other research on the sustainability of community development initiatives, particularly for managing relationships between different levels of stakeholders (Community Solutions 2004). Notably, the researcher has chosen to not use the term *leader*, as is associated with one who stands before others in guiding a mission. Instead, here the term *champion of the ECE vision* is used, thus denoting a more Kahuan culturally-appropriate “driver” of a “collaborative vision.” As further evidenced by this study, in accordance with sustainability literature (Community Solutions 2004, Mancini and Marek 2004, Ball 2006), the notion of a competent “champion” is an element permeating most, if not all, facets of program sustainability. However, in contrast to many community-based groups/projects affected by similar sustainability challenges in MUP, the kindy appears to provide an alternative potentiality, when successfully supported by a “champion,” as explored below.

### *Potential of “Champions” for the Kindy Vision*

In this thesis, the term *intergenerational cultural decay* has been created and epitomized through the study of SI education systems and difficulties facing sustained community-based ECE. Extending this study to incorporate understandings from a broader literature, these SI education findings are closely linked with, and therefore can be further analyzed through, the *Golden Circle* theory (Sinek 2009). Drawing on concepts with marketing and biological underpinnings, Sinek’s theory revolves around the premise that all great inspirational people and organizations think, act, and communicate in a certain way. Simply, those thinking from the inside out about their work are far more successful leaders, or as here understood as “champions of the ECE vision.” This is as opposed to those who fail to inspire by attempting to communicate from the outside inwards. To understand this dichotomy, the theory is based on three simple questions: *why?*, *how?*, and *what?* The few people who are capable of inspiring address these questions in their “championing” beginning with “*why* they do what they do,” followed by “how they do it,” and “what they do.” As such, they begin with a purpose, cause, and/or belief – notably, not an end result. This is contrasted by those who fail to inspire by beginning in explanations of their work with “what they do” and “how they do it,” likely leaving out “*why*.” Based on this idea emerges the notion that people will not come to support what one does simply because they are told to do so. Instead, when people believe *why* they will be doing something, they will come to support it.

With support, and/or cooperation, identified as one of the greatest barriers to Kahua kindies’ functioning, this becomes critically important for comprehending program sustainability. Understanding the *why* emphasizes an intrinsic motivation in current support, and thus not merely motivation towards final outcomes. Such a concept is

challenged in Kahua where there is outward recognition by many people claiming, for example, that ‘when Blackman gets money, immediately he will go spend it,’ desiring instant gratification. This is contrasted by local perceptions of Whiteman, ‘who saves for the future.’ Nevertheless, this mentality is in transition, partially as influenced by Natives’ increasing understandings of financial planning for education.<sup>81</sup>

To explore Sinek’s theory more carefully, one can better understand it by situating it in the context specific example of successfully sustained kindies in Kahua. Of the few potential examples, based on the limited number of regularly functioning kindies in Kahua, most exemplary are the champion qualities of Headmaster Jephlet (first referenced - Chapter 6). He is the mastermind of the vision behind the long-standing independently-established and community-maintained kindy of Maniono community. Fundamental to the sustained success of this kindy has undeniably been his championing of the ECE vision. In a 2008 speech to kindy stakeholders, at the opening ceremony of a new kindy structure, he stated,

Our past failures do not bring us discouragement but an encouragement to see out mistakes and put things right. This school was not supported by any organization or government – it was started by our own concern and we find it hard sometimes to meet materials and support for our teachers. [But] let us promote manpower by using our power.

Jephlet began with a *belief* in supporting children’s development and preparation for primary school, without any formal understanding of ECE, such as taught through Field-Based Training. Subsequently, he has since been inspirational in championing, and thereby garnering, community-wide support for his shared vision. This example is expanded in the following vignettes contrasting two communities deeply affected by the Army Movement (first referenced - Chapter 4): Maniono (East Wainoni) and Narama (West Wainoni).

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<sup>81</sup> It is recognized that taking this Western-developed theory and attempting to apply it in a different context and culture does present dangers of uncritical transfers of ideas. However, reference here to the Golden Circle theory arose after conducting fieldwork; and as such, it is used to describe what was already observed, as opposed to driving observations and interpretations.

### *Case of Championing a Vision versus Segregating through Oppositional Beliefs*

On the surface level, Naramé and Maniono villages are quite similar. Both are comprised of Kahua people following the same traditions, cultural practices, and predominantly subsistence lifestyles. However, the effects of community-dividing beliefs over the Army Movement have developed significantly dissimilarly in each context, particularly as understood through the functioning of their community-based kindies. As referenced in Chapter 6, Maniono Kindy serves as an exemplar community-sustained kindy initiative within Kahua, since its establishment in the 1980s and independent ongoing functioning for the majority of the past three decades. Despite never having received external support, financially or through training, the masterminding of merely a sole inspirational champion has since spread throughout the community, based on his vision for supporting the preparation of young children for entry into primary school. Consequently, over the years, this has bolstered community-wide support, as well as neighboring communities' envy. Nevertheless, during the past few years, this has dramatically changed since the arrival and growth of beliefs in the Army Movement. While a portion of the community has believed in these ideas, the other portion has abstained. Thus has created a level of community-divide so severe that even the community church has been torn down until a "belief-consensus" can be achieved. With churches in Kahua serving as the center of communities, and a significant institution of social interactions, the demolition of Maniono church exemplified the demise of amicable daily interactions between these two opposing groups of villagers. This not only affected the quality of communal life, but it also undermined the Kahua Principles of respect and compassion for others. At the height of the divide, throughout the village, on a daily basis, opposing-belief villagers completely severed interactions with one another. They were further divided over no longer communing for church services and instead held private services in individual homes. During this time, the kindy provided the sole community building of significance for both groups of villagers. Therefore, despite the great segregation, the kindy remained the sole maintained unifying element of the community. As a result, the kindy can be credited with driving a community-reunification effort. While adults became estranged over deep-seated beliefs, uniting them has been an enduring commitment to their children's educational development. This has demanded community-wide cooperation in the preservation of a functioning kindy for the benefit of all children in the community. Even so, the reunification capacity of the kindy has been greatly challenged, wherein most regularly only mothers are involved in direct classroom interactions, along with a few fathers/grandfathers whom are teachers. This excludes men who have been some of the most divided within the village. Markedly, the kindy is contrasted by the primary school, which is located outside the village, and therefore predominantly the site of children/youth daily interactions but not the grounds of daily parental involvement. Nevertheless, slowly through the maintained mutual objective of children's development, community members have continued sharing a common belief and practical project (i.e. ECE), through which to begin rebuilding amicable community relations.

Dissimilarly, to Maniono community, Naramé community demonstrates a more deeply segregated village. This can be attributed to both the Army Movement and how it in turn has affected community support for vision champions over belief divisions. Contrasting to the championing of the former Naramé village chief, who had inspired great unity and communal willingness in his people, under the current "champion,"

disunity has grown to such a degree that people passing each other throughout the village withhold any acknowledgement. Such is similar, but to a greater degree, as observed in the aftermath of Maniono's Army Movement-incited division. This behavior is atypical to the norms of Kahua communal living and respect, which underpin the Kahua Principles.<sup>82</sup> Within Narama, the kindy resides in a small back portion of a community building, with extremely limited resources, solely brought down from the rafters by the teacher for children's use, yet not setup as a concretely functioning classroom. Contrary to most Kahua communities, this village does not have their own church, due to their proximity to the large Wainoni Mission Station, on which an Anglican church resides. With lacking community-wide unity in virtually any endeavor, the kindy deeply reflects this segregation with an inability to bolster community support for making kindy resources, regular attendance by children, or commitment to support/monitor/develop teachers. Consequently, for example, no teacher has regularly maintained commitment to the position or undergone formal training. Reflected in this are community individualist practices, such as demonstrated by those with the highest education levels, who have chosen to home-school their children and push them into early attendance at the nearest primary school (i.e. approximately thirty minute walk away, over difficult terrain for young children, requiring accompaniment of adult). As suggested by the highest achieving educated man residing in the village (i.e. partial completion of college), a private fee-based kindy must be established, thereby enforcing community support for those who desire a quality ECE for their children. This contradicts the essence of most community-based kindies, which have developed as communal projects, respectful of the different degrees of financial and in kind support different community-members are capable of contributing. Further, this conflicts with fundamental values of the Kahua Principles: sharing and compassion for others. Instead, preference has been suggested for a Western-approach to ECE, as in this particular instance is being modeled off of Western fee-based programs located in the national capital: Honiara.

Reflected in these vignettes of two Kahua kindies, as related to the Golden Circle theory, are differing championing styles, thereby inciting differing reactions from their communities in terms of support for their kindies. The Maniono headmaster led his village to share his belief in *why* to support the kindy and the village's young children. Contrastingly, in the absence of a champion for the community-based ECE vision coming from within the Narama Kindy, and lacking regard for the current village chief, the most educated man in the village assumed an uninspiring dictator role in driving his vision for ECE in the community. Markedly, his primary focus remained on his own young daughter's long-term educational achievement, albeit beginning with ECE. Yet,

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<sup>82</sup> Villagers from West Wainoni attribute part of these comparatively weaker communal interactions to a long-standing distinction between people from East and West Wainoni, despite nearly all being wantoks of Kahua and descendents of the two tribal lines: Atawa and Amea.

his attempts to merely tell the community “what to do” and “how” (i.e. suggesting a fee-based school, incongruent with local finances and cultural practices), failed to instill a vision for “*why*” they should come together in support of children through the kindy. Consequently, the community remains divided and the kindy is non-operational. Further emerging from these contrasting stories of division within communities, as reflected in their kindies, are numerous links between the capacities of community champions and other sustainability factors, as previously identified in this thesis.<sup>83</sup> Most significantly, this relates to the concept of *fellowship* – literally meaning “communion” with the intent of sharing, serving each other, and functioning together in striving towards a shared objective, such as education. This requires a commitment to the Kahua Principles of compassion for one another, thereby demanding accountability from one another. Applying this to a champion for the kindy, two contrasting approaches can be observed. First is the phrase in SI Pidgin, “Talem man, bi hem duim,” meaning that “if you tell a man to do something, he will.” This is contrasted by the Pidgin colloquial phrase, “Man talem duim,” meaning “do as you say.” In comparing the development of kindies in Maniono and Naramie, the former community most aligns with the revivment of fellowship and deep understanding of *why* community support is required. The latter community’s approach remains flawed without anyone willing to champion the vision, by setting an example. Instead, it remains segregated while blame and orders of responsibility are vocalized but not enacted.

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<sup>83</sup> The Golden Circle theory is not entirely clear-cut or congruent with Kahuan champions, where long-standing gender differences and societal positions continue to dictate community-regard for particular people who attempt to attain leadership positions. This includes lower regard for females in leadership positions and those who generally maintain their same societal level in the community despite attaining leadership roles.

### *Extended Application of Sustainability Elements*

To further extend the analytical discussion of the two kindies depicted in the above subsection, they concretely reflect additional research findings presented in the preceding chapters. As claimed in Chapter 4, church denomination further correlates with kindy sustainability based on community cooperation levels, in which South Seas Evangelical Church (SSEC) and Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) church communities were found to have the highest levels of community unity and cooperation. Therefore, in suggesting that vision championing that incorporates fellowship has been more successful, as exemplified in Maniono community, underlyingly can be linked with the community's SSEC denomination. Value in fellowship is fundamental to SSEC communities and their maintenance of a servant-champion model (Fangalasu'u 2003). This is contrasted by Narama, which is an Anglican community, and further affected by not having their own, central, community church. Additionally, linking with external influences driving development of education, illuminating comparisons can be drawn on the two communities differing contextual factors. Maniono, being an inland bush community, with poorly fertile land, emphasizes the significance of education as primary means to counter strained subsistence resources under growing population pressures.

Contrastingly, Narama, a coastal village much closer to markets in the provincial capital (Kirakira), as well as numerous villagers owning land along the fertile banks of the Warihito River (i.e. conducive of growing an abundance of the cash crop cocoa), has a lucrative alternative to formal education. Therefore, while Narama community has experienced a greater transition into a cash-based economy, education, and as such support for the kindy, has featured less prominently amongst villagers.

#### **7.4 Concluding Analytical Discussion Remarks**

In concluding this analytical discussion, emphasizing the researcher's understanding of key cumulative findings, sans participants, a few themes emerged. Firstly identified were the lasting historical influences on kindy program sustainability, when analyzed with regard to present-day program cultural appropriateness. Accordingly, the researcher has deduced that the present cultural-specificity in Kahuan ECE, in its often objectified tokenistic implementation, can be traced back to Marching Rule and the subsequent unification of disparate cultural groups though *kastom*. Recognition of this is essential when thinking of intergenerational cultural maintenance, as deemed necessary for communal efforts to support the vision for community-based ECE. Thus is why despite identifying the significance of community awareness, ownership, and support/cooperation as critical to program sustainability, ultimately these can be addressed through community-members stepping-up to champion the ECE vision for their community. These progressively building ideas will be more definitively and comprehensively addressed in the following chapter (8) through the final Discussion and Conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 8: Discussion and Conclusion – Drawing on the Past, Giving Rise to the Future**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Throughout this thesis there has been a depiction of the post-colonial landscape of early childhood education (ECE) in the Solomon Islands (SI). Building on previous research, this study has continued to illustrate how Western values, attitudes, and objectives permeate present-day Solomon Islander life, and likewise how colonial knowledge and practices particularly persist in dominating Pacific regional education. Within Pacific small island nations, the extent to which these colonial influences have become internalized is clear throughout all levels of society. This presents a barrier for SI ECE with regard to the transformation, or rejection, of these external influences in favor of a locally desired incorporation of traditional beliefs and practices, as relevant to local contexts and cultures. Furthermore, with regard to neocolonialism, previously colonized nations that are now independent continue to be bound to colonial rule, either voluntarily or through necessity, largely as realized through education. Puamau (1999) writes that relatively little change occurs to education systems after nations gain their independence, which she argues is one of the most insidious elements of this neocolonialism. Later, she writes,

In the case of the Pacific, educational apparatuses can be described as hegemonic because once structures such as curriculum assessment and school organization become entrenched and institutionalized, they have a totalizing effect on society.

(Puamau 2005:4)

As institutionalized education saturates the perceptions of a society, so too it often becomes desired by parents for their children. Such was found to be the reality presently affecting the development of education in SI, however not yet widespread for ECE, and therefore spurred this study's focal research question:

What factors have influenced the cultural and contextual sustainable development of Kahua community-based ECE?

In taking a sociocultural-ecological perspective throughout this study to address the above research question, this incorporated a wide breadth of information. Notably, through researching the ecological environment, this also gave significance to historical underpinnings of present-day society. The abundance of issues addressed in this thesis were of great significance in order to trace how historical foundations have given rise to present factors affecting kindies. Key research findings have suggested five overarching elements influencing kindergarten sustainability: presence of “*champion*” for the ECE vision; community ownership-taking, awareness-building, and cooperation-maintenance; and program cultural/contextual sensitivity and relevance. These elements were found to be strongly linked with an intergenerational cultural decay in the Kahua region, as will be conceptualized in this chapter through a model of Cyclically-Sustained Kindergarten Mediocrity.

In concluding this thesis, firstly, this chapter will revisit the educational foundations to the research, as well as review the overall study. Subsequently, it will progress to a discussion inclusive of reflections on the research methodology and cumulative findings. Finally, concluding sections will identify present practical recommendations arising from the findings, identify key limitations of the study, and end with future research directions from where this thesis leaves off.

## **8.2 Thesis Foundations**

### *8.2.1 Revisiting Educational Issues in Context*

Within the Pacific, the past forty years of educational reform have been regarded by Indigenous scholars as largely a failure in what donors and governments have provided. This is particularly with regard to insufficient quality human resources to achieve

development goals, in addition to a lingering vagueness of the vision for Pacific education and the purposes it aims to fulfill.

Education reforms have remained largely fixated on improving various aspects of the quantification of education, but there has been little questioning of the values and assumptions underpinning formal education or development.

(Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, and Benson 2002:1)

Furthermore, with regard to ECE research, internationally, generally this has focused on outcomes, instead of emphasis being placed on ECE as a process and/or cultural tool. As argued elsewhere (Burman 2001, Kincheloe 2000, MacNaughton 2005), ECE is at risk of,

...inadvertent complicity in a neoliberal imperialist agenda to secure and expand the hegemony of individualist, often European-heritage, positivist values, goals, and pedagogies in early learning and development.

(Ball 2010:3)

Likewise, within Pacific Forum island nations, education scholars have deemed it critically important to rethink education in context in response to the lasting regional colonial legacy (Thaman 1998, Daiwo 2001, Foote and Bennet 2004, Puamau 2005). Therefore, in recognition that culture is continuously evolving, space must be left by practitioners/policymakers/villagers to continually reflect on and revise approaches to, and goals for, ECE. Arguably, this should be inclusive of locals' own evolving "images" and not merely an absence of choice, such as in an image of middle-class Anglo-American English-speaking cultural constructions of the child. Having resituated the contextual educational foundations to this research, the following subsection reviews how these issues informed this study.

### *8.2.2 Reviewing the Study*

The researcher approached this study as an educationalist, not an anthropologist, which emphasizes the immense cultural nuances of the thesis naturally arising and not merely her prime focus going into the study. Nevertheless, what did become apparent through

extensive participant-observations, interviews, and focus groups were local desires and efforts towards cultural revitalization. These were realized through SI ECE policy, curriculum, practices, and Kahuan verbalized aspirations for young children.

Throughout the thesis, this has been underlined and contrasted by illusionary claims of “developmentally best practices” and uncritical international transfers of ECE policies and practices, as spurred by the dominant Western-based ECE research community.

This begs the question, in order to address community-based ECE program sustainability, “Are practitioners/policymakers/villagers capable of creating sustainable culturally-sensitive and contextually-based foundations to ECE programs?” And in doing so, “Whose cultural values and methods should drive the development of children and transmissions of knowledge?” Findings from this study have suggested that while it is achievable to create sustained contextually-relevant ECE in line with local values and incorporation of traditional approaches to learning, such is challenged by numerous barriers.

The main focus of this study lay in the cultural relevance of ECE programs, in the context of rural Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP) communities, with particular significance for small island developing nations and community-based programs.

However, in order to understand this formal educational environment, which plays a considerably limited role in children’s lives, it was necessary to analyze it in comparison to other prominent community-based early learning microenvironments. Therefore, the study examined traditional approaches to early learning across a variety of microenvironments and the corresponding teaching/learning strategies of rural Kahuans/Makirans. To achieve this, the researcher explored these varied contexts to understand participant interactions, and as such, raise elements of contextual and cultural

dissonance between diverse contexts and approaches to ECE. From this, factors were identified as influencing the sustained development and functioning of community-based ECE (i.e. kindergartens). Overarching to this, the researcher aspired to maintain the integrity of Kahuan culture through an ongoing emphasis on working collaboratively with the Kahua people and incorporation of the Kahua Principles. Nevertheless, although the study focused on local knowledge whilst in the field, ultimately, in exploring, analyzing, and making recommendations about community-based ECE in SI, the researcher was concerned with working between knowledge systems. This included dominant Western-orientated literature and traditional SI wisdom and practices. Ultimately, the study was able to identify challenges facing, and supports enhancing, the development and maintenance of community-based kindergartens in MUP. Most significantly, this research was deemed of critical importance since the enactment of the SI 2008 national policy requiring all children's attendance in kindergarten for three years before entering primary school (MEHRD 2008).

The following discussion section will explore how this study's methodological choices addressed the above challenges within ECE research, which will subsequently be reflected on in a discussion of the research findings.

### **8.3 Hekarigi (Discussion) of Cumulative Findings<sup>84</sup>**

#### *8.3.1 Extension of Kahua Principles to Discussion and Analysis*

Originating from the Kahua Principle of *hekarigi*, meaning discussion, this section finds its title, focus, and continued thread as woven throughout the thesis, designed to embody a Kahuan cultural approach. Here, this is extended to discussing the overarching

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<sup>84</sup> This discussion incorporates collaborative ideas arising during the research, as reflected in this section title, and notably also one of the Kahua Principles: *hekarigi*.

research findings, as realized through extension of the Kahua Principles. In keeping with the Kahua people's underlying cultural practices of deep *respect*, as here reflected by a collaborative research approach (i.e. design, data collection/documentation, preliminary analysis, findings sharing), the following were incorporated by the researcher throughout the study, including in this final discussion and conclusion:

- Hemakuani - *care* in respecting participant intellectual property included in study;
- Hekarigi - inclusive of *dialogue* between researcher and SI stakeholders regarding emergent data and findings;
- Herongogi - *asking/suggesting* as opposed to telling of findings/recommendations for verification and edification; and
- Hemoti - *sharing* overall findings.

For the duration of the research and analysis process, these Kahua Principles provided an ongoing strand. Increasingly it became apparent, as presented by the Kahua people, that the cultural erosion of these societal guidelines is having direct ramifications on community-based initiatives and cooperation as a whole. Therefore, not only was their incorporation and exploration of significance in the design and implementation of the study, but also, as will be illuminated in the following sections, the Kahua Principles arose as key program sustainability factors themselves.

### 8.3.2 Reflections on Indigenous Research Collaborations

To begin this discussion, it is important to briefly reflect on the research methodology and design implemented. Throughout the study, the researcher maintained an interpretive-hermeneuticist perspective through a belief that knowledge cannot be perceived in isolation, but rather within a context, such as that which one already knows. Such a belief raised challenge with regard to the researcher's non-Indigenous background, and as such, the lenses she could use when conducting this study.

Nevertheless, through implementing an *ethnographically-inspired collaborative research approach*, she determined that this allowed for an integrated critical consciousness-raising, from both internal and external participants' perspectives. Gallagher (1992:70) writes, with regard to learning, that "we simply bring forward the parts that we are familiar with so as to illuminate the part that requires understanding." This is based on the assumption that new knowledge is conditioned by prior learning. As such, the incorporation of different stakeholders' perspectives, seen through different lenses based on their prior developed knowledges, is believed to have enriched the diversity of findings obtained and presented in this thesis. Accordingly, the researcher believed that any Solomon Islander had the capacity to significantly and authentically contribute to the study. This is particularly important to recognize with regard to how it shaped the research design, theoretical foundations, and participants' contributions. Consequently, it was viewed as liberating to alternative epistemologies and research approaches, as reflected in the wealth of locals' voices integrated, which was made possible through the variety of methods implemented. Clammer (2005:113) elucidates,

The concept of culture is transformed under the impact of globalization in diverse ways. While the hybridity of actually existing cultures has to be recognized, it is also true that globalization both triggers off the search for the authentic or indigenous (the "local") and forces (or should force) our explanatory framework to encompass but then to move beyond a language of post-colonialism and Eurocentricity into a fresh paradigm where the multicentered nature of the world is grasped and with it the complex, subtle, and contradictory flows of "cultures" (themselves already hybridized), and in which representations do not flow only in one direction, but are refracted, mirrored, partial, and kaleidoscopic.

In accordance with the quote above, such was recognized by the researcher and reflected in her methodologically-synergistic research approach.

In beginning to move towards discussion of research findings, inevitably the study had a significant impact on the thoughts surrounding ECE of the Kahua people. This was

largely based on the researcher's mere presence,<sup>85</sup> notwithstanding her efforts to conduct a collaborative study. In the simplest forms, this could be seen in communities' last minute efforts to improve their kindies before her arrival, such as sewing a new kindy house roof. On numerous occasions, more powerful effects were also observed. Such included participants' emotional reactions after participating in interviews and focus group discussions in reflection on the detriments of lacking community cooperation required to sustain a quality community-based kindy. Some participants even broke down into tears from personal realizations of the potentially detrimental effects their communities were creating by not "better supporting" their young children's development/learning. Markedly, these were merely personal participant realizations, during which the researcher maintained an impartial approach, guarding against imposing her outsider views on local research related issues. Further, it is important to note that such reactions, based on deep meaningful involvement in the study by participants, was likely made possible as a result of critical consciousness-raising collaborative research activities. Additionally, this can partially be attributed to ongoing rapport built by the researcher with participating villages over the course of two years.

As initially claimed in Chapter 3, the mere implementation of this study in and of itself had outcomes, outside of those presented in the findings chapters (4-7). These were inclusive of, but not restricted to, the building of local capacity to support research, development of local knowledge regarding young children, and provocation of participants' thoughts on future ECE planning and practice. Such accomplishments were made possible through the design and implementation of the ethnographically-inspired

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<sup>85</sup> The researcher was a female Caucasian outsider to remote SI communities. Locals understood that she was a student at a prestigious international university and interested in studying ECE. Further, her research naturally served as instigator of deeper thinking regarding the lives/education/learning/development/culture of young children in Kahua.

collaborative research approach. Additionally, key successful elements identified in the implementation of this particular approach included:

- Facilitated identification of symptomatic barriers rather than focusing on alleviating causes;
- Necessitated understanding research from Indigenous perspectives to accommodate context and culture appropriate research processes and practical outcomes;
- Reciprocity and rapport strongly built with all research stakeholders, capitalizing on each person's strengths;
- Emphasized context and culture sensitivity to guard against inappropriate uncritical transfers of incongruent ideas and practices; and
- Critical consciousness-raising activity, regarding ECE, for all involved. Accordingly, often served as instigator of ownership-taking once study was complete, based on greater local involvement in the process, to drive future development.

In light of these methodological decisions, this chapter now turns to the final discussion of how they gave rise to the overarching research findings.

### *8.3.3 Recapitulation of Key Research Findings*

At the essence of program development is sustainability, particularly once external supporting bodies withdraw their assistance and local communities must assume greater responsibility for ownership over their own programs. Ultimately, sustainable development is that which meets the present needs of humans without compromising future generations' abilities to meet their own needs (WCED 1987), as here emphasized culturally and contextually. Such was observed in this study, through Kahua community-based kindies. As explored in the preceding findings chapters, this required accounting for many practical elements and obstacles to kindy development. To address these, essentially program sustainability demands the integration of research, practical implementation, and varying perspectives (i.e. Majority/Minority World) in knowledge

across an entire spectrum of stakeholders. Such is reflected in this thesis' shift from more traditional education research to that which incorporated more collaborative, exploratory, and demand-driven approaches. What follows in this subsection is a cumulative overview of the key research findings.

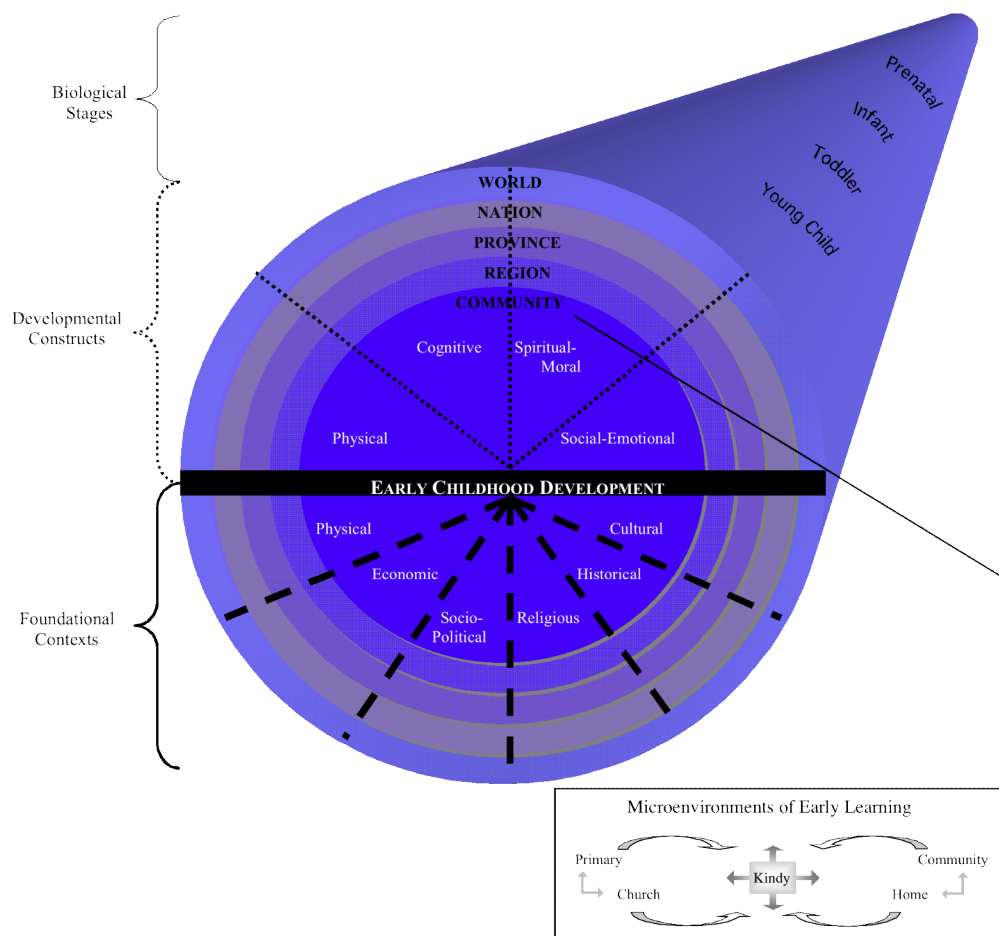
### *Cumulative Findings: Overview*

Firstly, it is important to reiterate the researcher-identified cultural significance of kindies, as presented throughout the thesis:

- Reinvigorate community unity and cooperation;
- Develop intrinsic value for education/learning throughout communities;
- Instill local cultural and traditional values and practices in children;
- Prepare children for transitions between varied early childhood learning microenvironments;
- Create an educational environment that values local culture to develop the local cultural and contextual identity of children, who will eventually become the leaders of Kahua communities and kindies; and
- Increase education program sustainability by raising stakeholders' involvement in program development, implementation, and maintenance.

In theoretically conceptualizing the above kindy features, along with findings from Chapters 4-7, this led the researcher to reflect on their theoretical foundations. This was achieved through the revision of the researcher's model of "Context-Based Holistic ECCD [Early Childhood Care and Development]," as originally presented in Chapter 2. In accordance with the theoretical standpoint that the cultural milieu in which a child resides will determine his/her preferences of learning approaches, this raises the significance of understanding the varied microenvironments in which young children learn. In this study, this in turn allowed for better understanding of how the kindy incorporated elements from other microenvironments to support children's holistic

development. Figure 8.1 concretely depicts the addition of the ECE microenvironments in this study to the model. As explored in Chapter 5, the identified microenvironments (i.e. kindy, primary, church, home, and community) are to be understood through the three components of the Developmental Niche (Super and Harkness 1986) and their corresponding attributes: physical/social settings, customs of teaching children, and psychology of teachers.



**Figure 8.1** Extended Model: “Context-Based Holistic Early Childhood Care and Development” in Kahua

As depicted in Figure 8.1, within the immediate context of the child (i.e. the “Community”), the model has been extended to include the “Microenvironments of Early Learning,” in the context of Kahua. These microenvironments are presented as framed around the “kindy,” yet depicted to represent their community-wide interactive

nature. Most significantly, this raises the potential of the kindy as “hook and hub” for other community efforts and awareness building. For example, such has been exemplified in this thesis through the case of the kindy serving as community-reuniting context and factor counteracting Army Movement-instigated village divisions (Chapter 7). This thereby demonstrates the kindy’s challenge in being sustained while also being fundamental to bolstering community cohesion, capable of sustaining unity and fellowship, and therefore cycling back as greater kindy sustainability in return.

Moving on specifically to Kahua kindies, on the surface level, correlating with the 2008 enacted national ECE policy mandating kindy as prerequisite for primary school, kindy enrollment rates were found to be increasing. Correspondingly, increases were found in the number of kindies, thereby raising enrollment and attendance rates by decreasing travel and distance barriers for children. However, while classroom age distribution was found to be consolidating, to the span of three to five year olds in accordance with attendance policy, teachers were found to have remained overly burdened with “observer” children under age three. This was often associated with parental misconceptions of kindy as childcare, as well as the freedom that children have to move throughout the openness of communities.

More careful examination of the current state of Kahua kindies revealed three broad themes of significance for understanding program sustainability. Due to the nature of the research questions, and data generated, these themes represent concepts that span across the thesis’ seven supplementary research questions, yet cumulatively contribute to understanding the overarching research question (Section 1.6). Namely, these include

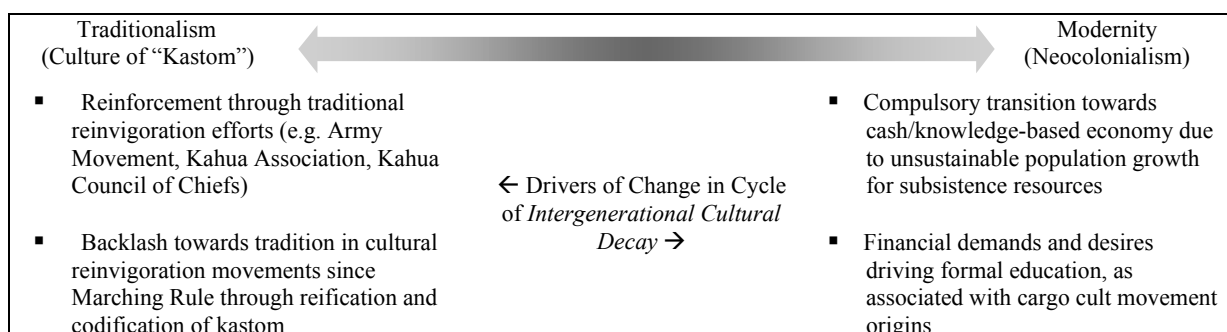
*historical context* influences and *cultural* influences, which then lead into factors found to be affecting *sustained kindy functioning*.

### Historical Context Influences

The following two historical points were deemed particularly influential to kindy programs:

- Lasting legacy of *external dependency mentality* for driving perceived internal entitlements, including education and material wealth, as originated with missionary education, colonization, and cargo cults / Marching Rule.
- Historic origins of unrealistic educational expectations based on a linear progression belief of education directly leading to employment, and as such monetary/material wealth.

With regard to the above points, essentially, kindies were found to be challenged by the cyclical evolution of Kahuan society between traditionalism and modernity, as presented below in Figure 8.2.



**Figure 8.2** Spectrum of Kahuan Development.

### Cultural Influences

Building on historical context influences, the following cultural elements were also found to be highly influential on kindy programs:

- Growing individualistic development aspirations, consequently driving destruction of "wantok system" (traditionally obligatory kinship ties), thereby precluding communal efforts necessary for sustained kindy functioning.

- Cultural dissonance in championing styles, with persistent challenges to both sharing and acceptance of knowledge/information from those deemed to be on the same societal level. Additionally hindered by a cultural tendency to keep information to oneself based on the possibility that someone else may be more knowledgeable.
- Mystical development mentality, where societal improvements are thought to be “deserved deliveries” from external sources/supporters, as opposed to internally-driven/initiated.

### Sustained Kindy Functioning

The above historical context and cultural influences give rise to understanding program sustainability barriers. Prominent barriers identified include:

- Teacher/parent/child/community **ongoing commitment** in support of kindy;
- **Geographical/environmental obstacles** preventing safe travel to/from kindy; and
- Declining parent/community **support** over time for teachers, sufficient resource-making, and classroom maintenance.

Subsequently, below are factors identified as significantly associated with kindy functioning:

- Length of **time** since establishment, and/or length of operation, whereby functioning was found to waver as community/parents/teachers’ commitment dwindled over time.
- Level of **autonomy**, and as such ownership-taking, in which communities with greater independence in the establishment and maintenance of kindies were associated with higher functioning rates. Contrastingly, significant external support was found to breed dependency, and therefore less local ownership-taking.
- Teacher **commitment** was found not to be strongly correlated with teacher salary or education/training levels achieved. However, in the long-term, with increasing pressures on subsistence lifestyles, insufficient financial or in kind support is increasingly becoming inhibitive.
- Ease of alternative means to **financial** income generation (e.g. cash crops, logging), whereby communities generally placed less significance on education where alternative routes to achieve material desires were present. Correspondingly, literacy levels were less indicative of kindy sustainability, whereby communities with lower educations and fewer income generating activities placed higher priority on, and offered greater support for, education.

- **Religion** (church denomination), and as such levels of community fellowship and cohesion, were associated with fostering more sustainable initiatives. This was generally based on higher communal cooperation in South Seas Evangelical Church and Seventh-Day Adventist communities, as opposed to Roman Catholic and Anglican communities.

Most significant of factors identified as capable of supporting/fostering a communal environment more facilitative of sustained community initiatives included:

- **Community values:** strong community fellowship/cooperation/unity/social capital.
- **Cultural maintenance:** reverence and abidance by traditional values (i.e. Kahua Principles and ramata), underlain by love (compassion for others), respect, sharing, and cooperation.
- **Community awareness:** increased awareness of community's role in supporting ECE and kindy (as delivered by external experts), which in turn was found to increase community ownership-taking of such initiatives.

The following subsection extends these key findings to a more overarching level, with the modeling of “Cyclically-Sustained Kindy Mediocrity.”

#### *Cycle of Sustained Kindy Mediocrity*

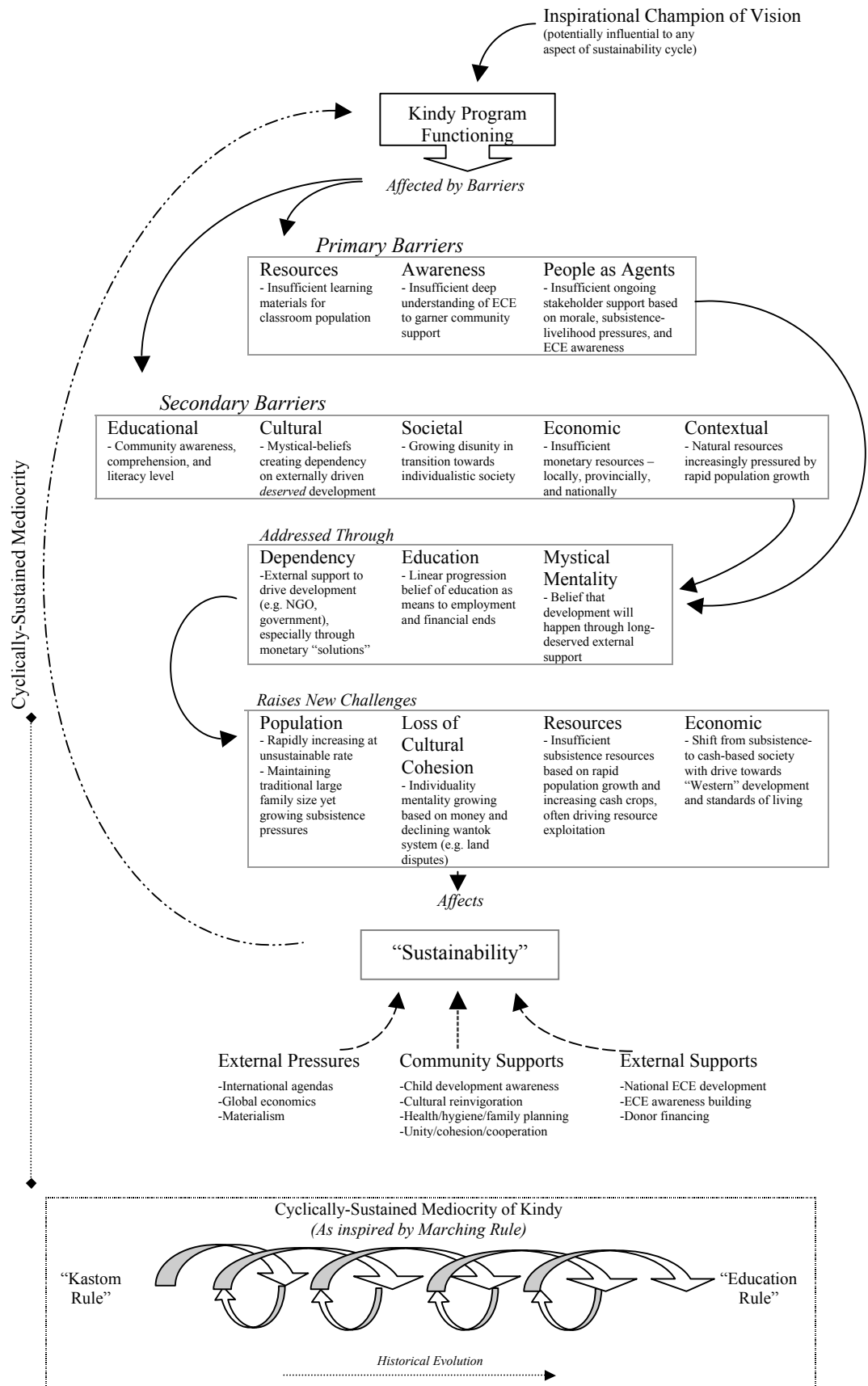
On a spectrum of communal kastom, the educational program functioning within villages was found to be highly reflective of communities' cultural evolution, such as traditional maintenance or reinvigoration, with regard to the Kahua Principles. As such, Kahuan tradition and cultural sustainability were associated with villagers functioning together through fellowship. Authentic fellowship, as motivated by the Kahua Principle of *love* for one another, demands accountability to one another, and as such facilitates program sustainability. While these concepts were previously discussed in the comparative examples of community support for kindies in Chapter 7, below they are more broadly summarized in a model of *Cyclically-Sustained Kindy Mediocrity* (Figure 8.3). Markedly, this model, and associated terminology, marks a significant contribution

to knowledge by the researcher, with both practical and theoretical relevance.

Embedded within it are elements inclusive of findings applicable to each supplementary research question, while cumulatively it addresses the thesis' overarching research question (Section 1.6, Table 8.1).

**Table 8.1** Research Questions Addressed through “Cycle of Sustained Kindy Mediocrity”

| Abridged Research Questions                                                  | “Cycle of Sustained Kindy Mediocrity”<br>Applicable Model Element Headings |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. ECE microenvironments                                                     | “Cyclically-Sustained Mediocrity of Kindy”                                 |
| 2. Culture’s influence on kindy                                              | “Cyclically-Sustained Mediocrity of Kindy”                                 |
| 3. Kahuan ECE epistemologies and kindy involvement                           | “Addressed Through,” “Raises New Challenges,” and “Community Supports”     |
| 4. Community characteristics affecting kindy sustainability                  | “Primary Barriers”                                                         |
| 5. Non/Governmental influences on kindy                                      | “External Supports”                                                        |
| 6. Historical influences on kindy                                            | “Secondary Barriers”                                                       |
| 7. Western-based ECE influences on kindy                                     | “External Pressures”                                                       |
| Overarching Question: Factors influencing sustainable development of kindies | Entire model of “Cycle of Sustained Kindy Mediocrity”                      |



**Figure 8.3** Cycle of Sustained Kindy Mediocrity (in Kahua).

Kindy sustainability on the wide-scale is currently not being achieved in Kahua, which in this thesis has been associated with what has been termed “Cyclically-Sustained Kindy Mediocrity.” As depicted in Figure 8.3, this is based on a variety of key primary (i.e. *Resources, Awareness, and People as Agents*) and secondary (i.e. *Educational, Cultural, Societal, Economic, and Contextual*) kindy sustainability barriers (identified in Chapter 6), which build upon one another, as well as are externally influenced. Also, in this figure, are elements suggested as being implemented (i.e. *Dependency Building, Education Furthering, and a Mystical Mentality to Development*), which appear to be further raising a new set of challenges. Eventually these factors bare on one another and return back into ECE program sustainability, thereby perpetuating challenges to the sustained functioning of kindies. In this study, this model demonstrates that as stakeholders continue to address challenges throughout the cycle, albeit incompletely, efforts of “mediocrity” are exerted. Therefore, these efforts are not actually eliminating program sustainability barriers, but instead are simply delaying their effects on the kindy. Within this cycle, cultural and societal values are often in countermotions, pulling between kastom ruling (i.e. traditionalism) and formalized education (i.e. modernity) taking precedence. This is not to imply that kindy sustainability is unachievable without following this progression and fully eliminating all barriers. However, in general, the model can serve as a representation of typical Kahua community-based kindy unsustainability. Nevertheless, it is recognized that particular factors can dramatically augment, or counteract, these proposed sustainable development progressions. Most notably, “champions for the ECE vision” have been attributed to successful kindy counter-examples, despite looming sustainability barriers, such as explored through the Golden Circle theory (Chapter 7). Therefore, with ongoing local and external reinvestment (culturally in kind, as opposed to financial), periods of locally sustained support can be instigated, particularly under an inspirational vision champion. Yet, without

internally inspired belief as to *why* whole community support is necessary, inspiration and understanding from within remote communities is arguably unachievable and thus a state of *cyclically-sustained mediocrity* will likely be maintained. Such is often reflected in the following chain of events example:

→ *Education = external benefits = employment = material wealth*

→ *Brief periods of sustained education support until quicker means-ends realized = cash crops*

→ *Lack of education = insufficient traditional and Western thinking capacity =  
irreversible detrimental effects in exploitation of natural resources*

Contrastingly, in the local Kahua expression of “having a heart for community,” those who have a deep internal belief in the communal good of their family and/or community will continue striving towards local development despite barriers. Such is represented by a champion for the ECE vision. Accordingly, those who are merely committed to the financial ends of education quickly give up “advancing” the quality of life for their wantoks, while those who truly understand *why* they are doing something aside from the final outcome, often pursue alternative paths.

#### *Cumulative Findings: Summary*

From the above discussion of cumulative research findings, four overarching principles to sustainability arise: *Champion for the ECE Vision, Ownership-Taking, Awareness-Building, and Cooperation-Maintenance*. Ultimately, these principle factors are embedded in the concepts of social (program and culture) sustainability through cultural capital. Taking Bordieu’s (1986) conceptualization of social capital, he includes the actual or potential resources residing in one’s social network and the ability of the individual to mobilize these resources. Individual outcomes, such as educational attainment, have clearly been correlated with social capital; yet, currently, there is limited evidence of the role of social capital (individual and community levels) enhancing child and program outcomes

(Janssens, Van der Gaag, and Gunning 2004). Growing evidence (Tennent, Farrel, and Tayler 2005), as reinforced through findings in this study, suggests that communities high in social capital provide children with the resources, supports, and role models that can contribute to positive academic outcomes and sustained education programs. This is evidenced by strong social and information networks, feelings of trust, clear-cut norms and expectations, perceptions of stability, and community participation. Furthermore, as reflective of Mancini and Marek's (2004) identified elements of community-based program sustainability, this study showed improved kindy sustainability as associated with inspired competent vision champions, effective collaboration, community understanding and culture/competency-sensitive awareness, staff involvement and morale, and program responsiveness to the local context. Although not the focus of this study, also recognizable elements suggested as influencing ECE program sustainability, in accordance with Mancini and Marek's research (ibid), are programs that demonstrate positive effects from communities' support and strategic funding. This has been suggested by the researcher in this study to eventually be necessary in the long-term sustainability of SI kindies.

#### *8.3.4 Hekarigi Concluding Summary*

This study began with an a priori assumption that local knowledge is potentially valuable, which provided justification for the collaborative nature of the research. Consequently, this facilitated the exploration and understanding that what has been developing in the SI, as exemplified in Kahua, is not predominantly a knowledge-based society. Instead, arguably, a knowledge-based economy was found to be developing, which in turn is driving a growing cash-based society, with a narrowly circumscribed range of externally adopted educational program possibilities. As a result, this is leading to contextual and cultural incongruences greatly challenging community-based ECE program sustainability.

Neoliberal constructions of this developing knowledge-based economy raise a dystopian perspective with regard to educational discourses typically focusing on economic advancement as a primary objective. This lacks recognition often given to locals' beliefs and values within context, as opposition to purely viewing knowledge as mere information and skills.

Further arising from this study, as counteragent to an intergenerational (traditional) cultural decay in MUP, the kindy was found to hold much potential to serve as cultural reinvigorator by reuniting communities in the shared objective of supporting community-wide children's futures through formal ECE. However, not only was the kindy found to be severely challenged by numerous barriers in maintaining regular program functioning, the very foundational sustainability of the kindy itself was found to be largely dependent on this cultural reinvigoration, and as such, maintenance of local traditional values. Through a revitalization of key cultural values and practices, as rooted in the Kahua Principles, future generations could better be able to continue embodying the fundamental local values of respect, fellowship, love, and compassion for others, as locally deemed necessary to maintain a harmonious Kahuan society. To achieve this, the researcher identified the need for inspirational local championing and context/competence-sensitive awareness building. This was deemed necessary to drive community cooperation and local ownership-taking to support kindergarten functioning, and correspondingly culturally-oriented program sustainability.

Also observed in this study, the kindy was found to be capable of moving from solely a child-focused program to one facilitative of community-wide enlightenment. Consequently, this is further indirectly reinvigorating local traditional cultural values and beliefs, at least

on the surface level. Underlying these findings and potential suggestions for future sustainability are deeply rooted historical turning points regarding Natives' beliefs about learning and education. Most significantly, these are suggested to have altered local perceptions in collaboratively exploring these research issues, as well as provided augmented views with which non-native researchers approach the specific research contexts of the South Pacific, and Melanesia in particular. Educational researchers have traditionally faced a problem of analyzing the globalization of education not from the perspective of belief but that of imposition. Tracing societal changes, largely derived from colonization and the enforcement of Western development ideologies, has frequently been analyzed through such imposition in many post-/neocolonial arguments. However, in this study, through incorporation of these traditional conceptions with those possible through Indigenous collaborations, significant sustainability elements linked with local beliefs were illuminated. Relating this to ECE sustainability in Kahua, there has been a shift in what were once deeply held beliefs, enacted through daily lived-experiences, replaced by the codification of *kastom*. Through this, much of what was largely understood as the ways of traditional cultural practices (i.e. rationales not outcomes) have been replaced by mere understandings of their basic execution (i.e. what and how) as traditionally practiced by their ancestors. As experienced in the uniting of disparate tribal groups and unification of their cultures during Marching Rule, in the face of anticipated invasions, a similar reaction can be observed in the desire to once again strengthen culture. This was found to be locally evident in ECE policy, programming, and verbalized aspirations for young children. The institutional *unifying agents*, or “servants” with regard to fellowship, to achieve such ECE programs can be realized through the Kahua Association (KA) and Kahua kindies. With regard to the KA, as it struggles to demonstrate itself as a viable, beneficial, and active agent in the development of Kahua, its role in driving cultural reinvigoration is challenged.

Nevertheless, as increasingly the KA builds the capacity to practically influence and initiate locally defined development in Kahua, it could become a key stakeholder in ECE through serving as a regional champion for the ECE vision. The KA could achieve this by becoming a more practically active regional unifying organization. Contrastingly, the kindy itself currently presents a more viable avenue to intergenerational cultural knowledge maintenance, as dependent on its sustainability as a program. In light of these overarching research findings, the second half of this chapter will now progress to the concluding sections of this thesis.

## **8.4 Concluding Elements**

In concluding this thesis, the following subsections will address the researcher's contributions to the field of knowledge, recommendations of the study, limitations of the research, and final concluding remarks.

### *8.4.1 Contributions to Field of Knowledge*

This study offers a number of contributions to a variety of fields of knowledge. Foremost, it extends the paucity of research on indigenous community-based ECE in rural communities of the developing world, particularly small island developing states (e.g. Veramo 1984, Watson-Gegeo 1992, Morton 1996, Guild 2000, Daiwo 2001).<sup>86</sup> This was significantly realized through the development of concepts including the model of *Cyclically-Sustained Kindy Mediocrity* and the *Intergenerational Cycle of Cultural Decay*. More specifically, based on Kahua as a case study, the research contributes to the literature in understanding how community characteristics have affected the cultural and contextual sustainability of indigenous community-based ECE (Swadener, Kabiru, and Njenga 1997;

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<sup>86</sup> This is not to suggest that broad generalizations can be drawn from this research; however, in theoretical terms it has relevant implications. This may also be extended to some "fourth world" indigenous community-based early childhood programming.

Ball and Pence 2006), how such programs have reinforced local knowledge and goals for children's early learning (Flinn 1992, Ninnes 1995, Fleeer 2003), and how they have reproduced local cultural approaches to learning (Rogoff 2003, Nsamenang 2006). Accordingly, this provides an alternative example to the international transfer of Western-based ECE programs by exploring how those in MUP have been integrated with local traditional early learning beliefs and practices.

In generating the above contributions to the field of knowledge, this study also contributes to the growing application of the Developmental Niche framework for conceptualizations of different aspects in children's developmental pathways, as determined by culturally-structured landscapes.<sup>87</sup> Traditionally research in psychology has emphasized measuring individual differences (e.g. children's cognitive functioning), and historically anthropology's contribution has been of more detailed subjective accounts of cultures (e.g. children's socialization). In contrast, this study's interdisciplinary approach integrated both the cultural regulation of early childhood learning and the cultural beliefs and practices that shape the microenvironments in which learning transpires.

With regard to ECE, this study serves as both historical documentation of this point in time about early childhood in Kahua, and contributes to the very limited empirical research on ECE in SI. Aside from general statistics collected by the government and NGOs about children throughout the nation, the only other formal studies of ECE have been two theses conducted in the 90s: one about field-based teacher training (notably conducted by the first SI woman to obtain Ph.D. – Daiwo 2001) and a second about the relationship between education and primary school academic achievement (Guild 2000). Neither of these

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<sup>87</sup> Previous use of the Developmental Niche included explorations of commonality and diversity, affective functioning, cognition, infant morbidity/mortality, motor development, health, language development, and temperament (Harkness and Super 1996, 1999, 2010).

researchers explored the foundational concepts of the current ECE policy, (unofficial) curriculum, or wide-scale sustained community-based program functioning. For, these present programmatic (post-2008) advances were all virtually irrelevant in the research from a decade ago.

Finally, this study also contributes to the field of knowledge regarding research methodologies and methods for working in collaboration with locals, particularly while striving for context-sensitive approaches to research in rural SI communities. Having the opportunity to spend this extended period in Kahua, in comparison to other non-Indigenous researchers thus far (e.g. Fazey, Latham, Hagasua, and Wagatora 2007; Latham 2007; Fazey et al. 2010; Kenter, Hyde, Cristie, and Fazey in press), the research approach potentially will have lasting effects both on participants and future researchers in the region. These influences include the researcher's extensive efforts to work in collaboration with locals, develop local capacity (most significantly through research assistants), and empower locals through increasing awareness of their rights on the ethics of research. This emphasizes the value of developing this thesis' methodologically-synergistic research approach: *ethnographically-inspired collaborative research*. While in the SI there remains a dichotomous relationship between Pacific scholars and Western researchers (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 2002), increasingly efforts from both sides are recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of each and thus attempting to bridge between them (Josephides 1991, Fazey et al. 2010). Much promise lies in the ongoing development of collaborative approaches between Westerners and Natives in SI (Fazey et al. 2007; Blignault, Bunde-Birouste, Ritchie, Silove, and Zwi 2009; Kenter et al. in press). In general, based on Smith's (1999:1) Maori-perspective, she critiques research conducted by Westerners of indigenous peoples as being "inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism." Through mutual

consciousness-raising activities and local research capacity building, there were numerous benefits to working in collaboration with locals throughout this study. This required trying to understand “local underlying assumptions, motivations, and values which inform research practices,” from the stance where research *on* indigenous peoples is not just judged on the ends, but rather, the means to the ends (Smith 1999:20). Based on these contributions to the field of knowledge, the following subsection extends these to recommendations based on the research findings.

#### 8.4.2 Recommendations

As one of the preeminent proponents of integrated supports for early childhood development, Myers (1992) expressed that *whole child* development requires an integrated response to children’s needs, regardless of the integration degree of services themselves. Within rural MUP communities, this would entail coordinating the efforts of all early childhood stakeholders, from the national level of policymakers, to intermediary supportive bodies such as NGOs, and the grassroots level. Doing so could alleviate the current situation of heavy dependence often falling on only a few stakeholders, thus prohibiting long-term sustainability when any degree of said support is weakened or withdrawn. Fundamentally, sufficient resources (i.e. human, physical, cultural, and financial) are necessary for successful programs, which have all been met at a basic level in most MUP researched communities. Further, in reiteration, issues identified within this study that could substantially facilitate community-based kindy sustainability (at present) include: *strengthening ongoing community-wide ECE awareness*, *garnering greater community ownership-taking of kindergartens*, and *increasing community cooperation* in kindy support by reinvigorating the use of traditional cultural practices rooted in the Kahua Principles.

Identifying the comprehensive needs of young children is a starting point for ECE initiatives, as achieved in the SI's development of a national ECE policy, curriculum, and teacher training program. The next crucial component is to then recognize the importance of including families and communities in sustaining these programs. At present, it is necessary for these programs to be made feasible as community-based initiatives due to the SI sprawling geography, remoteness of many villages, and limited governmental financial resources. Interest in family and community interventions has been spurred by evidence that early interventions solely focusing on children have time-limited impacts (Zeitlin, Megawangi, Kramer, Colletta, Babatunde, and Garman 1995; Engle et al. 2007).

Bronfenbrenner (1974:279) writes,

The family seems to be the most effective and economical system for fostering and sustaining the child's development. Without family involvement, intervention is likely to be unsuccessful, and what few effects are achieved are likely to disappear once the intervention is discontinued.

Moreover, the family exists in a wider environment that must be taken into account if children are to thrive: the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions of the community, and ultimately the nation (Bronfenbrenner 1979, Evans 1997). In MUP, World Vision's (WV) Girl Child Reading and Rescue Project (GCRRP) has been immensely influential in the initial support and development of community-based kindies. This anecdotally has had a ripple effect on other regional communities, replicating what they have seen and/or heard, by establishing their own kindies and attempting to seek further assistance from WV. Yet, unless adaptations to kindy program activities are made, in the long-term these ECE initiatives are not likely to achieve the desired outcomes of supporting children's early learning, development, and preparation for primary education. This is an issue that must be addressed now before affecting the entire education system due to children unable to enter primary school without the required kindergarten qualification. Therefore, these issues cannot be procrastinated about until the future, such as when potentially more government financial support becomes available.

While the GCRRP has made a strong start in the early developments of ECE in MUP, it is now time to increase awareness throughout the province to the wider networks of people involved in children's lives, aside from teachers. Such is necessary in order for communities and kindy committees to take ownership and responsibility for their community-based kindies, particularly to maintain such programs into the future once WV support is withdrawn. For as one MUP ward 5 kindy teacher said,

I am very glad to see some changes coming in my community – especially the parents – and that is my concern. My concern is to build a bright future for my community. The Girl Child Project is eventually making a big change in our community.

But this is merely the first stage, for as a leader from the same community asserted,

Our community needs to have good education for our children's future management of our community to change the current community leadership, which the majority are not educated. Therefore, awareness and other knowledge and skills is needed for the current population for the sole purpose of upholding the education.

Therefore, the following practical recommendations, requiring the support of all levels of SI ECE stakeholders, were made to strengthen community-based kindies functioning and sustainable development in MUP. These are grouped into the three overarching categories of capacity building, inclusive of awareness-building, trainings, and cultural incorporation. Collectively, they are presented in an overall effort to increase ownership and community cooperation in a shared ECE vision, as ideally championed by community members.

#### Awareness:

✓ *Increase community awareness-building opportunities for ECE to bolster community support for kindies.* Community support for the kindy is strongly affected by the level of community awareness about ECE and the role kindergartens play in the short- and long-term learning and development of children. One-time awareness talks given to communities by WV have only reached a limited number of community members, and for communities with high illiteracy levels, such one-time programs are insufficient. Many communities suggest that further awareness talks given by teachers or kindy committees

will be insufficient, ineffective, and poorly attended by communities. Thus necessitates further awareness talks by ECE officials (i.e. WV and provincial ECE Coordinator). Additionally, it is recommended that teachers are given better guidance on how to conduct their own awareness programs, both to parents within their village and the wider community. To make this most effective, it is suggested that teachers also be given training in confidence building to support their efforts to stand up within their communities: a challenging task for many teachers who are women and thus culturally often hold a lower societal position.

✓ *Rethinking selection of “model” kindies.* Three of the four “model kindies” selected by WV in MUP, and further used by the Ministry of Education ECE division, currently do not all represent schools and communities that serve as appropriate examples from which other communities can seek guidance. These kindies/communities were selected before their kindies were constructed and operating. In light of poor community support, lacking classroom resources, and (fundamentally) non-regularly functioning classrooms, these kindies are not capable of fulfilling their role as exemplars to others. By looking to currently functioning kindies, with strong community support, these schools could be effectively used not only for special WV and Ministry of Education guests to visit but should more regularly serve as learning opportunities for their teachers, kindy committees, and communities. As is commonly expressed within Makira, people learn by seeing and doing, not just by being told. Therefore, in order for communities, committees, and teachers to better understand what they are striving to achieve, these model kindies must be more appropriately selected and utilized regularly for visitors.

✓ *Clearer explanation of school relationships for kindies based at primary schools.* The National Ministry of Education, ECE division, is striving to ensure all primary schools have kindergartens; however, these kindies appear particularly problematic compared to stand-alone kindies. Clarity must be given to both kindies and primary schools better outlining the requirements and support expected from each institution in relation to each other.

#### Training:

✓ *Training for kindy committee members, especially kindy chairpersons.* Kindy committee members express never having been informed about their responsibilities to the kindy. Teachers express the role of the committee as a necessary link between teachers and the kindy with the community. Due to the extremely significant role the committee plays in the kindy, members must be better informed so as to properly fulfill their roles, which at this time remain unclear. Many of these committee members are well-respected in their communities, which could provide an important support to the kindy, in light of the fact that young children and female teachers are often culturally not as highly regarded within their communities. On the one hand, this could positively strengthen the kindy; yet, as is also currently evident, a powerful kindy chairman can overrule other committee members and kindy teachers. This thereby necessitates committee training to achieve proper balance.

✓ *Further trainings for Field-Based Trained (FBT) teachers.* Original FBT teachers (dating back to the early 90s) claim to have never received further education opportunities, as well as express concern about being overlooked due to their age in comparison to new younger teachers. These teachers have accumulated a wealth of practical experience and knowledge over the years and should be recognized for their special expertise, yet must not

be forgotten in ongoing trainings and opportunities. Often those who have taught for many years can become set in their ways: ways that may not always be the most beneficial for supporting children's development. Therefore, ongoing learning opportunities must be offered to all teachers to refresh their skills, as well as keep them updated on the ECE field. This is crucial for remote island teachers whom are often isolated from such ongoing awarenesses and support within their remote kindies. This could further be supported if teachers were encouraged to form regular groups/networks with surrounding schools to work together. Currently, even neighboring schools are not in regular contact, which fails to capitalize on an important support network for teachers who are often facing the same struggles within their kindies and communities.

✓ *Establish accountability requirements for teachers to participate in ongoing training opportunities.* Many kindy teachers continue to be invited to participate in ongoing WV funded trainings, such as Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) summer courses, yet when they return to their communities they continue not to have functioning kindies. Teachers must be held accountable for utilizing their new knowledge/skills by putting them into practice in operating kindies and sharing them within their communities. Regular contact must be maintained between kindies, WV, and the provincial ECE Coordinator to ensure that if teachers are merely taking advantage of ongoing training opportunities, yet not actually teaching, that these opportunities should be suspended for them. There are many eager kindy teachers throughout Makira not receiving external support, and it is inappropriate that opportunities are being misused by teachers not committed to implementing their knowledge in the classroom.

### Cultural Incorporation:

✓ *Raise ECE awareness through increased promotion of kindy as cultural reinvigorator.*

As increasingly locally recognized, and reflected in national ECE policy and curriculum, support for the kindy may be promoted through its recognition as a tool to teach local culture and traditions. Many Makirans do not deeply recognize the value of the kindy's fundamental educational approach, which is based on the notion that "children learn through play." However, emphasizing the kindy's additional value as an avenue to teach culture could provide another means to begin understanding program benefits, as well as draw in different local support to the classroom (e.g. resource making, storytelling, activity creation). Most fundamentally, such an approach in Kahua could directly reemphasize the Kahua Principles as of importance for both teaching young children and garnering the required communal support for communities' overall benefit (i.e. children).

Despite the above recommendations, this study faces a number of limitations, inclusive of to whom these recommendations can be applied, as addressed below.

#### *8.4.3 Limitations of Study*

Notwithstanding the wealth of critical illuminations regarding SI ECE arising from this study, it is also recognizably restricted by a number of limitations. From the outset, recognized and accepted was the inevitable inability to widely generalize research findings due to the small confines of the case study contexts in MUP, and most comprehensively the Kahua region. Furthermore, throughout the study, the researcher recognized that the longevity of practical implications from the research findings would be dramatically affected/diminished based on the rapid changes occurring to SI ECE. Most notably, this is

attributed to the enforcement of the national mandatory kindergarten policy and corresponding increasing governmental financial investments since 2008.

With regard to the ethnographically-inspired research approach implemented, additional limitations were inherent to the study. Firstly, the qualitative overview nature of the research was unable to offer definitive (quantitative) measures based on the data, which are often necessary to drive increased government and foreign investments. Secondly, despite extensive efforts to collaborate with locals at all stages of this study, undeniably the limited time of one year in the field prohibited extensive long-term local research capacity building. This particularly affected local involvement in the final analysis stages of the research. Despite these above inherent limitations to the study, the researcher significantly strived to counter the greatest potential limitation, in being a non-Indigenous researcher, by understanding cultural issues of SI ECE through the flexible ethnographically-inspired collaborative research design. In looking beyond the present study and some of the above limitations, the following subsection suggests future research directions.

#### *8.4.4 Future Research Directions*

Prior to this study, there existed a large gap in scholarly literature, with regard to the paucity of documentation, about formal ECE in Pacific small island nations. While this present study began laying the foundations to fill this gap, additional future research directions have been envisioned to further these findings. Most significantly, it is deemed imperative to continue building local research capacity within small developing nations. Crossley (2008:250) argues that the need for educational research within small states is both “urgent and strong.” He (ibid:249) asserts,

[P]art of the rationale for such capacity development is to strengthen the ability of small state voices to engage actively with and, where appropriate, challenge the nature and influence of powerful international agendas, this notion of capacity building would also be well-advised to encompass a diversity of paradigmatic perspectives.

The significance of local research collaborations is arguably heightened with regard to the Kahua region, out of their particular interest for taking greater ownership over their future development, as realized (albeit largely symbolically at this point) through the KA.

Currently, in applying this call for local research capacity building to MUP, and most specifically with regard to ECE research, here it is argued that the next essential step is to locally define context and culture specific measures with which to enforce localization of ECE programs. This will require local collaborations to maintain culturally-defined quality assurance standards with which to develop and regularly monitor SI ECE programs and child development. This would extend the present study to a greater policy and practice level than possible from a non-Indigenous researcher to emphasize widespread local involvement in generating deep cultural foundations for each of the unique contexts throughout SI. Over a century ago, Sir Michael Sadler (1900:49) said,

We cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and picking off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant.

Despite ever-increasing awareness of the need to contextualize educational programs to local cultures, rarely has this been deeply applied in SI education, particularly in ECE. Further, the alternative – uncritical international educational transfer – has increasingly spurred fears that have persisted over decades, such as Thaman (1998:52) writes,

There is a fear here that the continued dominance of a Western educational model of teaching and learning could lead to Pacific Island people thinking that the wisdom of their own cultures is worthless or at least irrelevant to modern educational development. Worse still, indigenous cultures and languages are often seen by many Pacific Island people as obstacles to learning and modern development.

In order to address these concerns, this section calls for further formalized locally defined culture and context-sensitive measurable standards with which to monitor SI ECE. This

could ameliorate the situation by providing firm guidance for all levels of SI ECE stakeholders in a shared sustainable vision, yet adaptable to the diverse contexts within SI.

## **8.5 Concluding Chapter Remarks**

This study identified five overarching principles influencing kindergarten sustainability: presence of a “*champion*” for the ECE vision; community ownership-taking, awareness-building, and cooperation-maintenance; and program cultural/contextual sensitivity and relevance. Yet, through exploring these community mediating factors and processes to early childhood learning and education, with implications for ECE program sustainability, inevitably an emphasis must also be placed on historical influences and changes to Kahuan society. As societal changes occur throughout the decades, notable events and progressions could suggest detrimental futures to the diversity of cultures and ultimately the unique context of SI as a whole. Pre-colonization, the islands consisted of a multitude of diverse cultural tribes, yet with the arrival of Westerners (missionaries) came the introduction of Christian religion. With this also came the abolition of many traditional customs and cultural practices, which were replaced by Christian beliefs and the introduction to formal education. More recently, as other Western bodies have entered the islands, such as in the form of international agendas, Western ideals continue to be imposed on their dissimilar contexts. There is no final consensus of the appropriateness of the current dominant institutionalized education system infiltrating the world, yet now too the SI have succumbed to global influences and adopted similar systems, with regard to ECE.

Sensitivity to cultural aspects of ECE programs has long been purported as a vital consideration in program design. However, with dominant program objectives typically focusing on issues of social-emotional development, cognition, and/or poverty alleviation

(all often influenced by the uncritical international transfer of ECE research, policy, and practice), a true cultural focus within ECE programs is often a supplementary feature, if evident at all. Arguably, most concerning, with regard to influences from globalized dominant educational trends, beginning with ECE in SI, are similar connotations to those held elsewhere in the world of a single development trajectory: by obtaining an education, one will be able to find employment and lead a more prosperous life. However, this is often not the case for a country such as the Solomons with very limited paid employment opportunities, including for those with formal higher educations. Debatably, the current system is not preparing the children of today to maintain and/or progress the country into the future. If anything, it is laying the footwork to what may likely be detrimental outcomes when islanders lose the skills of their traditional subsistence lifestyles, “wantok” system (obligatory kinship ties), and fundamental kastom principles rooted in communal respectful behaviors. Instead, youths are increasingly moving to overpopulated urban centers in futile search of employment, without traditional practical and social skills to fall back on. Such concerns do not go unnoticed by the government, for as former SI Prime Minister Sikua (2008:4) stated, with regard to a root cause of poor national development,

In some ways our education system has alienated our young from their rural contexts and from traditional wisdom. The goal of the education process has for many been a job in Honiara. For the majority that miss that goal, the education system has not prepared them well for alternative meaningful and sustainable lifestyles.

Despite decades of Western-based education systems in SI, now realized in ECE, little has changed in practice to reflect such local recognition, as Sikua’s, of the need for re-imagining SI ECE. As internationally acclaimed early childhood Cuban scholar Martinez proclaims, “Education leads development and brings development with it. [...] [D]evelopment doesn’t determine what education should do. What education does affects development,” (cited in Cristol 2003:104). Therefore, as is evident in Cuba’s successful investment in intellectual capital, largely in the form of ECE, such an investment is a

significant one for national development, as it lays the foundation on which all human development builds upon. Subsequently, not only is a cultural focus on SI ECE of significance to intergenerational SI ECE program sustainability, as well as the current heightened significance based on mandatory attendance requirements. It also has long-term implications for SI citizens, and as such the future leaders the nation is developing.

This was not a study of cultural changes and children, but instead the cultural stability of “children-in-context,” as was explored through the Developmental Niche framework and recognition of communities’ mediating factors in the education and developmental processes of young children. Identification of the significance of education and young children for the context-specific development of SI has become evident across all levels of stakeholders, from policymakers to rural villagers. Yet, ongoing struggles to sustain community-based kindies, often as influenced by cultural dilemmas, made exploring issues of ECE at present particularly of significance with the potential to enlighten local developing policies and practices. With an ever-increasing influence of the globalization of ECE through international agendas, yet lack of resources by governments to support such endeavors nationwide, it was critical to begin better understanding how community-based initiatives can facilitate ECE while also instilling context-specific cultures and identities in each generation through sustainable initiatives.

In concluding this collaborative study with the Kahua people, the final words are left to a local Kahuan kindy chairman. He emphasized the utmost *local significance* for Kahuans/Makirans as championing the future of sustained context and culture-sensitive ECE for *their* children, as resonates with the fundamentals of the Kahua Principles. He stated, “We must not give up easily because once you give up, you give up for good. The

future of all children and teachers in Makira needs *us* to take pride in early childhood education.”

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## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A: Supplementary Information to Research Methods**

### *A.1 Expanded Overview of Key Research Methods*

#### *A.1.1 Observations, Supplemented by Semi/Unstructured Interviews*

1. During the first month in Kahua, one week was spent disseminating research findings from Phase I (pilot study) by traveling throughout the region (by foot) and facilitating village meetings in response to the findings, as well as raising awareness of this Phase II of the study. This procedure was strongly encouraged by the Kahua Association (KA) to begin rebuilding rapport with the Kahua people, encourage regional inclusion and awareness of the research, and re-familiarize the researcher to the context.

2. An initial two months in the field were spent in Toroa village (approx. 30 households), conducting extensive participant observations and unstructured interviews in order to gain initial understandings of local society, with emphasis on children aged approximately 3-8. Additionally, this time was used to identify the various microenvironments of their learning, as structured through the use of the Developmental Niche framework. Furthermore, the researcher attended informal lessons in the local Kahua language on an ongoing basis. Initial research focus was on interactions that arose from 3 kindergarten-aged children (1 with whom the researcher lived [along with his primary school Class 1 brother] and 2 from neighboring households with different household family structures [1 female from family of 6 children and 1 male with a single mother]). However, interactions throughout the community were observed and unstructured interviews were conducted on an ongoing basis without restriction to specific community members. Yet, notable key informants that the researcher regularly interacted with included: kindy teachers (2), chiefs (2), a religious leader [pastor] (1), extension primary school teacher [Pre-Class/Class 1] (1), Sunday school teachers (5), kindergarten chairman (1), and settlement community of the family the researcher resided with (8 children, 6 parents, 2 unwed sisters). A typical day for the researcher involved observance of morning church service (5:30am) and (half of the week) afternoon “Sunday School” (7pm), daily attendance of kindy (9-12am), and focus specifically on language lessons primarily during evenings (9pm). Between these more structured activities, the researcher actively participated in all aspects of life in the village, opportunistically conducting unstructured interviews and participant observations.

3. Semi-structured interviews conducted with a variety of early childhood (EC) stakeholders, from national government officials to rural Kahua villagers (A.2 and A.3 – sample interview schedules).

4. Children (aged approx. 3-8), whom were also deemed key EC stakeholders, participated by making illustrations of their perspectives on learning and their community, which facilitated informal discussions of groups of 2-4 children with the researcher. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to interact with kindy children in a number of villages where she did not have an extended amount of time to build rapport with the children. Yet, by involving them in an engaging activity, they became willing and comfortable to participate. Further, the illustrations provided a concrete object on which to focus their attention during brief discussions about their learning in the community. Initially, the researcher proposed to potentially go

throughout the village with groups of children implementing a photographic-based method; however, due to the frequently inclement weather in Kahua, local beliefs that children's exposure to rain will inevitably make them sick, and the tight timeline for the research schedule whilst traveling between villages, this alternative indoor illustration-discussion activity was opted for.

5. Informal interviews were used to obtain and document traditional kastom stories from parents and community leaders. To capitalize on evenings spent sharing stories with Kahua families, each community was asked to contribute (give approval for documentation of) 1 kastom story. Although Kahua people speak of the importance of sharing traditional wisdom with children, it is very difficult to know what is transpired to the children, as (traditionally) such interactions typically occur during closed conversations and are only for select people to know. However, many of these apparent sessions have become obsolete, leaving many children and parents without such knowledge. Therefore, this method provided the researcher with insight into the transmission of cultural knowledge, while also coinciding with KA endeavors to document kastom stories. Stories have since been compiled into a children's book and audio recording to make participants' contributions a valuable resource for local kindies, which aspire to teach traditional culture, as well as early reading skills, yet typically have extremely limited resources.

#### *A.1.2 Local Approaches/Methods*

Throughout the researcher's fieldwork in Kahua, as well as in Kirakira station where the KA has recently (2009) obtained an office, she regularly attended local meetings, programs, project sites, etc., which were not directly related to the inquiry, but provided a means to learn more about local approaches to development, power balances, and the structure and organization of locally developed groups/programs/meetings/etc. Some examples of such "local approaches," where the researcher conducted observations and interviews, included activities related to the Kahua *Sustainable Forest and Conservation* research project (i.e. four projects throughout Kahua [2008-2011]: soil management, watershed, Ngali nut production as income generating activity, building of permanent KA office in Kirakira) and the KA Council of Chiefs' project on land rights documentation. Opportunities for observing these projects in action and discussing them with those designing/implementing them, as well as informally with other community members involved, was done opportunistically. Heightened efforts were made to explore these local projects in the first 3 months in the field, while primarily conducting participant observations/unstructured interviews in Toroa. This was before final designs were made for more interactive focus group methods, which subsequently incorporated aspects from these local approaches. However, notably, overall many of these projects/meetings/programs strongly resembled Western approaches, in line with school-based activities, including traditional village chiefs' meetings. This demonstrated the strong impact educational systems have had on the Kahua people in altering their custom approaches to group interactions and planning.

#### *A.1.3 Visual Data Collection*

Video and photographic data collection were used to supplement primary data collection methods of participant-observations, interviews, and focus groups, thus facilitating visual elicitations (i.e. between communities, to EC officials outside of the Kahua region, and

for use in reports/presentations) and allowing for the recording of nonverbal aspects of shared learning experiences. It was deemed necessary to collect visual data to supplement written and oral forms of data. This allowed for capturing nonverbal learning exchanges and contextual elements, which words were incapable of comprehensively documenting, especially in light of extensive linguistic and cultural differences. During the pilot study fieldwork, photographic elicitation (Pink 2001) was found to greatly facilitate interviews,

...particularly when discussing the current situation in Kahua with government and organization officials, to bridge experiences of reality and visually reinforce points being made...through providing firm evidence on which both involved in the interview could then discuss on relatively equal ground. Occasionally, this also led to interviewees desiring to share their own photographic evidence to make their own positions clearer.

(Burton 2008:56-57)

Due to the strong oral tradition of communication in the Solomons, which remains the dominant form in rural villages, it was essential that data collected could be presented locally with visual representations. This was in addition to the importance of visually being able to validate the researcher's claims when presenting outside the Solomons, where outsiders would also benefit from a deeper visual understanding of the context and current situation.

Photographs, to a great extent, can capture this desired type of data. However, in viewing learning and development as sociocultural processes (based on theoretical foundations around the cultural nature of holistic development and legitimate peripheral participation in situated learning), to document brief interactions and learning processes through video data was also important for ongoing comparisons and analysis. This included: 1) asking a parent to watch a video clip and explain his/her thinking as the researcher tried to gain deeper understandings of his/her perspectives; 2) the researcher personally re-watched footage and reflected after having deeper grasps on local culture and language over time; and 3) when trying to confirm translations. Furthermore, the seminal work by Joseph Tobin in *Preschool in Three Cultures* (Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989) and the follow-up study *Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited* (Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa 2009) demonstrates the power of using video data to facilitate different participants' understandings/reflections of early childhood education (ECE) and rearing practices, albeit his work was between different cultures. Ultimately, while the researcher's intention was never to heavily focus on the collection of video or photographic data. This was largely due to practical limitations with restrictions of power, based on a reliance on solar energy whilst in the remote villages. However, these methods were used in the overall efforts of getting closer to understanding Indigenous epistemologies and trying to facilitate participants' verbal explanations, descriptions, and reflections of their own cultural practices, beliefs, and values.

#### *A.1.4 ECE Stakeholder Forum Meeting*

Initially, a 2-day Kahua kindy teacher workshop was proposed to be arranged to bring together these regional EC experts, as no such gathering had been held since their completion of teacher training, thus leaving many of these teachers feeling isolated in their remote kindies. Originally, such a method was devised to allow teachers to share ideas and challenges, in an effort to strengthen their ties throughout the region, as well as allowing for data collection on their struggles and ideas for improvements of kindies and

communities' support. Yet, early in 2009, a 3-phase extension ECE college certification course through Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) began a trial program in Makira-Ulawa Province (MUP), with the help of World Vision (WV). This provided an opportunity for "diligent, hardworking" teachers, as identified by WV, from Phase I of the Girl Child Reading and Rescue Project (GCRRP) to attend these Kirakira based summer school courses. In light of this, and the fact that the researcher had personally interviewed the majority of these kindy teachers, it was deemed more effective to hold a forum meeting with key EC stakeholders from throughout the province and national level, which coincided with these kindy teachers' presence in Kirakira whilst attending a one-week extension English training course (September 2009). This course was sponsored by WV and aimed to better prepare these kindy teachers for the demands of the SICHE ECE summer course. Therefore, while this forum meeting primarily devoted time for higher-level stakeholders to engage in sharing and discussion, some sessions of the 2-day meeting were also designed to include the over 50 kindy teachers simultaneously in Kirakira. This included providing an opportunity for a national level ECE official to present these teachers with the newly written ECE curriculum and the 2008 national ECE policy, which many teachers remained unclear about. Additionally, time was allocated for feedback/discussion/concerns between the teachers and upper-level stakeholders as a culminating event to the forum meeting.

#### *A.1.5 External Comparison Community Visitation*

While the majority of research was conducted in Kahua communities, an additional month was dedicated to understanding kindies on a wider scale throughout MUP to facilitate comparisons, thus visiting communities/kindies from Makira wards 5, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 2 outer lying small island wards 15 and 16 (in addition to wards 12 and 13 which consist of Kahua). This also allowed for meeting with kindy teachers/chairmen/concerned parents from throughout the province while the researcher based in Kirakira at the WV provincial headquarters. Inclusion of this wider range of geographically and culturally diverse communities was made possible through an opportunity for the researcher to work with WV, who shared the objective of identifying barriers to ECE in MUP, so as to guide their future work with the GCRRP. Thus, this is how the terminology "Barriers to ECE" came about in this study, as was termed by WV. Based on communications with provincial ECE officials, communities in these other regions outside of Kahua were said to be taking greater ownership over their community-based kindies and were therefore said not to be experiencing the same "failures" as in Kahua. In light of this, including these potential counter-examples to Kahua kindies was deemed potentially beneficial in providing a significant contrast to data collected in Kahua. Further it was thought to potentially raise key factors correlated to these different outcomes regarding community ownership and kindy program sustainability. This was particularly of interest to the researcher for Phase II GCRRP communities, in light of the fact that many of these kindies were initially community-established after hearing about Phase I of the WV project. However, as the findings eventually revealed, such statements of differing regional levels of kindy success on the whole in these other parts of MUP proved to not be the case, and although a few exemplarily communities/kindies were found throughout MUP, this was not correlated with any particular wards in general. Nevertheless, while working with WV, which enabled access to all GCRRP communities/kindies, this provided an invaluable opportunity to observe, conduct semi/unstructured interviews, participatory focus groups, and a survey

to gain understanding of kindy development outside Kahua. Thus broadened the researcher's overall understanding of kindy development, challenges, and key supporting factors, as well as an understanding of the functioning of the most prominent funding/supporting organization for ECE in MUP (i.e. WV).

## *A.2 Methods' Procedures for Makira Focal Communities*

### *A.2.1 Kindy Teacher Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with kindy teachers, by the researcher, following observation of kindy session. The following questions were addressed, in addition to any other issues that arose during observations that needed clarification. These were solely used as a guide to loosely structured interviews, so as not to put-off teachers with too formal of an approach.

1. What outcomes have you observed since the kindy was established? (Any changes in the health, physical growth, or appearance of children attending kindy?)
2. What successes/difficulties have you experienced with maintaining a functioning kindy?
3. What successes/challenges/difficulties have you experienced regarding teaching your students and/or their learning?
4. What types of trainings/workshops would be helpful for you (teachers), and/or community members, to better meet the needs of young children in your community?
5. What is your understanding of the significance of ECE as compared with the general community's awareness level?
6. How many children in your community currently are of kindy age but not attending kindy?
7. How relevant and appropriate are your resources, classroom environment, and teaching practices to your local culture and kastoms?
8. Any additional comments you believe are import for understanding your kindy or community?

### *A.2.2 Community Member Interviews*

Two community members in each focal community were interviewed, who were not involved in the focus group activities, which may have biased participants' perspectives.

1. How well is the kindy currently functioning? What factors about your community and the people here help explain why?
2. How does your community kindy support/inhibit the development of local cultural beliefs and values in young children?

### *A.2.3 Makira Focus Group Procedures: Guidelines<sup>88</sup>*

#### Informed Consent:

1. Explain purpose of the study, explain the following ethics points, and individually ask each participant if they understand before obtaining oral informed consent, documented by researcher on consent sheet.
  - Participation is completely voluntary and participants may choose to stop at any time.
  - All information collected will be kept confidential and anonymous.
  - Raw data will be restricted to use only by the primary researcher and research assistants (RAs). Data will then be compiled in a summary report for WV and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), in addition to reports written by Lindsay Burton for Oxford University, where she is currently a doctoral student.
  - By participating, you are also agreeing to be audio-recorded and photographed, which may be used in reports and presentations.

#### Focus Group Activity 1:

1. Read question: “What barriers/challenges does your community face in establishing, operating, and maintaining a kindy?” Then, ask all participants to go outside and collect various small bush objects (e.g. stone, leaf, flower): one to represent each barrier/challenge they can think of. (Note: participants should be told to quickly choose objects in the vicinity of the group meeting area to avoid excessive misuse of time.)
2. Once all participants return with their objects, participants will take turns placing their objects in a line on the ground. With each object, the participant must state what barrier it represents and how/why it is a barrier. Responses will be recorded on data sheet.
3. Participants will be told to collect 10 stones each. The researcher will then review with participants what barriers each pile of objects represents until everyone can remember. Participants will then be told to take their 10 stones and place them next to the various barriers, ranking which barriers are the most significant (i.e. challenging for their kindy). Participants will then choose how many stones to put next to each/any of the barriers. After all participants have placed their stones, the facilitator will direct participants to count piles, of which totals will be recorded on the data sheet.
4. The researcher will then make a verbal summary statement of the group findings thus far based on ranking totals. Participants will then be asked for possible solutions (who and how) to address the top 5 highest ranked barriers.

#### Focus Group Activity 2:

Researcher will read each statement listed on data collection sheet. The group will be given 5 stones with which to collectively rank the statement for their community and explain their reasoning as expressed during group discussion. Participants must take turns being the first to physically place the stone-ranking for the various statements (i.e. in center of group, which is seated in circle), and then those who wish to change the ranking must physically do so, either by adding or taking away stones, until consensus is reached. Responses to be recorded on data sheet.

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<sup>88</sup> Written in present tense for implementation purposes with research team. Additionally, sample data sheets located in Appendix A.4.

### Focus Group Activity 3:

This activity will be conducted the same as “Focus Group Activity 1”; however, two separate stone-rankings will be carried out, as opposed to one. Therefore, participants will need to collect 20 stones. First, 10 will be used to rank the importance of the particular skill/knowledge to the community, to the left side of objects representing knowledge/skills. Then, the second 10 stones will be used to rank their importance to supporting children/kindy to the right side of the representative objects. Finally, suggestions will be asked for, while reflecting on the activity (referring to the visual of objects and stones on the ground), as to what further knowledge, skills, training, or awareness the community needs to better support kindies and young children's learning. Any additional comments/feedback/concerns will be asked for from participants, which the participants believe are of importance but may have not been thoroughly addressed with the research activities.

### *A.3 Methods' Procedures for Kahua Focal Communities*

#### *A.3.1 Sunday School Teacher Interviews (×2 each community)*

(Record: church denomination, age, gender, village, # years teaching)

1. Is a Sunday school program currently functioning in your community? If so, what is the weekly schedule?
2. How does the church fit with traditional culture and kastoms?
3. How do young children learn about religion?
4. What beliefs and values must children learn about religion?
5. What hopes/goals do you have for children's short- and long-term (spiritual) development?
6. What are your thoughts on children/families who do not attend Sunday school/church? How will this affect their learning and development?
7. Any further comments to better understand children in your community?

#### *A.3.2 Church Leader Interviews (×2 each community)*

(Record: church denomination, position in church, age, gender, village)

1. How does the church fit with traditional culture and kastoms?
2. How do children learn about religion?
3. What beliefs and values must children learn about religion?
4. What are your hopes/goals for children's short- and long-term spiritual development?
5. What are your thoughts on children/families who do not attend Sunday school/church? How will this affect their development?
6. Any further comments to better understand children in your community?

#### *A.3.3 Parent Interviews (×2 each community)*

(Record: age, gender, village, number of children)

1. Culturally, how would you describe young children?
2. What kastoms/beliefs/values are taught in the home?
3. What is the purpose of kindy? How does kindy teaching/learning fit with local culture/kastoms?
4. What factors affect parental involvement in the kindy?

5. What is the community's awareness of ECE? How does this affect the kindy?
6. How has Kahua culture changed over time? How is this change currently affecting children?
7. Any further comments to better understand children in your community?

#### *A.3.4 Kindy Teacher Interviews (×2 each community)*

(Record: age, gender, village, # years teaching)

1. How does kindy support/inhibit the development of local cultural beliefs/values/practices in your community?
2. What factors affect parental/community involvement in support for kindy/community projects?
3. What goals do you have for children by the time they finish kindy?
4. How does (or does not) kindy prepare children for transition to primary school?
5. What is your community's awareness of ECE? How does this affect the kindy?
6. Any further comments to better understand your kindy/community?

#### *A.3.5 Kindy Chairman / Committee Member Interviews (×2 each community)*

(Record: age, gender, position, village)

1. How does the kindy support/inhibit the development of local cultural beliefs/values/practices in your community?
2. What factors affect parental/community involvement in support for kindy/community projects?
3. What goals do you have for children by the time they finish kindy?
4. How does (or does not) kindy prepare children for transition to primary school?
5. What is your community's awareness of ECE?
6. Any Further comments to better understand your community/kindy?

#### *A.3.6 Kahua Focus Group Procedures: Guidelines<sup>89</sup>*

Informed Consent (See A.2.3 above)

Kahua focus groups conducted with 4 groups of participants in each research community (9, plus 1 pilot community): groups divided for cultural purposes into men, women, male youths, and female youths (approximately 6-10 participants in each group, although participants were not denied involvement due to the culture practices of inclusively). Furthermore, for comparative purposes regarding understandings of different levels of ECE stakeholders, as well as a training/trial run for the RAs in facilitating the focus group method, a focus group was conducted in Toroa community. This was conducted before beginning in focal research communities, since the researcher already had 2 months of intensive interactions with this community (thus, it was recognized that these participants would potentially biased having had time to more deeply think through responses due to their lengthier involvement with the researcher and inquiry). Each

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<sup>89</sup> Written in present tense for implementation purposes with research team. Additionally, sample data sheets located in Appendix A.4.

focus group was facilitated by 2 people: researcher using SI Pidgin and RA facilitating in language when necessary. The sole male RA exclusively worked with men's groups, for cultural purposes. Notably, as an outsider to Kahua, the researcher's position as a female in these male groups was not a significant issue. In contrast, the two female RAs solely worked with women's groups, where translating into the local language was often more necessary (with generally significantly lower education levels amongst women and thus lacking sufficient knowledge to meaningfully participate in Pidgin). Additionally, female participants also expressed a significant shyness in the presence of men or outsiders (whether non-Solomon Islanders or even those from other parts of Kahua). As a result, in 2 bush communities where the RAs did not know the participants well (i.e. not close relatives, as were the majority of participants in the coastal research communities), the 2 female RAs conducted these groups independently of the researcher. Notably, these RAs had thoroughly proved their skills extensively working in the other research communities before being asked to independently conduct these groups. Yet, it was deemed imperative to conduct the groups this way in order to get the most open responses from participants. Immediately afterwards, audio-recordings of the focus groups were reviewed between the RAs and researcher to ensure the reliability and validity of responses documented.

#### Kahua Focus Group Activity 1:

Researcher explains that groups will discuss the different areas around the community young children (of kindy ages) learn. Group then asked to call out, aloud, the different places in the community where children learn, for each of which the researcher will designate one color of circular-tied string and place it on the ground showing to show that will represent the particular learning area. Researcher will guide participants to come up with 5 learning areas (as initially determined whilst piloting method, arising as overarching categories): home, church/Sunday school, kindy, primary school, and wider community (including gardens, beach, river, etc.). After 5 learning areas are laid on ground with circular string representations, researcher introduces 2 colors of small strips of paper: 1 to represent kastoms learning/knowledge and the other for Western or imported types of learning/knowledge. Depending on the literacy ability of the group, all/a few representatives/RA/other will be designated as writer (or drawer of representative images) as participants call out various things children learn in these different community contexts. After each idea is written/drawn, the group must then determine which string circle (representing area of community) to place piece of paper. For learning that takes place in multiple areas of the community, string circles should be brought together to slightly overlap, such as in the concept of Venn diagramming, and the paper should be placed in overlapping circles. Once group continues this process until all main ideas of children's early learning around the community have been exhausted, the researcher will then lead the group through a discussion about each of the slips of paper, whilst recording on data sheet (which serves as guide of which questions to ask), asking: What skills/values/beliefs/practices are involved and why this/these are important for the children to learn; how the child learns this (including the teaching/learning method and tools/materials involved); who are the teacher(s) and learner(s) involved; and confirm the location(s) in which it occurs, as well as if it is cultural or kastom knowledge.

Whilst reflecting on the visual mapping the group has made of children's learning throughout the community, the researcher will lead the group into 3 discussion questions and record responses on data sheet: (roughly phrased around following three ideas)

1. What are your learning and development goals for early childhood (e.g. educational, spiritual, moral, social, cultural, etc.) and the long-term (e.g. future education, work, life)?
2. How do traditional approaches to learning fit with Western learning approaches (e.g. kindy, primary, Sunday school)
3. What would you add/change to any aspect of early childhood learning in community to better fit local culture/kastoms? (e.g. physical setting, instruction, learning materials, information taught, etc.)

Kahua Focus Group Activity 2:

Same as “Makira Focus Group Activity 1” (See A.2.3 above).

Kahua Focus Group Activity 3:

Group facilitator will read each statement listed on data collect sheet (similar to statements addressed in Makira survey [See A.2.3 above]). The group will be given 5 stones with which to collectively rank the statement for their community and explain their reasoning as expressed during group discussion. Participants must take turns being the first to physically place the stone ranking for the various statements (i.e. in center of group, which is seated in circle). Those who wish to change the ranking must physically do so, either by adding or taking away stones, until consensus is reached. The researcher will record responses on data sheet.

#### *A.4 Sample Data Sheets and Survey*

The following pages contain sample data collection documents:

- Makira Focus Group Question Activities 1-3
- Kahua Focus Group Question Activities 1-3
- Survey of Barriers to Early Childhood Education

|                             |               |                   |                        |                               |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Facilitator's Name: Lindsay | Date: 17-9-09 | Location: Ward 15 | Group: Kindy Committee | # Participants (m/f): 5m / 7f |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|

**Makira Focus Group Question 1: What barriers/challenges does your community face in establishing, operating, and maintaining a kindy?**

*(May relate to issues for children, parents, teachers, or wider community.)*

| Barrier / Challenge                                | How / Why                                                                                                                                                                                      | Rank<br>Significance<br>(10 stones) | Solution (Who / How)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher Manufactured Resources (stationeries)      | Have not yet received from WV and can't work without.<br>Affects ability of teacher to work and make documentation.<br>Asked for resources from Sunday School and Primary, but unable to help. | 20                                  | Outdoor equipment – Must work together with community and teachers (men, not women), but also need external assistance in help building (e.g. nails, climbing frame, and seesaw).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Local Resources                                    | Parents not listening, leaving only teachers to make resources, so only have a few before and now empty.                                                                                       | 14                                  | Manufactured teacher resources – WV will supply some for each kindy, but must additionally plan fundraising. It is the kindy committee's responsibility to find money. One possible way is through a government grant available to kindies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Children's Manufactured Resources (crayons)        | Not enough resources for all so causes fighting. Need for "Manipulative" area coloring activities.                                                                                             | 9                                   | Teacher salary – Community and kindy committee must work together, such as in arranging fundraising. For the past 2-3 years teachers have received no salary, yet they have continued to teach. For the first time last month, after finally running a fundraiser, teachers received their first small allowance. Because of this, it is believed that the community is beginning to "come up good" in supporting teachers.                                         |
| Teacher Salary                                     | Without salary, teachers weak to teach and rush to prepare activities because must also work their gardens and homes.                                                                          | 18                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Community/Parents don't Support Teachers           | Don't help make resources to play; don't pay school fees. They can't see the long-term benefits of kindy.                                                                                      | 3                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Mothers don't always Prepare Snack                 | When don't prepare, especially balanced diet, then children hungry so they can't learn.                                                                                                        | 5                                   | Teachers – Unaware of potential government grants available to kindies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| No Outdoor Equipment                               | Don't have any, and if made with local materials, will go bad too quickly next to the ocean.                                                                                                   | 25                                  | Local resources – Parents and community must work together. The kindy committee should lead them by informing them of what the kindy needs. One kindy teacher tried to make community aware, but without support, she was unsuccessful. Also, a WV awareness talk was given to the community once, but most people did not attend. At the time, the kindy was given A4 paper and some pencils for coloring, but not enough for all of our 72 children in the kindy. |
| No Proper Roof (want copper, only have leaf house) | Community is too lazy to work to raise funds for copper.                                                                                                                                       | 5                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Toilet                                             | Need a toilet, set away from kindy, so don't have to send children to "sea."                                                                                                                   | 5                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Kindy Committee                                    | Just elected chairman, secretary, and treasurer, but not given training and they don't have a good mind for planning activities.                                                               | 5                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Naughty Children                                   | Children should learn in the home first, but they are not being taught well and therefore are following the bad ways of parents and peers, which makes teaching difficult.                     | 6                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

**Makira Focus Group Question 3:****What livelihood knowledge and skills do people in the community have? How are these used to help improve or support kindies and young children's learning?**

| Knowledge / Skill          | How important to community, children, or kindy                                                                                                                                                                                             | Rank importance to community | Rank importance to children/kindy | What knowledge/skills must learn                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Carving                    | Skills to pay for food, but not to be used towards community projects.                                                                                                                                                                     | 15                           | 18                                | Literacy – team just came through village, but need money for a classroom and to establish an ongoing community program.                                                                        |
| Carpenter (Building Homes) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 12                           | 18                                | Kindy committee trainings.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Food in Garden             | Not for business. First priority is food for children and only afterwards can be concerned with money for kindy classroom, resources, and teacher salary.                                                                                  | 28                           | 5                                 | Note: trainings often ineffective but do want more if made more helpful – often forget trainings after first time so need repeat visits (e.g. how to plant vegetables, more about livelihoods). |
| Food to Sell               | Work separate side garden of cabbage and beans (as taught by a WV awareness program). Everyone works their own gardens to eat, but they should also grow a little extra to sell and use for our children. They just don't plan in advance. | 13                           | 30                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Fishing                    | Main skill of men here to earn money.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 16                           | 14                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Oil (coconut)              | Starting to go down, but can cook to sell.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 6                            | 6                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Buns                       | Women's main income generating activity, along with gardening.                                                                                                                                                                             | 11                           | 6                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Tourism                    | Largest (and one of only) tourist destination in Makira, but only have one guesthouse.                                                                                                                                                     | 17                           | 18                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Kerosene                   | Refill sale by the litre.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 7                            | 2                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## **Focus Group Question 2:**

| Statement                                                                                                                         | Ranking<br>(1-poor, 5-<br>excellent) | Reasoning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Level of community support for management of kindy (e.g. organization and participation in kindy).                             | 4                                    | Kindy only owned by those with children attending. Community participation with resources is not very good, only some bring; only some help with maintenance on in/outside the classroom. As far as parents of kindy children, they are helpful and very welcoming. |
| 2. Level of community financial support for kindy (e.g. money or help in kind).                                                   | 3                                    | Community just starting to come up now because have recently elected a kindy committee, which planned a fundraiser, but they are not helpful all the time.                                                                                                          |
| 3. Level of kindy committee support for management of kindy.                                                                      | 5                                    | “Little good” support for teacher’s salary. Everything they are asked, they do. The previous committee was no good, but now all the committee members and teachers know each other well and work well together.                                                     |
| 4. Level of teacher support for kindy (e.g. classroom preparation and teaching).                                                  | 5                                    | Teacher commitment = #1. Even though not getting salary, continue teaching and invite committee into kindy to plan together.                                                                                                                                        |
| 5. Level of Provincial Ministry of Education support for kindy.                                                                   | 1                                    | Don’t understand their work well and haven’t seen anyone come down to this village yet. Think kindies function through the support of WV.                                                                                                                           |
| 6. Level of World Vision support for kindy.                                                                                       | 4                                    | WV came to make one awareness talk, run Field-Based Training (lead by the ECE coordinator), and provided few classroom resources.                                                                                                                                   |
| 7. Community knowledge of health and nutrition (e.g. balanced diet).                                                              | 3                                    | Every meal not balanced (usually missing one of the three groups: energy, bodybuilding, and protective. Usually have too much from the energy food group.                                                                                                           |
| 8. Community awarenesses/skills on food's importance for improving academic performance.                                          | 3                                    | Some know but some don’t, so then sleepy in class. Also, some know about a balanced diet because the teachers made an awareness.                                                                                                                                    |
| 9. Supply of fresh food for community (cabbage, kumara, bananas, etc.).                                                           | 5                                    | Enough for community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 10. Community knowledge on family financial planning and management (e.g. budgeting and saving for future education of children). | 1                                    | Very poor for planning future of children’s education due to no budgeting. People get money and spend it right away.                                                                                                                                                |
| 11. Community awareness of importance of ECE.                                                                                     | 4                                    | Before didn’t know about ECE or kindy, but teachers gave awareness and so now all children come to school every morning.                                                                                                                                            |
| 12. Appropriateness of kindy classroom and teaching to local culture and kastoms.                                                 | 5                                    | Snack time sharing; tradition and culture training like warriors welcoming of visitors to community.                                                                                                                                                                |
| 13. Support from kindy in preparing children for transition into primary school.                                                  | 5                                    | Foundation of education – 6 aspects of children’s development, especially side of art, fine motor skills, and cognitive development with writing.                                                                                                                   |
| 14. Involvement in church. (Denomination? Anglican )                                                                              | 4                                    | Usually church committee attends, but others do not regularly assist when help asked for.                                                                                                                                                                           |

|                             |                        |                             |                    |                          |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Facilitator's Name: Lindsay | Date: December 2, 2009 | Location: Kahua (Village 9) | Group: Male Youths | # Participants (m/f): 8m |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|

**Kahua Focus Group Activity 1: Map and discuss early childhood learning throughout community.**

| Where<br>(Primary [P], Church [C],<br>Sunday School [SS], Kindy<br>[K], Home [H]) | Who involved<br>(teacher/learner)                                | How – teaching/learning method and tools/materials                                                                                                                                                             | Cultural/Kastom<br>[C] or Western<br>Knowledge [W] | What (skills, values, beliefs, practices) are involved & why learn                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P, C                                                                              | Teacher, Other Children                                          | Other children speak and they listen and learn. The teacher speaks and reads in English, and then the children learn.                                                                                          | W                                                  | English – Must learn because common language in the world, and it wouldn't be good if Whitemar and we were frightened and ran away.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| P, H                                                                              | Primary Teacher, Daddy                                           | Look at dad or teacher doing and then know how.                                                                                                                                                                | C / W                                              | Gaining more skills (make handle ax or canoe, cut tree) because must know for when older and marry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| P, K                                                                              | Kind/Primary Teachers                                            | Start with using manipulatives, following teachers with counting stones and then following teacher with counting numbers.                                                                                      | W                                                  | Maths – must know for when older so able to go to store independently, so must know calculations Kindy prepare for primary school maths.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| H                                                                                 | Parents                                                          | Parents teach by example – e.g. mother prepares food and goes out to share with others, during which child learns through watching.                                                                            | C                                                  | Sharing – part of kastom in Kahua, so must share with others, such as food during feasting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| H                                                                                 | Daddy                                                            | Dad tells child to come help with certain parts (e.g. tie something, sew leaves for roof, how to make house post) and child looks and learns.                                                                  | C                                                  | Building house – very important so have place to live when grow up.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| H                                                                                 | Mommy                                                            | Child sees mother peeling, washing, getting fire, and sharing food with others.                                                                                                                                | C                                                  | Household care – must know how to cook and care for the house so prepared for marriage and won't go hungry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| C, K, P, C, SS                                                                    | Older People                                                     | Learn by looking at big people playing.                                                                                                                                                                        | C / W                                              | Playing games – develop social life and learn game skills of how to play; for health and fitness; can possibly go play to another country some day if very good.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| C, K, P, C, SS                                                                    | Pastor, Sunday School Teachers, Parents, Other Community Members | Develop through hearing the word of G-d and seeing the actions of other men. Teacher tells to close eyes, hold hand in prayer, and show respect for G-d because he is holy. Teacher also shares Bible stories. | C / W                                              | Prayer and Christian Spiritual Life – when grow up must know so don't depend on pastor to pray for him and so under any circumstances will be able to overcome them.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| C, K, P, C, SS                                                                    | Everyone                                                         | Everyone shows by being respectful in church and throughout community by showing respect to G-d and others.                                                                                                    | C / W                                              | Respect for G-d and kastom – respect is not the character of every man, but it is the character of G. Must learn in all areas of community for respecting G-d, people, and other's property. This is not just for childhood, but a skill everyone needs for their whole life even when they move to new place.                        |
| H, K, SS, C                                                                       | Elders, Teachers, Pastors                                        | Elders and teachers tell stories for children about kastom stories and in church they hear about Church/Bible stories.                                                                                         | C / W                                              | Learn new stories – Must learn both kastom and Bible stories so know about our cultural past and how those people lived, as well as how we live today.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| C, K, P, C, SS                                                                    | Everyone                                                         | Love is like food, it is learned through sharing.                                                                                                                                                              | C                                                  | Love – love is something that you give away and it comes right back to you. Children must learn to love each other. They learn this in Sunday school as a doctrine to love G-d, others, and yourself. This prepares them for their future life when they must have love for their family and community to avoid hate and unhappiness. |
| C (sea, river)                                                                    | Parents, Other Children                                          | Parents take child to deep water and stay a little bit away from child to begin learning from “sink or swim.” Also, watch other children.                                                                      | C                                                  | Swimming – (not bathing) must know if any boat or ship may be traveling and sinks. Also if don't have a canoe, can just swim.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

| What are learning and development goals for early childhood (educational, spiritual, moral, social, cultural, etc.) and the long-term (future education, work, life)?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | How do traditional approaches to learning fit with Western learning approaches (e.g. kindy, primary, Sunday school)?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | What would you add/change to any aspect of early childhood learning in community to better fit local culture/kastoms? (physical setting, instruction, learning materials, information taught, etc.)   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Good reputation.</p> <p>In the home, children must grow up as good men, who don't make trouble in the community, thus making shame for parents. Rather, people look at children and think parents raised them well and gave them good skills.</p> <p>Must grow up into good men who help bring together the community and do not cause separateness or lacking peace.</p> <p>Children must school good so they can go get good work because here in the Solomons, we need people to help in community, province, and whole country (e.g. prime minister, doctor, nurse, teacher, etc.).</p> <p>Must come up in spiritual life because real place for people that G-d has prepared is heaven, so not worried about current world per say.</p> <p>Learn how to build house, not leaf house but permanent, so live in good house. People start to develop now, and it's too expensive to pay someone else, so must be able to build yourself.</p> | <p>Western: store, noodles, plastic bottles, taio tins, biscuits</p> <p>Traditional: ax, paddle, canoe, spear, custom bowl, grass skirts</p> <p>Difference between materials in kindy learning areas.</p> <p>Learn differences in transport: canoe vs. now boat, truck, plane.</p> <p>“Mara mara” – side of learning, kastom side of communication and music but now wireless radio carried by drunks and used to send messages between villages.</p> | <p>Hard to change things (e.g. would lose kastoms).</p> <p>Must learn all learning areas in balance to maintain kastoms while still preparing for further education (i.e. primary and secondary).</p> |

|                             |                        |                     |                    |                          |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Facilitator's Name: Lindsay | Date: December 2, 2009 | Location: Village 9 | Group: Male Youths | # Participants (m/f): 8m |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|

**Focus Group Activity 2: What barriers/challenges does your community face in establishing, operating, and maintaining a kindy?**

*(May relate to issues for children, parents, teachers, or wider community.)*

| Barrier / Challenge                                        | How / Why                                                                                                                                                                                     | Rank<br>Significance (10<br>stones) | Strengths                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher Payment                                            | No money to pay teachers – yet teachers continues to teach (think WV should pay teachers and not rely on communities; government should also look at this, too).                              | 17                                  | People in community work together to a degree, otherwise wouldn't have kindy.                 |
| Lack of Community Cooperation                              | Community doesn't work together when told by chairman, which is a problem for all community projects here.                                                                                    | 10                                  | Parents must continue to make children go so kindy can continue.                              |
| Land for Kindy                                             | Muddy too much but must find a good clear dry area fit for children to play.                                                                                                                  | 0                                   | Dedicated teacher, without which kindy couldn't continue.                                     |
| Teacher Untrained                                          | Can teach now but must really learn the proper skills to teach.                                                                                                                               | 15                                  | Parental support good – encouragement for children to go to kindy when mothers prepare snack. |
| Ministry of Education                                      | Should arrange time for everyone to start a new training together as we have been waiting for months but not hearing anything. This should be paid for by government.                         | 2                                   | Payment should be given to teacher to encourage her to continue teaching.                     |
| Government doesn't look at Kindy                           | Only interested in higher education schools – missing small children in rural schools – just focus on primary and upwards.                                                                    | 8                                   |                                                                                               |
| Manufactured Materials (chalk, books, blackboard, crayons) | Problem of WV who told us to build this classroom because too difficult for our children to cross the river, and now they won't support us with supplies like they have in other communities. | 6                                   |                                                                                               |
| World Vision                                               | Should assist with trainings and resources. Don't think project should go out and stop working here in Kahua by instead going to other parts of Makira.                                       | 12                                  |                                                                                               |
| Kahua Association                                          | Should help to provide awareness, voice complaints to government and WV, and provide teachers a salary.                                                                                       | 3                                   |                                                                                               |

|                             |                        |                     |                    |                          |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Facilitator's Name: Lindsay | Date: December 9, 2009 | Location: Village 9 | Group: Male Youths | # Participants (m/f): 8m |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|

### **Focus Group Activity 3:**

| Statement                                                                                          | Ranking<br>(1-poor, 5-excellent) | Reasoning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Community level of awareness of child-centered early childhood education in kindy.              | 1                                | When WV did awareness, was done in village on other side of river and we weren't invited. Since, no one has come to talk to our community so we don't understand the importance. If we did, we would likely work together.                                                                              |
| 2. Community level of awareness of supporting early childhood education in home.                   | 1                                | Elders don't have a good education, so hard for them to teach – only possible for those with an education to teach. Elders only know how to teach about sickness and kastoms.                                                                                                                           |
| 3. Community level of awareness of supporting early childhood education in church / Sunday school. | 3                                | Children don't concentrate in class, so don't listen well to teacher. They learn from the teacher but then parents don't support what they are hearing in Sunday school back in the home. Children don't learn ideas quickly, just a bit at a time. Often only children, and not parents, go to prayer. |
| 4. How much ownership does community take over kindy.                                              | 5                                | Community owns because all children from community attend, and if it were to rot, we all would be the only ones to fix it.                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 5. How much ownership does community take over church/Sunday school.                               | 5                                | Community owns – everyone can use because we all built it.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 6. Appropriateness of kindy classroom and teaching to local culture and kastoms.                   | 5                                | Yes, fits because every material is made of local resources, not just Whiteman's. Children learn about the side of kastom as well as Whiteman's learning.                                                                                                                                               |
| 7. Support from kindy in preparing children for transition into primary school.                    | 5                                | Teacher prepares children well by working hard with them everyday so they can go to primary school. She even goes to visit each child's house in the morning after ringing the bell to make sure they are coming.                                                                                       |
| 8. Community involvement in kindy.                                                                 | 3                                | Only some help to work kindy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 9. Community involvement in church. (What is denomination? <u>SSEC</u> )                           | 3                                | Only some come help to work and pray. Thus, only some come up on their spiritual side of life.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                                                                                    |                                  | (Group additionally inquired as to why some children are quick to learn while others not.)                                                                                                                                                                                                              |



## SURVEY OF BARRIERS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

World Vision

This survey is to be completed by the community kindergarten teachers and committee about your community and kindy. The information collected will be evaluated by an external consultant to World Vision (Lindsay Burton, University of Oxford) in order to advise future World Vision programs and support to communities throughout Makira-Ulawa Province. Your assistance in completing this survey provides an opportunity for your community to voice their needs, concerns, and strengths, to be heard by national and provincial governments and organizations responsible for early childhood education programs. Please complete and return to \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ where it will be collected. Thank you in advance for your participation!

### I. KINDY CLASSROOM

|                                     | Ward  | Population male/female | # Households | Time to travel 1-way to kindy | # of children attending |
|-------------------------------------|-------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Village name (where kindy located): | _____ | _____                  | _____        | _____ mins                    | _____                   |
| Other villages attending kindy:     | _____ | _____                  | _____        | _____                         | _____                   |
| _____                               | _____ | _____                  | _____        | _____                         | _____                   |
| _____                               | _____ | _____                  | _____        | _____                         | _____                   |
| _____                               | _____ | _____                  | _____        | _____                         | _____                   |

| Ages of children attending | 2 and younger | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8 and older | Total # boys | Total # girls |
|----------------------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| (Write total # on lines)   | _____         | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____       | _____        | _____         |

| Date established: | Established by: (circle answer/s) | Independently by Community | Assisted by World Vision | Assisted by Ministry of Education |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____             | _____                             | _____                      | _____                    | _____                             |

Is the kindy currently functioning regularly? No Sometimes Yes

If yes, since what date? \_\_\_\_\_ How many days and hours each week? \_\_\_\_\_ days/week \_\_\_\_\_ hours/day

If no or sometimes, since what date? \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there enough space for all attending children? No Needs Improvement Yes

Are there enough resources for all attending children:

Bush materials? No Needs Improvement Yes

Manufactured materials? No Needs Improvement Yes

### II. KINDY TEACHERS

| Name of teacher | Education level completed | Place of teacher training (institution) | Qualification obtained | # years kindy teaching experience |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____           | _____                     | _____                                   | _____                  | _____                             |
| _____           | _____                     | _____                                   | _____                  | _____                             |
| _____           | _____                     | _____                                   | _____                  | _____                             |
| _____           | _____                     | _____                                   | _____                  | _____                             |

List any in-service trainings attended, and who conducted, for each teacher:

\_\_\_\_\_

How much financial, or in kind, support does each teacher receive fortnightly, and from whom? \_\_\_\_\_

### III. COMMUNITY EDUCATION

What is the current literacy level (ability to read /write in English) in your community? \_\_\_\_\_ % literate

# of literate women/girls: \_\_\_\_\_ # of literate men/boys: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the current numeracy level (ability to do simple mathematics) in your community? \_\_\_\_\_ % numerate

# of numerate women/girls: \_\_\_\_\_ # of numerate men/boys: \_\_\_\_\_

Have any literacy or numeracy programs been conducted in your community? No Yes

If yes, by whom? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_ How many people attended? \_\_\_\_\_

How helpful was the program? (circle answer) 1 2 3 4 5  
not very

Have any health awareness talks been conducted in the past year in your community? No Yes  
 If yes, by whom? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_ How many people attended? \_\_\_\_\_

How helpful was the program? (circle answer) 1 2 3 4 5  
 not very

Have any family financial planning or management programs been conducted? (e.g. saving for education) No Yes  
 If yes, by whom? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_ How many people attended? \_\_\_\_\_

How helpful was the program? (circle answer) 1 2 3 4 5  
 not very

#### IV. BARRIERS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Please rank the following statements based on your kindy and community by circling one number from scale of 1-5 for each.

|                                                                                           | ⊖<br>Poor |   |   |   | ⊕<br>Excellent |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---|---|---|----------------|
| Community support for management of kindy (e.g. organization and participation in kindy). | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Community financial support for kindy (e.g. money or in kind).                            | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Kindy committee support for management of kindy.                                          | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Teacher support for kindy (e.g. classroom preparation and teaching).                      | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Provincial Ministry of Education support for kindy.                                       | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| World Vision support for kindy.                                                           | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Community awareness on importance of early childhood education.                           | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Appropriateness of kindy classroom and teaching to local culture and kastoms.             | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Community knowledge of health and nutrition (e.g. balanced diet).                         | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Community awarenesses/skills on food's importance for improving academic performance.     | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Supply of fresh food for community (e.g. cabbage, bananas, kumara, etc.).                 | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Number of children eating balanced meal during kindy snack time.                          | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Community knowledge on family financial planning/management (e.g. saving for education)   | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Support from kindy in preparing children for transition into primary school.              | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| Community involvement in local church.                                                    | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |

What denomination is local church? \_\_\_\_\_

#### V. LIVELIHOODS (food and income)

List all income generating activities in your community: (put \* next to all activities that have been used to support kindy)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What further livelihood (e.g. food and income) and educational (e.g. literacy, numeracy, teacher training, kindy awareness, etc.) knowledge and skills does your community need to improve support and participation in the kindy and development of young children?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What barriers/challenges does your community have in establishing and maintaining a functioning kindy?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please write any additional comments or concerns:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Ethics Documents

### B.1CUREC I

**University of Oxford  
CENTRAL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (CUREC)  
IDREC Checklist**

|                                                                                |                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>*Principal investigator/supervisor/student researcher:</b>                  | Lindsay Julia Burton                                                               |
| <b><u>FOR STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS ONLY</u></b><br><b>Name of Supervisor:</b> | Dr. Maria Evangelou                                                                |
| <b>Department or institute:</b>                                                | Education Department                                                               |
| <b>Address for correspondence:</b>                                             | St. Cross College, St. Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LZ                                      |
| <b>E-mail and telephone contact:</b>                                           |  |

### Section A

***Title and brief lay description of \*research (about 150 words), plus description (about 200 words) of the nature of participants (including the criteria for inclusion/exclusion, method of recruitment, attaching samples of participant information and consent forms), purpose of the research, methods to be used, and use to which the results/data will be put.***

**“Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands:  
Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability”**

This D.Phil. study will examine how community-based kindergartens’ sustainability can be strengthened, based on an understanding of existing, formal and informal, practices of shared learning throughout the Kahua region (approximately 50 communities, comprising 4500 rural islanders) of the Solomon Islands. Through the use of qualitative, ethnographically inspired, methods, the study will explore how these shared learning experiences are shaped by the transmission of, and used to convey, cultural knowledge. Based on that understanding, implications will be drawn for how community-based institutionalized education in Kahua can incorporate traditional practices of shared learning experiences to support their sustainable development, as opposed to falling prey to inappropriate externally imposed international models of institutionalized/universalized early education. In light of pending national Solomon Islands’ policy requiring all children’s attendance for three years of kindergarten before entry to primary school, and currently unsustainable development of such early childhood centers in the region due to faltering community support, this study has significant practical implications for rural community-based initiatives and education developments throughout the region. Results will be published in regional reports and global journals, as well as through presentations to all participants and on an international scale. Additionally, local benefits are anticipated from involvement in interactive research activities and capacity building opportunities for locals as research assistants.

This research aspires to continue working in partnership with the Kahua people and their developing grassroots association: the Kahua Association. Much effort during a three month pilot study (June-August 2008) was dedicated to rapport building, increasing awareness of this

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ongoing research project (indirectly emphasizing the significance of local education, particularly kindergartens), and establishing roots to work collaboratively with locals to build capacity and increase the likelihood of sustainable practical outcomes from the research. Due to the nature of the study as being ethnographic, with influences from collaborative research methods, all habitants in the Kahua region will potentially be involved in participant observations, community-wide interactive focus groups, and semi/unstructured interviews. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>List all *sites where project will be conducted:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Solomon Islands: Honiara (national capital) - National Ministry of Education, Kirakira (provincial capital) - Provincial Ministry of Education and World Vision Provincial Headquarters, Bauro region community, Kahua communities (e.g. homes, schools, churches, wider environment, etc.) |
| <b>Anticipated duration of project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <u>  6  </u> months                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Anticipated start date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 01 / 06 / 2009                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Anticipated end date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 31 / 11 / 2009                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Name and status (e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate; post-doctoral research assistant) of others taking part in the project:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## Section B

(Please put a tick in the yes/no column as appropriate to indicate your response).

|                                                                                                               |     |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1). Does your study primarily aim to monitor and/or improve the performance of a particular service provider? | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 2) Will your conclusions be applicable wholly or primarily to that service provider?                          | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 3) Are you conducting your study on behalf of or at the request of a service provider?                        | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                               |     | X  |

If you have answered 'yes' to any question in section B it is likely that your study is \*audit, not \*research. Please check CUREC glossary and if your study is audit you need not submit your proposal for ethical scrutiny. If you have answered 'no' to all questions please proceed to section C.

## Section C

(Please put a tick in the yes/no column as appropriate to indicate your response).

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1) Will the research involve *human participants recruited by means of their status as present or past NHS *patients or their relatives or carers or present or past NHS staff?                                                                                                                               | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 2) Will the research involve *personal data of any of the people listed in question C 1 above ?                                                                                                                                                                                                               | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 3) Will the research in whole or part be carried out on NHS premises or using NHS facilities?                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 4) Does the research involve administering any drug, placebo, or other substances to participants in the European Union (EU)?                                                                                                                                                                                 | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 5) Does the research involve ionising radiation in the EU?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 6) Does the research involve human genetic research in the EU?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 7) Does the research involve magnetic resonance imaging in the EU?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 8) Does the research involve use of organs or other bodily material of past and present NHS patients?                                                                                                                                                                                                         | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 9) Does the research involve any other *invasive procedure (Class A) not described above?                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |
| 10) Does the research involve *human participants aged 16 and over who do not have *capacity to consent for themselves?<br><br>[Please note that the definition of *capacity has been altered by the Mental Capacity Act 2005; see the <a href="#">Glossary</a> on the CUREC website for further information] | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |     | X  |

If you have answered 'yes' to any question in section C please stop work on this checklist as you will need to submit your proposal to the appropriate NHS ethics committee. If you have answered 'no' to all questions so far, please proceed to section D.

## Section D

(Please put a tick in the yes/no column as appropriate to indicate your response).

|                                                                                                                   |            |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>1) Is the study to be funded by the US National Institutes of Health or another US federal funding agency?</b> | <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
|                                                                                                                   |            | <b>X</b>  |

If you have answered 'yes' to the question in section D please stop work on this checklist as you will need to submit your proposal to OXTREC which uses separate documentation (<http://www.tropicalmedicine.ox.ac.uk/oxtrecreframeset.htm>).

If you have answered 'no' to all questions so far, please proceed to section E.

## Section E

(Please put a tick in the yes/no column as appropriate to indicate your response).

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |            |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>1) Are all the data about people to be used in your study previously collected anonymised data which neither you nor anyone else involved in your study can trace back to the individuals who provided them (e.g. census data, administrative data, secondary analysis)? Please refer to the definition of *personal data in the glossary and FAQ no. 6 for further guidance.</b> | <b>YES</b> | <b>NO</b> |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |            | <b>X</b>  |

If you have answered 'yes' to the question in section E please stop work on this checklist as you do not need to secure ethical approval for your study. There is no need to submit any details to IDREC as such research does not constitute research involving human participants for review purposes.

If you have answered 'no' to all questions so far, please proceed to section F.

## Section F

Methods to be used in the study (**tick** as many as apply: this information will help the committee understand the nature of your research and may be used for audit).

| <b>METHOD USED</b>                                                      | <b>PLEASE TICK</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Unstructured interview</i>                                           | X                  |
| <i>Semi-structured interview</i>                                        | X                  |
| <i>Structured interview</i>                                             |                    |
| <i>Questionnaire</i>                                                    | X                  |
| <i>Analysis of existing records</i>                                     |                    |
| <i>Participant performs verbal/paper and pencil/computer based task</i> | X                  |
| <i>Measurement/recording of motor behaviour</i>                         |                    |
| <i>Audio recording of participant</i>                                   | X                  |
| <i>Video recording or photography of participant</i>                    | X                  |
| <i>Physiological recording from participant</i>                         |                    |
| <i>Participant observation</i>                                          | X                  |
| <i>Systematic observation</i>                                           |                    |

|                                                                                                             |   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Observation of specific organisational practices</i>                                                     | X |
| <i>Other (please specify)</i><br>Children's illustrations to facilitate discussions/unstructured interviews | X |

## Section G

(Please put a tick in the yes/no column as appropriate to indicate your response).

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1) <i>Have you made arrangements to obtain written *informed consent from participants?</i>                                                                                                                           | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | X   |    |
| 2) <i>Have you made arrangements to ensure that *personal data collected from participants will be held in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act?</i>                                           | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | X   |    |
| 3) <i>If your research involves any use of *personal data obtained from a *third party, have you checked to ensure that the *third party has arrangements in place to permit disclosure?</i>                          | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | X   |    |
| 4) <i>Does the research involve as participants *people whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question?</i>                                                                                           | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | X   |    |
| 5) <i>Does the research involve any alteration of participants' normal patterns of sleeping, eating, or drinking?</i>                                                                                                 | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     | X  |
| 6) <i>Is there a significant risk that the research will expose participants to visual, auditory, or other environmental stimuli of a level or type that could have short- or long-term harmful physical effects?</i> | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     | X  |
| 7) <i>Is there a significant risk that that the research will induce anxiety, stress or other harmful psychological states in participants that might persist beyond the duration of the test/interview?</i>          | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     | X  |
| 8) <i>Does the research involve exposing participants to any physical or psychological hazard, beyond those of their usual everyday life, not covered by questions 9 and 10?</i>                                      | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     | X  |
| 9) <i>Does the research involve any *invasive procedure (Class B)?</i>                                                                                                                                                | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |     | X  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 10) Will the research elicit information from participants that might render them liable to criminal proceedings (e.g. information on drug abuse or child abuse)?                                                                                                                                                           | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     | X  |
| 11) Does the research involve the *deception of participants?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     | X  |
| 12) Will the research require a participant to spend more than 2 hours in any single session on activities designed by the researcher (NB this time restriction does not refer to situations where participants are observed going about activities not devised by the researchers e.g. observation of lessons in schools)? | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     | X  |
| 13) Will the research involve a significant risk of any harm of any kind to any participant not covered above?                                                                                                                                                                                                              | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     | X  |
| 14) Do you intend to follow any professional/CUREC guidelines (please provide details)<br>CUREC and BERA (2004) guidelines                                                                                                                                                                                                  | YES | NO |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | X   |    |

If any of your answers in section G are in a shaded box, please complete section H. If all your answers in section G are in the unshaded boxes, please complete section I.

## Section I

**Complete this section only if you do not need to submit form CUREC/2.**

I understand my responsibilities as principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher as outlined on p.1 of this form and in the CUREC glossary and guidance.

I declare that the answers above accurately describe my research as presently designed and that I will submit a new checklist should the design of my research change in a way which would alter any of the above responses so as to require completion of CUREC 2/full scrutiny by an IDREC. I will inform the relevant IDREC if I cease to be the principal researcher on this project and supply the name and contact details of my successor if appropriate.

**Signed by principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher:**.....

**Date:**.....

**Print name** (block capitals)...LINDSAY J BURTON.....

**Signed by supervisor:**.....(for student projects)

**Date:**.....

**Print name** (block capitals).....

---

I understand the questions and answers that have been entered above describing the research, and I will ensure that my practice in this research complies with these answers.

**Signed by associate/other researcher:** .....

**Print name** (block capitals).....

**Date** .....

---

I have read the research project application named above. On the basis of the information available to me, I:

- (i) consider the principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher to be aware of her/his ethical responsibilities in regard to this research;
- (ii) consider that any ethical issues raised have been satisfactorily resolved or are covered by CUREC approved protocols, and that it is appropriate for the research to proceed without further formal ethical scrutiny at this stage (noting the principal researcher's obligation to report should the design of the research change in a way which would alter any of the above responses);
- (iii) am satisfied that the proposed project has been/will be subject to appropriate \*peer review and is likely to contribute something useful to existing knowledge and/or to the education and training of the researcher(s) and that it is in the \*public interest.
- (iv) [FOR DEPARTMENTS/FACULTIES WITH A DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (DREC) OR EQUIVALENT BODY - PLEASE DELETE IF NOT APPLICABLE] confirm that this checklist (and associated research outline) has been reviewed by the Department's Research Ethics Committee (DREC)/equivalent body, and attach the associated report from that body.

**Signed:**.....(Head of department or nominee e.g Chair of DREC, Director of Graduate Studies for student projects)

**Print name** (block capitals).....

**Date:**.....

## B.2 CUREC II

### University of Oxford

#### CENTRAL UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (CUREC)

Not all research project leaders need to fill in this form. **Before starting work on this form**, please fill in CUREC's checklist (CUREC/1) which will show if you need to complete this form. Please also ensure you have consulted the following CUREC guidance documents available on the CUREC website (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/resrchapp/index.shtml>):

- [Guidance on approval process](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [FAQs](#)

Definitions of terms marked with an asterisk are to be found in CUREC's glossary and guidance.

#### SECTION 1: PROJECT TITLE, RESEARCHERS, AND CONTACT DETAILS

##### 1. Person to whom IDREC/CUREC should direct correspondence.

###### **\*Principal investigator/supervisor/student researcher**

Title and name: Lindsay Julia Burton (student researcher)

Appointment:

Department: Education

Institution: University of Oxford

Address: St. Cross College, St. Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LZ

Phone: [REDACTED]

Will you need training to participate in this project?

☐ Yes ☒ No

###### **FOR STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS ONLY**

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Maria Evangelou

##### 2. Full project title and proposed starting date:

Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands: Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability – Beginning June 2009

##### 3. Are you submitting this project to another ethics committee or has it been previously submitted to an ethics committee?

☐ Yes - provide details.

☒ No

**4. Have you made use of professional/CUREC guidelines in framing your research project and preparing documentation?**

Note: the CUREC guidelines are available online (<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/oxonly/protocols/guidelines.shtml>) or by emailing [curec@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:curec@admin.ox.ac.uk)

☒ Yes - provide details.

☐ No – explain why not.

|                                        |
|----------------------------------------|
| CUREC and BERA (2004) guidelines used. |
|----------------------------------------|

**5. Researchers involved in this project**

*For each researcher who requires training to participate in this project, describe training on a **separate page** and include the name of the trainer(s).*

**SECTION 2: PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**6. Description of project**

Please give a description (300-800 words) of your project to supplement the information already provided in Section A of the checklist (CUREC/1), detailing those aspects of the project which involve \*human participants, particularly any aspect which is beyond already established and accepted techniques. Please attach all other documents (e.g. questionnaire, recruitment advertisements, participant information, and consent forms) that you plan to use in the study. **Please note that detailed scientific background is not required unless directly relevant to ethical issues.**

The Kahua region of the Solomon Islands exemplifies communities taking ownership over their own future with the establishment of the Kahua Association (grassroots organization). In light of the Kahua people's interest in participating in research to shape their future development, this study is based on an understanding that the researcher must form a collaborative learning effort with the participants, which will be facilitated through the use of ethnographic methods. The researcher aspires to involve anyone with a desire to participate, as was requested by the Kahua people after completing a three month pilot study: locals expressed the importance of equality in involving as many communities and participants as possible so more people could benefit from shared learning opportunities, and furthermore, increased ownership-taking of research findings. Recruitment of participants for methods, aside from participant observations (for which opportunistic sampling will be used), will involve notifying communities in advance of focus groups, workshops, and other interactive activities, and as was evident during the pilot study, the vast majority of community members are then willing and eager to attend out of personal interest. To maintain consistent and manageable group sizes, subgroups will be created in line with culturally appropriate practices, likely separating by gender and age groups. Selection of research assistants, who will change during different stages of the study, will be determined through an open interview process to emphasize equality of opportunity, while simultaneously working with the Kahua Council of Women to increase their capacity for running such a process.

Methods to be conducted (as trialed in the pilot study) will include extensive participant observations of formal and informal shared learning experiences throughout Kahua communities, including in homes, schools, churches, and the wider outdoor community

environment; semi and unstructured interviews (audio-recorded) with key early childhood stakeholders in the government, NGOs, and rural villages; activity-based focus groups; children's group discussions based around their illustrations (to be drawn in kindergartens about their perceptions of education and learning throughout their community); video and photographic data collection of shared learning experiences (particularly to capture nonverbal learning exchanges and contextual elements, which words are incapable of capturing, especially in light of extensive linguistic and cultural differences); and an interactive regional teacher workshop. This wide range of methods has been designed to increase understandings of the diversity of people and perspectives involved in supporting the early learning and development of children: a process that permeates the community.

Research findings will serve the following purposes: practical implications for strengthening community support and sustainability of kindergartens and early primary education (based on interactive focus groups and a kindergarten teacher workshop, as well as through presentations of findings to communities upon concluding the study); reports and presentations to provincial and national governments and NGOs involved in the establishment of early childhood education to enlighten future developments as these services are scaled up across the Solomons; reports and presentations to the international community (particularly targeting Pacific island and small developing nations) who are also in the process of building up early childhood initiatives often in community-based models; and finally through a report and presentation to the Kahua Association for (in a broader sense) contributing to their development priorities in building local capacity and identifying factors applicable to a multitude of community-based projects.

Unless expressly stated by a participant, all data collected will not be recorded with participants' names or directly identifiable characteristics. Instead, identifiers of time/date, location, gender, and participant age (particularly for children) will be recorded with data in order to facilitate comparisons between findings. Particular care will be taken when involving children, which will be a large component of the study since they are essentially the focus. For those under age 15 (i.e. legal marriage age and thus adulthood), consent will be sought from children, a parent/guardian, and the adult in charge of the situation (if applicable). Visual, audio, and typed interview/observation data will be stored on a password protected Asus Eee PC and backed up on memory sticks, all of which will be locked in a case or remain with the researcher while not in use. At a minimum, once a day data will be downloaded and erased from a camera and audio recorder. The only other people with access to electrical equipment (i.e. laptop, camera, and audio recorder) will be research assistants who will only use this equipment under direct supervision of the researcher. All written field notes will also be secured in a locked case when not in use by researcher.

## **7. Literature search**

If the research involves significant risk to the human participants please describe what literature searches have been undertaken to obtain information to aid risk reduction/management.

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

### **SECTION 3: RESEARCH INVOLVING CONTACT WITH \*HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

If the project does NOT involve contact with\*human participants, but only use of data about them, do NOT complete this section, but go to Section 4. If you are not completing Section 3 please delete it from your application to save paper.

#### **8. Description of participants**

How many participants will be involved in the project?

Due to the nature of the study as ethnographic, a specific number of participants cannot be determined, as entire villages (selected from approximately 50 comprising 4500 people, yet predominately focusing on 5 villages) will be involved to some extent. Approximately 10 governmental and NGO officials will be involved in semi-structured interviews. Approximately 30 teachers will be involved in an interactive workshop.

#### **9. Details of participants**

- (a) What types of people will be recruited e.g. students,\* children, people with learning disabilities?

All people residing in Kahua regional villages are potential participants due to the broad ethnographic involvement of the researcher throughout the region. Additionally, participants will include villagers from the Bauro region for two weeks, mainly in the form of participant observations. Because the study focuses on shared learning experiences in the early childhood years (i.e. approximately age 3-8), many children will be involved in the study during participant observations and limited group discussions that will be facilitated by their illustrations. It is highly unlikely that participants with learning disabilities can be included in the study due to cultural barriers in gaining access to these individuals.

- (b) What will be the age range of participants?

Participants will include all ages from infants to the elderly.

- (c) How will the competence of participants to give \*informed consent be determined?

Informed consent will be sought from children and one of their parents/guardians for all participants under age 15 (the legal marriage age, and thus transition into adulthood, in the Solomon Islands). Furthermore, in settings of formal learning (i.e. kindergarten, church, etc.) consent will also be sought from the adult in charge. For persons deemed to have mental disabilities, consent will additionally be sought from a parent/guardian.

- (d) What are the \*defining criteria for participation in the study?

All government/organization officials in the urban centers of Honiara and Kirakira, the Kahua people, Bauro regional communities, and visitors living in the Kahua region are potential participants in this study. A range will be sought between genders, ages, and levels of social status/power of participants.

## 10. Recruitment of participants

- (a) Describe how, where, and by whom participants will be identified, approached, and recruited.

During a three-month pilot study, the researcher established connections with government and organization officials who have agreed to ongoing support and collaboration in the study. The entire Kahua region is aware of the study and familiar with the researcher; however, an initial two weeks will be spent travelling the region disseminating pilot study findings and informing villagers of this second phase. To maintain a partnership model, congruent with cultural/societal structures in place, the researcher will continually work through the chain of gatekeepers, beginning with the Kahua Association, then to village tribal leaders/elders and individual participants. During a brief visit to the Bauro region, the researcher will be shadowing the Provincial Ministry of Education Early Childhood Coordinator, whom will facilitate initial access throughout the communities. In all instances, upon arrival in a community, the researcher will carry out a meeting with village leaders and elders to gain initial research approval. Then, she will give an informal talk about the study to the entire community and how community members may be involved. Consent will then be obtained on a case-by-case basis as opportunities for particular data collection arise.

- (b) If your research involves any use of \*personal data obtained from a \*third party, describe the steps you have taken to ensure that the \*third party has arrangements in place to permit disclosure.

No use of personal data from third party.

- (c) Will any \*unequal relationships exist between anyone involved in the recruitment and the potential participants?

☒ Yes

☐ No

If yes:

- (i) Describe the nature of the unequal relationship.

Potentially, the researcher is in a position of power as perceived by the participants due to her ethnicity and education level.

- (ii) Explain how ethical problems arising from the unequal relationship will be resolved.

With the use of an ethnographic approach, the researcher aims to reduce any perceived power imbalances by becoming a participant-observer, living alongside participants on an equal level. Furthermore, she will emphasize participants' expertise in their knowledge of their own culture, context, and young children's development in comparison to hers as an outsider. These unequal relationships will further be reduced with the use of locals as research assistants facilitating the study, with the intention of making participants feel more comfortable communicating in the presence of another Kahua person or someone of their own gender.

- (d) Describe any \*financial or other rewards which will be offered to participants.

Individual participants will not be paid for contributing/involvement in the study; however, participation in daily village activities/chores by the researcher may be viewed as repayment for their participation in the study. During home stays, which will involve extensive participant observations, the research will pay a small sum of money for room and board.

## 11. \*Participant information

It is essential that written information is easily understandable by participants. Failure to provide this information in appropriate lay language is the most frequent reason for delays in ethical approval.

- (a) Will participants receive **written** information about the project before giving their consent?

☒ Yes - please attach.

☒ No - give reasons.

Government and organization officials who have sufficient literacy abilities will receive a written brochure and letter explaining the project along with the informed consent form. With a recognition that these participants have high levels of education and are knowledgeable in issues pertaining to early childhood development/education, the documents created for them provide a more in depth account of the study to both sufficiently inform them (since they will be speaking from an official position), as well as establish the credibility, knowledge, and professionalism of the researcher. However, due to low literacy rates and traditional oral practices of sharing information, written information about the project will not be presented to village participants in Kahua prior to seeking their consent. Instead, these participants will receive an oral explanation of the project, simplified but comparable to that included in the project brochure. If any participants are wary of signing an informed consent form, the option of verbal consent will be offered. Furthermore, if any participant is wary of participating, such as due to an insufficient understanding of the study, they will be able to ask any questions to the researcher and research assistants (capable of translating), as well as will be reassured of their confidentiality and anonymity.

- (b) Who will give the participants the information and how?

At any given time, the researcher will have two local research assistants/interpreters, who will translate information about the project into the Kahua language to be orally read to participants. Oral communication, rather than written, is the preferred medium for transmission of information in the rural Solomon Islands, stemming from a long cultural tradition of passing knowledge through verbal means. Since the majority of participants are illiterate, the researcher aims to guarantee their greatest comprehension before consenting to participate while also not off-putting potential participants fearing they must be able to read.

- (c) Does the research involve deliberate \*deception of participants?

☐ Yes- explain why the real purpose of the research needs to be concealed and how and when participants will be told of the deception.

☒ No

(d) Please describe the basis on which you have decided how long participants will have to think about the information provided before giving consent.

Participants have been aware of this study, and the format in which data will be collected, since June-August 2008 during the pilot study. An initial two weeks at the beginning of this phase will be spent travelling throughout the region reintroducing the study and potential involvement opportunities. Two months will then be spent in a single village, where initial consent has already been obtained. This extensive amount of time dedicated to informing the entire region of the research and researcher is based on a recognition that it takes an extensive amount of time to establish trust and rapport with potential participants, and thus villagers will be welcome to give consent and begin contributing to the study at any point once they feel comfortable and well-informed. Upon formally collecting data from a particular participant, she/he will be read a document explaining the study and the consent form. She/he will be allowed to ask questions before asked for consent. Officials in Kirakira and Honiara will receive consent materials up to one month in advance of an interview when interview appointments made.

**12. \*Informed consent**

(a) Will you obtain written consent?

- ☒ Yes - please attach \*consent form.
- ☒ No - explain how consent will be obtained and recorded and why this method is used.

Written consent will be obtained from literate government and organization key stakeholders; however, villagers, for whom the majority are illiterate, will have the consent form read aloud to them in the language they best understand (Solomon Islands Pidgin or Kahua Language) by the researcher with the assistance of interpreters. These translations will be written in advance. If consent is agreed, the participant's name will be recorded on a "Verbal Informed Consent" document, along with the researcher's initials, and date. Notably, the "Verbal Informed Consent" document has space to record multiple participants' consent in an effort to cut down on excess paper since all materials must be carried by foot throughout the fieldwork.

(b) If participants are unable to give valid consent, how and from whom will you obtain consent?

For participants unable to give valid consent, both the participant's consent (if possible) and the consent of a parent/guardian will be obtained. Both participant and parent/guardian will be orally read the consent form and allowed to ask questions. If they verbally consent, both the participant and parent/guardian's names will be recorded on a "Verbal Informed Consent" document, along with the researcher's initials, date, and the reason for needing additional consent.

- (c) List those researchers who will, with the authorisation of the principal researcher (or supervisor in the case of student researchers), secure the consent of participants.

The principal researcher will be present for all oral and written consent of participants secured.

### 13. Consequences of participation

- (a) What are the potential risks or actual ill effects of participation (if any) e.g. invasive procedures, distress, deception etc, and what will be done to minimise these risks

- (i) to the participants?

No significant potential risks are anticipated for participants since they will have the freedom to share information, and cease participating, at their discretion.

- (ii) to the researchers?

No risks are anticipated to the researcher.

- (iii) to others (e.g. the university, family)?

No risks are anticipated to others.

- (b) Is there a need for support or counselling?

☐ Yes - describe the form of support or counselling and how, when, and by whom it will be conducted.

☒ No

- (c) Is there a need for debriefing or follow-up discussion?

☐ Yes - describe the form of debriefing or follow-up discussion and how, when, and by whom it will be conducted.

☒ No

- (d) Are there any potential benefits to the participants?

☒ Yes - describe them below

☐ No

Foremost, the aspiration is that the Kahua people will benefit from this research in the continuing development of their context and culture relevant early childhood learning initiatives, as research findings are presented to them, as well as analysed with them, to determine appropriate ensuing developments. By participating in the study, the Kahua people will have the opportunity to discuss issues that may not come up in daily conversations. Through sharing and discussing views, concerns, and changes for their

future, the Kahua people may potentially identify significant issues they wish to address. Furthermore, findings will be shared with the Kahua Association and national/provincial governments/organizations, thus empowering the Kahua people through allowing their views to be heard by influential key stakeholders, capable of taking further action on issues identified. Throughout the research process, a number of locals will be involved in various capacities as research assistants, which will provide opportunities for local capacity building (e.g. computer skills, research facilitation abilities, literacy skills, ECCD knowledge, etc.).

**14. \*Adverse events**

How will adverse events be monitored and reported?

While no adverse events are anticipated, any problems noticed or distress that occurs with participants as a result of participating in the study will be logged by the researcher and reported to her supervisor during their next correspondence.

**15. Monitoring**

Explain how and by whom (e.g. supervisor in the case of student research projects) the ethical aspects of the project will be monitored to ensure that they conform to the procedures set out in this application.

The researcher's supervisor will have phone and/or internet contact with her for approximately one week at the beginning and end of the fieldwork and two weeks in the middle. While living in rural regions where there are no electricity or communication facilities, the researcher will be out of regular external contact. This necessitates clearly defining, and agreement on, ethical aspects of the project prior to beginning the study, as well as potential problems that may arise, and then debriefing upon returning to urban centers for communication in the middle of the fieldwork and after completion.

**SECTION 4: RESEARCH INVOLVING COLLECTION, USE, OR**

**\*DISCLOSURE OF \*PERSONAL DATA**

Your project must meet the standards laid down in the Data Protection Act (1998) with respect to the collection, use, and storage of \*personal data about \*human participants.

Please delete questions or parts of questions that you are not required to answer to save paper.

**16. Need I complete this section?**

Does the project involve the collection, use or disclosure of personal information including sensitive and/or genetic information?

☒ No – you need not complete this section. **Go to Section 5.**

☐ Yes – you must answer questions in this section. **Go to Question 17.**

**SECTION 5: MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES**

**24. \*Conflict of interest**

(a) Do researchers on this project have a financial or other interest in its conduct or outcomes?

☐ Yes – give details.

☒ No

**25. \*Peer review**

Has this project been peer reviewed?

☒ Yes – explain by whom (e.g. by a, tutor, supervisor, funding body etc) and with what outcome

☐ No – explain why not.

The researcher's supervisor has reviewed and approved the project proposal.

**26. Funding**

List all bodies and individuals from whom funding has been or will be sought.

| Source      | Amount in £ | Status of Funds                                          |                                                          |
|-------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
|             |             | Available                                                | Applied for                                              |
| Self-funded |             | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |

**27. Reporting of results**

(a) Will the project outcomes be made public at the end of the project?

☒ Yes – describe the intended report and how and to whom it will be made available.

☐ No – explain why not

At the end of the project, a D.Phil. thesis will be written and made public in the University of Oxford Department of Education library. A project report will be written and presented to the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, other government agencies and organizations that have participated in the research, the Kahua Association, and the Kahua and Bauro communities.

(b) Will a report(s) of the project outcomes (for example, individual or group data) be made available to participants at the end of the project?

☒ Yes – describe report and how it will be made available.

☐ No – explain why not.

☐ N/A

Oral presentations of pilot study research findings will be made to participants in the form of village meetings at the beginning of this second phase of the study. Likewise, preliminary findings presentations will be conducted in the final weeks of fieldwork, and final analysed findings will be presented in a subsequent visit in 2010.

## **28. Declaration by researchers**

### **Full project title:**

I/We, the researcher(s) agree:

- To start this research project only after obtaining approval from IDREC/CUREC;
- To carry out this research project only if funding is adequate to enable it to be carried out according to good research practice and in an ethical manner;
- To provide additional information as requested by IDREC/CUREC before approval is secured and as research progresses;
- To maintain the confidentiality of all data collected from or about project participants;
- To notify IDREC in writing immediately of any proposed change which would increase the risks that any participant is exposed to and await approval before proceeding with the proposed change;
- To notify IDREC if the principal researcher on the project changes and supply the name of the successor;
- To notify IDREC in writing within seven days if any serious \*adverse event occurs in the course of research;
- To use data collected only for the study for which approval has been given;
- To grant access to data only to authorised persons; and
- To maintain security procedures for the protection of personal data, including (but not restricted to): removal of identifying information from data collection forms and computer files, storage of linkage codes in a locked cabinet and password control for access to identified data on computer files.

Signed by principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher:.....

Date:.....

Print name (block capitals).....

Signed by supervisor:.....(for student projects)

Date:.....

Print name (block capitals).....

## **29. Certification by \*principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher and head of department**

**Full project title: Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands: Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability**

### **Certification by \*principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher**

I accept responsibility for the conduct of this research project.

I certify that all researchers and other personnel involved in this project are appropriately qualified and experienced or will undergo appropriate training to fulfil their role in this project.

Signed by principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher:.....

Date:.....

Print name (block capitals).....

**Acceptance by head of department/other senior member of the department if the principal researcher is the head of department**

I have read the research project application named above.

On the basis of the information available to me, I judge the principal researcher/supervisor/student researcher to be award of her/his ethical responsibilities in regard to this research. I am satisfied that the proposed project has been/will be subject to appropriate peer review and is likely to contribute to existing knowledge and/or to the education and training of the researcher(s) and that it is in the public interest.

Name of head of department/other senior member of the department (e.g Chair of DREC, Director of Graduate Studies for student projects):

.....

Signature .....Date.....

**FINAL CHECK**

To prevent delay please check each of the following before submitting the application.

Have you answered all relevant questions in Sections 1-5? ☒

Have you defined all technical terms and abbreviations used? ☒

Have you included all questionnaires and participant information, consent forms, advertisements, and surveys to be used? ☒

Have you included all relevant approvals and supporting letters? ☒

Have you declared all potential conflicts of interest? ☒

Are all pages (including appendices and attachments) numbered? ☒

Have you completed the declaration by researcher(s)? ☒

Have you completed the certification by principal researcher and head of department? ☒

Revised July 2008

### *B.3 CUREC II Attachments*

#### *CUREC II Attachments*

- I. Written Consent Letter (a), Brochure of Study (b), and Written Consent Form (c)
- II. Verbal Consent Script (a) and Verbal Consent Form (b)
- III. Letter requesting access from Kahua Association
- IV. Approval email from Kahua Association
- V. Supplementary Revisions to CUREC II Application

## **Ia: Written Consent Letter**

**LINDSAY J. BURTON**  
**UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY  
United Kingdom



Dear

My name is Lindsay Burton, and I am a research student pursuing my doctorate degree at the University of Oxford in England. I am currently conducting phase two of a two-part study, with the Kahua people of Makira Island, to examine issues of community-based early childhood education. Information gathered in the initial exploratory phase (June-August 2008) of the study identified early childhood issues of significance and concern to Solomon Islanders, which now form the basis of this second, more extensive (6 month), phase of the study. For a brief overview of the study, please refer to the attached brochure.

As a stakeholder in issues related to early childhood in the Solomon Islands, I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may chose to withdraw at any time. If you choose to participate, you will be involved in an interview, lasting approximately one hour, to discuss matters of early childhood in the SI from your official perspective. With your consent, the audio of this interview will be recorded. Additionally, if you have any relevant documents that would be helpful in understanding/supporting your position and involvement in issues concerning young children, it would be very helpful if you would be able to share copies of these.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated and make a significant contribution to understanding the broad picture of early childhood development issues in the Solomon Islands. If you have any questions, or would like further information regarding the study, please contact me or my research supervisor, Dr. Maria Evangelou:

|                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lindsay Burton<br>University of Oxford<br>Department of Education<br>15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY<br>United Kingdom<br>[REDACTED] | Dr. Maria Evangelou<br>University of Oxford<br>Department of Education<br>15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY<br>United Kingdom<br>[REDACTED] |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Sincerely,

Lindsay J. Burton

## **Ib: Brochure of Study**

### **Studying Early Childhood Education in Kahua**

This study aspires to explore how community-based kindergartens' sustainability can be strengthened, based on an understanding of existing, formal and informal, practices of shared learning throughout the Kahua region. By looking at how knowledge is transferred to young children (approximately age 3-8), the study aims to identify how these early shared learning experiences are shaped by the transmission of, and used to convey, cultural knowledge. Based on that understanding, implications will be drawn for how community-based institutionalized education in Kahua can incorporate traditional practices of shared learning experiences to support their sustainable development.

Studying and investing in early childhood education has been deemed important based on a vast body of research showing that such investments can potentially support children's physical and cognitive development, as well as:

- ❖ Improve health and nutrition
- ❖ Reduce dropout and repetition rates
- ❖ Improve intelligence and school achievement
- ❖ Moderate gender imbalances in access to education
- ❖ Increase adult-life productivity and earning-potential
- ❖ Decrease anti-social behavior and juvenile delinquency

### **Findings and Further Information**

Findings from this study will be reported to participants, the Kahua Association, and regional Pacific governments and organizations through a written report and oral presentations at the end of 2009. Through collaborative efforts between the researcher and participants to learn more about early childhood education in Kahua, we aim to identify ways to improve services for families and young children in villages of the Kahua region, as well as ways to identify ways to support the transfer of cultural knowledge and practices to future generations.

For more information about the study, please contact:

Lindsay Burton  
Probationer Research Student  
University of Oxford  
Department of Education  
15 Norham Gardens  
Oxford OX2 6PY  
England

[lindsay.burton@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:lindsay.burton@education.ox.ac.uk)



*\*Photographs taken by Lindsay Burton in Kahua during research phase I (2008).*

### **Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands:**



### **Cultural & Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability**

*This study is the second phase of a research collaboration with the Kahua people, of Makira-Ulawa Province, exploring sustainable community-based early childhood education.*

*June 2009 – January 2010*

## Research Findings from Phase I

Findings from phase one (June-August 2008) revealed that some Kahua kindergartens are struggling to operate and some communities are failing to provide the support necessary, and take sufficient ownership, to maintain these community-based early childhood centers. Findings also indicated that knowledge of comprehensive early childhood care and development is increasing among the rural Kahua people; however, many challenges lie in the way of supporting children in reaching their maximum developmental potential.



Key concerns about early childhood care and development identified by research participants included:

- ❖ Misinformation about child care
- ❖ Lacking knowledge of developmental supports
- ❖ Great variability in the development of kindergartens
- ❖ Challenges in access to education
- ❖ Transitioning difficulties from kindergarten to pre-class and further primary education
- ❖ Limited recognition of the vast range of people and behaviors influencing the lives of young children

## Commitment to Ethical & Collaborative Research

- ❖ **Participation is completely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.** Regardless of age, gender, or educational achievement, all participants will play an important role in creating a broad understanding of childhood in Kahua!
- ❖ **Participants' identities will be kept confidential and anonymous in presentations and publications of findings.**
- ❖ **With the help of native interpreters, the study will be conducted in English, Solomon Islands Pidgin, and Kahua.**
- ❖ **No literacy skills are necessary to participate.**
- ❖ **This study aspires to empower participants** through working together with the researcher in identifying local issues, exploring them through discussion, and generating ideas for potential changes in the future.



## Who is involved in the study?

With a recognition that the Kahua people are the most knowledgeable about the context and cultural specific development of their children, this study aims to work collaboratively (for six months) in understanding shared early learning experiences as widely as possible from a variety of community members' unique perspectives. Input from anyone in the region, regardless of how directly they are involved in the development of children, will be documented and greatly appreciated. Participants may be asked to contribute to interviews, focus groups, and observations by the researcher as she participates in daily community activities involving young children.



Additionally, provincial and national Solomon Islands' government officials and other key stakeholders in matters of early childhood will also be recruited for the study to provide a wider view of childhood issues, policies, and practices throughout the nation.

## **Ic: Written Consent Form**

**UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY  
United Kingdom  
[REDACTED]



# **Research Participant Consent Form**

Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands:  
Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability  
*Researcher:* Lindsay J. Burton, Probationer Research Student

As a valued stakeholder in matters of early childhood in the Solomon Islands, you have been invited to participate in the second phase of the “Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands: Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability” study. If you choose to participate, you will be involved in an interview, lasting approximately one hour, and asked to provide copies of documents that would be useful for better understanding early childhood issues in the SI.

All information gathered will be kept confidential and anonymous. During the study, direct access to data will be restricted to Lindsay Burton, until it is compiled in a summary report that will be shared with participants in 2010. This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

*By voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study, you acknowledge that you have read the information letter and brochure, and you have had the opportunity to ask questions, which have been answered to your satisfaction. At any point, you retain the right to withdraw from participating in the study by advising the researcher.*

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

---

Participant's Name (print)

---

*Parent/Guardian Signature (if necessary)*

---

*Date*

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

## **Ila: Verbal Consent Script**

### **Verbal Informed Consent Script**

*(Written in third person to facilitate research assistants' translations.)*

Lindsay Burton is a research student from Oxford University. She is conducting a study for six months to explore community-based early childhood education in Kahua. This is a continuation of research she began for three months in July through August of 2009. As a valued resident in the region, Lindsay wants to invite you to participate in the study. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can stop participating at any time by telling Lindsay.

Lindsay will be living in [name of village] for [length of time]. If you choose to participate in the study, she wants to learn about early childhood in the village by observing and participating with you in your daily activities involving young children. You would also be involved in a guided group discussion with about seven others from the village, for about two hours, and short conversations with Lindsay about your thoughts on early childhood learning. During this time, Lindsay will be taking photographs, movies, and audio recordings around the village.

The findings from the study will be published in a report for the Kahua Association, the government, and local organizations, as well as in a paper for her university. After completing the study, she will make oral presentations of the findings, which she hopes can be used to improve local early childhood education and strengthen the sharing of traditional cultural knowledge and practices to young children in Kahua. Your identity will be kept anonymous in all reports and presentations.

Do you have any questions about the study?

Would you be willing to participate?

If you want to contact Lindsay in the future, she can be reached through the Kahua Association (Eddie Jude Hagasua).

## **IIb: Verbal Consent Form**

### **Verbal Informed Consent**

## Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands:

### Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas Influencing Program Sustainability

Read to Participant: *I have been read a description about Lindsay Burton's study of early childhood in Kahua and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that: my participation is voluntary; I can stop participating at any time by telling Lindsay; my identity will be kept confidential and anonymous.*

I agree to participate in the study.

[illegible]

<sup>90</sup> Consent for participants under age 15, and those with mental disabilities prohibiting them from giving informed consent, must also be granted by a parent/guardian.

<sup>91</sup> Additional notes to record special circumstances or requests by participants, such as not to be photographed or for their identity to not be anonymized.

### **III: Letter requesting access from Kahua Association**

Lindsay J. Burton  
University of Oxford  
Department of Education  
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY  
United Kingdom  
lindsay.burton@education.ox.ac.uk



March 18, 2008

Dear Members of the Kahua Association,

My name is Lindsay Burton, and I am currently a research student pursuing my doctorate at the University of Oxford in England. I have been in contact with Dr. Ioan Fazey, and from what he has told me, I am very impressed by what your association is doing in the Kahua region. I am also very interested in the participatory research Ioan began with the Kahua people last year. I am writing this letter to request your permission to carry out a study about early childhood education and development in Kahua.

#### *Importance of Early Childhood Years*

Early childhood is a period of extraordinary development and great vulnerability that builds the foundation to lifelong learning and success. I propose to conduct a study that aims to explore the holistic concept of early childhood care and development (ECCD), which would include the essential supports young children need to survive, grow, and thrive later in life: education, health, nutrition, social/emotional/spiritual development, care and nurturing, safety, etc. This also includes family and community issues, such as parental education and population growth. A vast body of research has shown that investments in ECCD can support children's physical and cognitive development, as well as:

- ❖ Improve health and nutrition
- ❖ Reduce dropout and repetition rates
- ❖ Improve intelligence and school achievement
- ❖ Moderate gender imbalances in access to education
- ❖ Increase adult-life productivity and earning-potential
- ❖ Decrease anti-social behavior and juvenile delinquency

With such compelling research about early childhood, particularly considering the great influence early experiences have throughout life, issues of early childhood appear to be an essential component to explore when working towards sustainable development.

#### *Proposed Research*

I propose to carry out a two-part study. An ethnographic case study approach would be used to broadly explore early childhood development, care, and education. This would involve me living in villages throughout the region for one-week stays to participate in the daily lives and activities of villagers while collecting data on their perceptions about early childhood and the resources available for their children.

I would like to begin with a pilot study lasting for two months (June and July). Throughout the study, participants would be asked to participate in focus groups and casual conversations to discuss their perceptions of early childhood development in the region and potential changes (if any) they hope for in the future. In addition to collecting information from a variety of community members, the views of key early childhood regional, provincial, and national stakeholders would also be gathered through interviews, observations, and the collection of documents. In order to facilitate such methods, I would like to hire and train two locals (one male and one female) to assist with data collection and language translations, which I intend to

be a beneficial learning experience for them as well as an asset to the region when carrying out future research.

With the Kahua Association's approval, I would then like to continue the research in January 2009 (lasting approximately eight months). Initial findings from the pilot study would be used to shape the research focus of this second phase, and the data collection would be expanded to extensively cover villages throughout the region. Throughout both phases of the proposed study, I wish to collaborate with islanders in a process of mutual learning that will focus on childhood issues of greatest importance as identified by the Kahua people. Additionally, following the pilot study, if I am granted access to continue the project, this would provide an opportunity for much more extensive training of additional research assistants. I recognize that the Kahua people are the most knowledgeable about the context and culture specific development of their children, but through facilitated discussions of related issues, I believe this study has the potential to reveal many important issues throughout the region.

Throughout all phases of the proposed study, I am committed to conducting research of the highest ethical standards: informed consent will be obtained from all participants, all participation will be completely voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time, and data collected will be kept confidential and anonymous.

#### *Benefits to Kahua*

This study is potentially beneficial to the Kahua people in the following ways:

- ❖ Identifying issues of importance (strengths and limitations) with regard to regional early childhood issues, which could be used to advise future development/planning efforts.
- ❖ Increasing exposure of the Kahua Association at an international level through research publications and presentations.
- ❖ Documenting the current situation, which can then easily be used to convey regional issues to governments and NGOs, with the possibility of influencing future policy and practice.
- ❖ Training for locals as research assistants, in skills of research methods, research facilitation, data collection, and on the computer.

#### *Research Findings*

Since I would be carrying out the study as part of my doctoral degree, I will be required to write a dissertation and thesis for my university. I also intend to report findings from the study through a written report and oral presentations to the Kahua Association and participants, as well as in international publications and presentations. Additionally, the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education has expressed interest in this study with its implications for their future early childhood planning, thus providing an opportunity for the Kahua people's voices to be heard by the national government. However, ultimately, I am dedicated to making this study of greatest value to the Kahua people. I hope to be able to carry out research with the Kahua people that will be an enjoyable learning experience for everyone involved and result in useful information for future planning in the region.

#### *Requests of the Kahua Association*

I would greatly appreciate if the Kahua Association would take the time to consider my proposal and inform me at your earliest convenience of a decision on whether to permit this study in Kahua. More specifically:

1. May I begin a two-month pilot study, about early childhood issues in Kahua, during June/July 2008?

2. Would the Kahua people be willing to participate in such a study? If so, would the Kahua Association be able to assist me in identifying four villages (one from each area: West Wainoni, Central, Pihuru, and Highland Villages) willing to allow me to live and work with them for one-week visits?

3. I am aware that Ioan Fazey began training research assistants last year, but would the Kahua Association be able to assist me in identifying two locals (one male and one female) willing and available during June/July to be hired and trained as research assistants/translators to facilitate the study?

4. If it is decided to allow me to come and carry out this study, would the Kahua Association be able to write a letter stating their approval of me researching in Kahua and how the Association may be able to assist? This letter is required by the Ministry of Education to obtain a permit to enter the country and carry out research.

I very much hope we will be able to work together in the future! Please do not hesitate to make any suggestions of how we could make this study the most beneficial to the Kahua Association and Kahua people.

Kindest regards,

Lindsay J. Burton

#### **IV: Approval Email from Kahua Association**

*(Email of research access granted to Kahua from President of the Kahua Association in response to researcher's request made in the field to the Kahua Association Executive Board on August 8, 2008.)*

Date: Sun, 25 Jan 2009 21:34:37 +1100

From: Evelyn Kahia [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: research

Lindsay I am very sorry for not responding to letter of request dated 08/08/2008 quickly. On your behalf I have made a request with the Kahua Association Council on the 30th October 2008.

Regarding your request to return to Kahua to continue your Early Child Hood research project the council had granted you permission to return when you feel to return. Just let me know when you think to return and Ill be just too hay to assist you where possible.

Kind regards and maurukoro.

Jude E. Hagasua

## **V. Supplementary Revisions to CUREC II Application**

### *Email response to feedback:*

Video and photographic data collection will be used to supplement primary data collection methods of participant-observations, interviews, and focus groups. It is deemed necessary to collect visual data to supplement written and oral forms of data, as stated my the CUREC II form: “to capture nonverbal learning exchanges and contextual elements, which words are incapable of capturing, especially in light of extensive linguistic and cultural differences.”

During the pilot study fieldwork, as explained in the researcher’s M.Sc. Dissertation, photographic elicitation (Pink 2001) greatly facilitated interviews, “particularly when discussing the current situation in Kahua with government and organization officials, to bridge experiences of reality and visually reinforce points being made...through providing firm evidence on which both involved in the interview could then discuss on relatively equal ground. Occasionally, this also led to interviewees desiring to share their own photographic evidence to make their own positions clearer” (Burton 2008:56-57). Due to the strong oral tradition of communication in the Solomons, which remains the dominant form in rural villages, it is essential that data collected can be presented locally with visual representations, in addition to the importance of visually being able to validate the researcher’s claims when presenting outside the Solomons, where outsiders will also benefit from a deeper visual understanding of the context and current situation.

Photographs, to a great extent, can capture this desired type of data; however, in viewing learning and development as sociocultural processes (based on theoretical foundations around the cultural nature of holistic development and legitimate peripheral participation in situated learning), to document brief interactions and learning processes through video data will be important for ongoing comparisons and analysis. For example, in asking a parent to watch a video clip and explain their thinking as the researcher tried to gain deeper understandings of their perspectives; as the researcher personally re-watches footage and reflects after she has deeper grasps on local culture and language over time; or, when she is trying to confirm translations. Furthermore, the seminal work by Joseph Tobin in *Preschool in Three Cultures* (Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989) and the follow-up study *Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited* (Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa 2009) demonstrates the power of using video data to facilitate different participants’ understandings/reflections of early childhood education and rearing practices, albeit his work was between different cultures. Ultimately, while the researcher does not intend to heavily focus on the collection of video or photographic data, which is largely due to practical limitations with restrictions of power due reliance on solar energy. However, in her overall efforts to get closer to understanding indigenous epistemologies and try to facilitate participants’ verbal explanations, descriptions, and reflections of their own cultural practices, beliefs, and values, she believes that visual data has the potential to greatly support these efforts.

With regard to the storage of visual data, it will be stored on a password-protected computer and memory sticks (locked in a case while not in use), as is stated in the CUREC II form, along with all other electronic data. Although video and photo data will not be kept with participants names, and instead will only be identified with locations, ages, dates, based on Phase I (the pilot study), participants expressed a desire

to be identified in the research and no reservations about having their names identified. Notably, the process of asking for informed consent was completely new to them, and some executive members of the Kahua Association even expressed concerns of giving people the power of consenting, particularly for photographs to be taken (as this may set future precedence for anyone who wishes to take any photographs in Kahua).

[Ultimately, there was general consensus of the importance of these practices for researchers.] If a participant's identity (by name) is made explicit in a photo or video, the researcher will conceal this before showing the data to those outside of Kahua (e.g. covering part of the photo or cutting the sound for portion of the clip) - unless expressly stated by the participant that they want their name to be used (room is provided to record this information on the "Verbal Informed Consent" form - attachment 2b). It is unnecessary to conceal names within Kahua in visual data, as all residents know each other (i.e. aside from a few deep bush villages where the researcher will not be allowed to travel or research anyhow). If visual data appears to be detrimental to participants, if shown to others, it will not be used, as the researcher has committed to not (knowingly) cause risks or ill effects to participants, as stated in the CUREC II form.

## *B.4 CUREC Approval Letter*

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES  
INTER-DIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Hayes House, 75 George Street, Oxford. OX1 2BQ  
Tel: +44(0)1865 614871 Fax: +44(0)1865 614855  
chris.ballinger@socsci.ox.ac.uk www.socsci.ox.ac.uk

Co-ordinator of the IDREC  
Social Sciences Divisional Office



Ref. SSD/2/3/IDREC

07 August 2009

Lindsay Burton  
St Cross College

Dear Lindsay Burton,

**Application for research ethics approval**

**Ref No.: SSD/CUREC2/09 – 35**

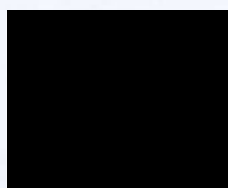
**Title: Community-Based Early Learning in Solomon Islands: Cultural and Contextual Dilemmas  
Influencing Program Sustainability**

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-divisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to the IDREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly approval has been granted.

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project, which raise ethical issues not covered in the original application, you should submit details to the IDREC for consideration.

Yours sincerely,



cc: Dr Maria Evangelou, Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens  
Phil Richards, Department of Education, 15 Norham Gardens

JED/CAJB

# *B.5 Solomon Islands Research and Residency Approval*

## Solomon Islands Research Permit (Fee) Verification

|                                                    |         |          |                                      |      |      |                          |   |  |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|--------------------------------------|------|------|--------------------------|---|--|
| SOLOMON ISLANDS                                    |         |          | DATE: 02.07.09                       |      |      | GENERAL TREASURY RECEIPT |   |  |
| MINISTRY Edu.                                      |         |          | OFFICE Edu.                          |      |      | No B 1335051             |   |  |
| RECEIVED FROM Lindsay Julia Burton                 |         |          |                                      |      |      |                          |   |  |
| The sum of (amount in words) Three hundred dollars |         |          |                                      |      |      | s. 300.00                |   |  |
| Being for Research Permit fee.                     |         |          |                                      |      |      |                          |   |  |
| By Cash/Cheque No. Cash                            |         |          |                                      |      |      | Signature                |   |  |
| To be completed by Sub-Treasury                    |         |          | To be completed by Revenue Collector |      |      |                          |   |  |
| Month                                              | Account | Vr No. * | Head/SHd.                            | Item | Job  | \$                       | ¢ |  |
|                                                    |         |          | 272                                  | 0001 | 0049 | 300                      | - |  |

TY 75 (04/09)

Residency to Reside in the Solomon Islands

Form 2

The Immigration Act, 1978

Reg. 3

No. IMM: 383/09

**PERMIT TO ENTER AND RESIDE**

**IN SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Permission to enter and reside in Solomon Islands is hereby granted to **MISS LINDSAY JULIA BURTON**

Subject to the provisions of the Immigration Act and Regulations and to compliance with the following conditions:-

1. That security in the sum of S **LETTER OF INDEMNITY** be deposited, or a Security Bond for that sum be lodged by .....  
(Name and address)

2. This permit will expire on **29.02.2010** unless previously renewed.

3. That the Permit Holder engage only in the following occupation or profession:-  
**NIL**

4. That on arrival in Solomon Islands he/she will be employed by .....  
**NIL** and will forthwith report to the Director of Immigration if he/she ceases to be so employed.

5. That he/she will not change his/her employment, occupation or profession without prior written consent of the Director of immigration (other conditions).

\* ~~That the permit holder shall not engage in any form of employment~~  
\* ~~without the written consent of the Commissioner of Labour.~~

Honiara,  
Solomon Islands

**16TH JULY, 2009** 20

\* The Director of Immigration may strike out all or any of these conditions and may add others

NOTE: Application for renewal must be made in writing at least two months before the expiry date. Under the Immigration Act, 1978 it is unlawful for a person to remain in Solomon Islands after expiration of his/her permit, and the penalty provided is a fine of one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for three years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

## **Appendix C: Formal Education System in Solomon Islands**

Primary education in the SI consists of 7 years of schooling. This commences with Preparatory class (a.k.a. Pre-Class), beginning at approximately age 6. Although, realistically for many remote villages, this can extend to 8 or 9 once children are fit for the often difficult or long walks to the nearest primary school. The foundation of these years is to introduce children to the skills needed for: writing, reading, mathematics, community studies, science, agriculture, art, music, physical education, and Christian education (MEHRD 2007:67). Upon completion of kindergarten, children progress to Pre-Class. This progression is automatic, unlike the required pass/fail for successive years from Preparatory through Class 6 (approximately age 12). Although education is not compulsory, most children are expected to attend, as per local societal values. Further, the national government, with the help of donors (Taiwanese government 2008-2010 and Australian government 2011 onwards), encourages attendance through external funding to support a “Fee Free Basic Education,” inclusive of kindergarten through Form 3.

Following Primary School is Junior Secondary School, spanning from Form 1 to 3, approximately ages 13-15, and then Senior Secondary from Form 4 to 6, with a small number of schools offering Form 7. There are 3 types of Secondary Schools, all of which are boarding schools, apart from the last, which is not exclusively boarding: National Secondary Schools (9 in 2005); Provincial Secondary Schools (introduced in the 1980s, currently 16 as of 2005); and Community High Schools (established in early 1990s and have expanded most rapidly due to community demand placing great pressure on government’s ability to provide trained teachers, sufficient equipment, and curriculum support materials. Total 117 as of 2005). Successful completion of Primary School allows for students to sit a performance exam (Solomon Islands Secondary School Entrance Examination) to determine admittance and placement into Form 1 at a Junior Secondary. Upon successful completion of Forms 1 through 3, students can then sit the “Form Three Examination,” as precursor to admittance into a Senior Secondary School.

## Appendix D: Kahua Learning Essentials

**Table D.1** Kahua Learning Essentials (generated from focus group activities [Appendix A] and supplemented by research observations)

| Where     | What (skills, values, beliefs, practices)               | Significance/Purpose of Learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Cultural [C] or Western [W] Knowledge | Who Involved (teacher)                             | Model of Learning <sup>92</sup> |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Community | Fishing (at sea in dugout canoe)                        | Skill for when older so can catch food.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | C                                     | Father                                             | MO, LPP, I                      |
|           | Paddling Canoe (boys)                                   | Skill for when older so can catch food, travel, and transport goods.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | C                                     | Father, Elder Male Peers                           | MO, I                           |
|           | Gardening                                               | Life skill so can plant food independently for survival.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | C                                     | Parents, Siblings                                  | MO, LPP                         |
|           | Social Disobedience (Kwaso Drinking, Gambling, Smoking) | Not intentionally taught, but learned through observing adults and youths' "rascal" behaviors, such as stumbling about community making excessive noise and sometimes being destructive to people's properties from drunkenness.                                     | W                                     | "Rascal" Adults and Youths (typically male)        | MO                              |
|           | Fighting                                                | Defense skills for safety, as well as traditional warrior practices in some villages. However, most children learn and inappropriately use to "play-attack" other children, which is not supported by parents, as a result of watching violent videos and mimicking. | C / W                                 | Videos, Other Children, Parents/Community Fighting | MO                              |
|           | Diving                                                  | Skill (generally of boys) to dive underwater in the sea or rivers and "shoot" fish and other sea creatures for food so do not need to buy from others.                                                                                                               | C                                     | Peers                                              | MO, I                           |

<sup>92</sup> Modeling-Observation (MO); Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP); Independently (I); Apprenticeship (A); Rote Learning (R); Play-based (P)

|                  |                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |       |                                                                                                             |                        |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Community, Kindy | Swimming                                                                      | Important skill to have incase boat, ship, or dugout canoe capsizes or sinks whilst out at sea. Generally, two approaches to teaching initiated by parents: child taken to deep waters and while relatively nearby, child dropped in to teach him/herself; alternatively, some fathers will put child on their backside and swim together like a turtle, thus teaching child in process. Many children in coastal communities also learn from watching other children play at sea or in rivers, yet for those children in bush communities (for example who come down to coastal community for school) kindy teacher may help facilitate this development during daily “swims” (i.e. bathing). | C     | Parents, Other Children, Kindy Teacher                                                                      | “Sink or Swim” – I, MO |
|                  | Dancing                                                                       | To participate in school programs when secondary schools ask for kastom dance demonstrations/fundraisers/socials and during kastom feasts. Also acquired from video-viewing and used in developing a social life, such as “Whiteman” dance moves.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | C / W | Relatives, Teachers, Videos, Peers                                                                          | MO, LPP, I             |
| Community, Home  | Traditional Skills (e.g. wood carving, weaving, canoe making, house building) | Skills of value for both self-sufficiency in creating the necessary materials for daily rural life, as well as now marketable skills due to decreasing knowledge of such traditional practices where both locals and expatriates desire buying such handcrafted materials.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | C     | Village Elders, Parents, Community Experts                                                                  | MO, LPP, A, I          |
|                  | Swearing                                                                      | Mainly inappropriate words (i.e. anything that could cause offense to others, such as calling person a particular kind of animal) overheard by children in village and then copied and used in the wrong contexts. Such language is unacceptable according to kastom; however, for some aspects of ramata, male elders formerly would use swearing words to prevent children from using in future (e.g. telling child that when he grows up he will run away with another woman). Due to this then being taken the wrong way and used in inappropriate contexts, this practice is now largely discontinued.                                                                                    | C / W | Parents, Other People/Children (visiting, living in, or passing through) Community (generally males), Radio | MO                     |
|                  | Washing (e.g. clothes/dishes in river)                                        | Preparation for life when older to keep everything clean; responsibility of women in home.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | C     | Mother, Granny, Community Women, Female Siblings                                                            | MO, LPP                |

|                                |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |       |                                                                           |            |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
|                                | Sweeping                                                        | Preparation for life both in supporting family, when younger, and one's own household when older, for maintaining a clean environment and thereby protecting one and his/her family's health (e.g. remove attractants of flies, mosquitoes, and rats, which have associated health risks)                                                                                                                                                 | C     | Mother, Granny, Community Women, Female Siblings                          | MO         |
| Community, Primary             | Foreign Culture                                                 | Children see styles youths and adults have picked up while living in urban centers and brought back to the village, or pictures of foreign cultures' styles, and desire to copy: clothing (e.g. girls wearing trousers), hairstyles (e.g. long hair as opposed to traditional short cuts for both genders, "noodle hair" on boys who twist hair into tiny curls), footwear (e.g. no longer barefoot but like boots and slippers/sandals). | W     | Peers, Community, Teachers                                                | MO, R      |
| Community, Home, Kindy         | Kastoms                                                         | Must know how to treat strangers and everyone with respect                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | C     | Community                                                                 | MO, LPP    |
|                                | Kastom Stories                                                  | Must know heritage stories of ancestors and lands, both to pass on kastom to future generations and as source of entertainment at social gatherings.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | C     | Kindy Teacher, Parents, Community                                         | MO, R      |
| Community, Kindy, Primary      | Playing Games (eg. Soccer, Shell-a-Coconut)                     | Know how to play socially and join into games in community/school. Also important for the physical health and development of the child. Skills in soccer additionally are a potential avenue to make money in child's future as an athlete.                                                                                                                                                                                               | C / W | Friends, Teachers                                                         | MO, LPP, I |
| Community, Home, Kindy, Church | Playing Musical Instrument (e.g. guitar, wooden drum, panpipes) | Learn for future life so could become a musician to make money, or as a skill to play at any occasion (e.g. home gathering, church service, community feast).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | C / W | Self-taught, Community, Kindy Teacher                                     | MO, I      |
|                                | Cooking / Sharing Food                                          | Mothers give ramata of how to cook, so when older children can cook independently. Sharing food with family and friends is an important part of kastom. Reflected in kindy teachers/practices of sharing with other children during snack-time to develop this fundamental value/behavior for later life.                                                                                                                                 | C     | Mother, Father, Other Children, Kindy Teacher, Relatives, Whole Community | MO, LPP, P |
| Community, Home, Primary,      | Planning                                                        | Must develop ability for both short- and long-term planning, such as when to plant/harvest crops to ensure sufficient amount year-round. Also, need ability for long-term planning, such as                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | C     | Parents, Community                                                        | MO, LPP, I |

|                                            |                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                    |                                                                         |            |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Church                                     |                | of kastom feasts and weddings to ensure raising enough pigs in time, completing building of a kastom house, invite all relatives, etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                    |                                                                         |            |
| Home, Kindy, Primary, Church/Sunday School | Prayer         | Learn to pray alone with G-d, to know how to talk with G-d in order to maintain a relationship with “the Master.” This begins in the home and Sunday school, where initially children learn how to hold their hands in prayer, while adults say prayers aloud for them, until children memorize prayers and begin developing their own.                                                    | C / W              | Parents, Sunday School Teachers, Kindy Teacher, Primary Teachers        | MO, LPP, R |
|                                            | Spiritual Life | Must develop a good Christian life to live by in order to achieve eternal life with “the Master.” This requires learning to pray, memorizing Bible verses, and learning ways of good Christian standards for life.                                                                                                                                                                         | W                  | Initially Parents and Sunday School Teachers, then throughout Community | MO, LPP, R |
| Kindy, Primary                             | Counting/Maths | Preparation for further schooling and daily community activities (e.g. cooking, gardening)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | C / W (in English) | Teachers                                                                | MO, LPP, R |
|                                            | Reading        | Begin by learning ABCs in kindy and then move on to reading books and poems, followed by learning to spell words for writing. Need for education in primary school and beyond, as well as to be able to read letters sent between villages when older. Although limited texts available in rural villages, important to be able to read English in newsletters, newspapers, and the Bible. | W                  | Teachers, Peers                                                         | R          |
| Primary                                    | Writing        | Begin by learning to draw, then with a teacher’s assistance in guiding the child’s hand learn to take a pencil to paper and form letters. Important to be able to reply to letters, as well as general use throughout schooling/education because if school well, then able to get white-collar job which will further require writing skills.                                             | W                  | Teachers                                                                | MO, R      |
| Church/Sunday School                       | Memory Verses  | Memorize “G-d’s word” so remains in one’s head throughout life to properly guide them through leading a “straight” life.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | C / W              |                                                                         | R          |

|     |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |       |                                                                                    |            |
|-----|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| All | Singing              | To take part in singing tunes with community at gatherings, church, and in school.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | C / W | Community                                                                          | MO, LPP, I |
|     | Communication Skills | To effectively and respectfully verbally interact with people throughout the community, inclusive of dialogue and discussion in accordance with the Kahua Principles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | C     | Parents initially, then Community                                                  | MO, LPP, I |
|     | Cooperation          | Fundamental Kahua Principle to facilitate a strong and peaceful Kahuan way of communal life and fellowship.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | C     | Kahua Community                                                                    | MO, LPP    |
|     | Love                 | Must love everyone. Beginning with parents and kindy teacher, children are told not to hurt friends and are stopped and told to apologize if do so. From there, children must grow to have love for everyone in their family and community, as well as strangers, in order to avoid hate and unhappiness. Loving each other is the foundation to life in Kahua: it is taken as a doctrine to love others, G-d, and oneself, under the belief that, "Love is something that you giveth away and it comes right back to you." | C     | Parents, Teachers, Pastor, Kahua Community                                         | MO, LPP    |
|     | English/Pidgin       | Fundamental Kahua Principle to communicate with people from other provinces/parts of the world (e.g. Whiteman); as medium of instruction in primary/secondary/higher education; to understand and participate in some parts of church service (e.g. songs, Bible readings, etc.). Initially learned from overhearing others use in village and kindy teacher teaching the English alphabet.                                                                                                                                 | C / W | Kindy Teacher, Primary School Teachers, Visitors to Community from other Provinces | MO, LPP, R |
|     | Respect              | Begins in the home with learning respect for parents and expands through parents' verbal teachings and modeling to instill this important kastom in children, such as respecting strangers in order to maintain family integrity and avoid paying compensation. Children in particular must learn respect for siblings, such as not playing with or sitting close to opposite gendered brothers/sisters, which would violate kastom.                                                                                        | C     | Begins with Parents, then throughout Kahua Community                               | MO, LPP    |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |   |                                                      |         |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Sharing (Hemoti) | Kahua Principle to share everything with others so as not to be selfish and to create good relations with others. Beginning with teaching by parents when children are young to share with other children. Food sharing is particularly important with friends/relatives. This is also a behavior encouraged when facilitating children's spiritual development. | C | Begins with Parents, then throughout Kahua Community | MO, LPP |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------|---------|

## **Appendix E: Community Rationale's to Kindy Barriers/Challenges**

What follows is a compilation of focus group responses, after preliminary categorical grouping analysis by the researcher. These participant responses were drawn from focus groups: Makira Focus Group Activity 1, Kahua Focus Group Activity 2 (Appendix A).

### Lack of **Community** Cooperation - Disunity

- Community not working with teachers and kindy committee in making classroom resources from bush materials or fundraising
- Community ignores requests from teachers and kindy committee members
- Community is divided over Army Movement
- Only parents with children in kindy provide support
- Community does not think highly of kindy or children's early learning so are not concerned with supporting
- Community/parents are lazy
- Community/parents preoccupied with other commitments (e.g. helping in church/primary school, caring for family/children, working gardens, making copra)
- Some parents do not walk children to school daily so then children decide not to come (or cannot travel the distance alone)
- Some parents do not prepare snack for children (when children hungry, cannot learn well and will leave early to return home for food)
- Too many other community activities planned leaving no time to help kindy

### Lack of **Kindy Committee** Cooperation (Weak/Inactive)

- Inactive but difficult culturally to confront leaders and request change
- Do not organize kindy activities, such as community work or fundraisers
- Weak planning abilities
- Do not work together, often due to dominant separate chairman
- Do not work together with teachers
- Community does not listen, thus making committee weak without support

### Lack of **Financial** Support (for teachers from community)

- No financial support, or support in kind through helping in teachers' gardens, making teachers weak and stop teaching
- No support by communities in fundraising
- Teachers working on and off, so community does not want to pay
- Community confused about who are regularly teachers, and who just works part-time, so does not know who to pay properly
- Without payment, then teachers do not teach
- Community fundraisers do not make enough money
- No cash flow in community

### Lack of **Resources** (Bush)

- Teachers ask community to make resources but community/parents fail to make
- Not enough resources in classroom to attract children's attention, so become bored and stop attending
- Not enough resources, so teachers' deemed learning ineffective since children learn through play and closed the school

### Lack of **Resources** (Manufactured)

- Not enough resources for teachers to support children's learning: need glue, pens, flipchart paper, chalk, etc.
- Not enough resources for children's learning facilitation: pencils for drawing and beginning practice of writing, paper, reading books, exercise books, etc.
- Need "Whiteman's" resources to entice children to attend

#### Lack of **Trained Teachers**

- No one trained in community to teach kindy
- Teachers trying their best now but could greatly benefit from additional age-group specific skills to teach more effectively
- Lack money to pay FBT course fee and community unwilling to support in fees
- Teachers never completed FBT
- Many Form 5 leavers available to be potential teachers yet do not know about trainings available
- Husbands preventing women from going away to attend trainings
- Insufficient spaces available for teacher trainings
- Lack further ongoing training opportunities

#### Lack of Support from (Lazy/Weak) **Teachers**

- Prioritize personal commitments (e.g. own family, children, gardening) without thinking about children's future
- Lack of community support, so not motivated to teach
- Lack of committee support, so not motivated to teach
- Teachers do not always attend to teach
- Teachers do not arrive on time, so children lose interest and leave
- Children do not arrive promptly or regularly, so not motivated to teach
- Receive no financial or in kind support, so not motivated to teach
- If not many children attending on a given day, teachers not motivated to teach

#### Lack of Support from (Lazy) **Parents/Community**

- Some prioritize personal commitments, without thinking about the future of children
- Some parents think children are too small to stay in kindy alone, but then unwilling to stay with them
- Some parents do not properly support their children through cooking breakfast before kindy, preparing snack for child to take, giving child good clean clothes, walking child to kindy every morning (or carrying when muddy) - without which children are not motivated to attend
- Parents should teach children in the home first, but then they do not understand/support kindy
- Community does not help with kindy work/maintenance
- Parents take children to their gardens instead of kindy
- Too many other community activities planned, so too tired to become involved in helping another
- Too lazy to participate in fundraising and work to support kindy

#### Lack of **Proper Location** for Kindy House

- Class cannot be held on rainy days due to excessive mud prohibiting safe travel
- Excessive mud in surrounding environment makes unfit for children thus preventing schooling
- Children tempted away from classroom by location next to the sea
- Not enough space allocated to the kindy by landowners to have sufficient outdoor learning area
- Land disputes over kindy location and price
- Too public of location causing distractions during class time
- Located too near primary school causing noise disturbances between classes and primary children taking kindy resources
- Surrounded by bushes which make kindy aesthetically pleasing so not a place for children to learn and play
- Dog and pigs freely walking about community come spoil kindy building

#### Lack of **Government Support (Provincial)**

- Government only looking at primary/secondary school children but missing out on the small children in rural kindies
- Beginning of education is kindy, which the province must take responsibility to improve through the higher education system to provide well trained, qualified, and paid teachers
- Poor support to teachers: lack teacher training opportunities (long awaiting next FBT course to begin), do not pay teacher salaries, do not pay teacher training school fees
- Should help pay teachers and provide housing, like primary/secondary school teachers, so can focus on teaching
- Provincial member, which the people of Makira voted into power, must meet some of the requests of his people, like helping to support school fees

#### Lack of **Government** Support (National)

- Should set an example for the Provincial government by contributing kindy resources and teacher trainings
- Government set the three year requirement policy for children to attend kindy, so they should be responsible for supporting kindies (e.g. teacher trainings and salaries)
- Government told communities to work the kindy, but now they just depend on community contributions, yet the community is tired

#### Lack of Community **Respect** for Property (Drunkenness)

- People in community busy drinking alcohol so do not work together: men must stand up first and the women will follow, but they are too busy drinking kwaso
- Drunkards destroy the classroom: when man is non-confrontational in his heart, then he wants to spoil community property instead of arguing with another man
- When resources given to kindy (e.g. exercise books), people remove/steal them

#### Lack of **Community Awareness** (“Illiteracy”)

- Only some people can read and write, making it difficult to help in the kindy, but they would still be able to help in teaching kastom knowledge
- Not everyone in community is educated, thus preventing parents from understanding they need to help the kindy
- Those without children do not help in kindy because they do not know what is inside
- Community awareness on kindy has only been given once but not everyone in the community attended

#### Lack of Sufficient Kindy House (**Infrastructure**)

- Personal commitments prevent community from building kindy classroom
- Classroom not large enough for all children, which causes fighting in the class
- Need a permanent building with enough space for all children because there is a shortage of leaves for sewing leaf-hut roofs
- Community unhappy with always repairing kindy, so just give up support, which is why need a permanent kindy
- Big men in community not helping to construct, leaving responsibility to male youths who are not interested in helping, so nothing is done
- Teacher asks for repairs to rotten roof and kindy house but community does not respond
- Leaf hut is not fit and clean enough for children’s learning: need a permanent house
- Classroom on ground making it unfit for children when wet from heavy rain so need permanent house with flooring and corrugated metal roof
- Pigs and dogs go inside kindy house and spoil by leaving excrement inside and breaking walls while walking in and out, thus need fencing around kindy to prevent
- Need seats/mats (not benches which children will fall off of) so children do not fight over where to sit in classroom

## Appendix F: Overview of Kindy Program Sustainability Barriers

The following sections highlight and explore the overall most frequently cited barriers to kindies, drawing on all methods implemented, as identified by communities, kindy committees, kindy teachers, government/NGO officials, and the researcher.

### *F.1 Stakeholder Support*

#### *F.1.1 Community Support*

The most significant barrier to kindies identified across focus groups and survey responses related to lacking community support and involvement. This was most notably expressed by kindy teachers, yet was consistently identified by other participants as a problem within communities. Further, a significantly lower level of community (financial) support was identified for GCRRP Phase II and Wainoni independently established kindies (Figure F.1). This difference may be explained by the fact that these communities have more recently begun to develop an ECE awareness of why they should support such programs. Particularly regarding finance, this aspect of community support is likely to take a more substantial time to build up awareness and support due to the immense commitment required from the community, considering the very limited cash flow and financial resources available throughout MUP.

Key related community support barriers identified included:

- × Lack of community support for resource making and kindy house construction/materials.
- × Community prioritizing personal and other community programs/commitments (i.e. NGO, church, primary school, youth groups, etc.).
- × Poor parental involvement in classroom: associated with laziness, problems within the home, and lack of parental knowledge about responsibilities to child (e.g. preparing daily breakfast and snack before kindy).
- × Lack of gender balance with parental participation, suggested to be due to cultural beliefs in which women are responsible for young children.

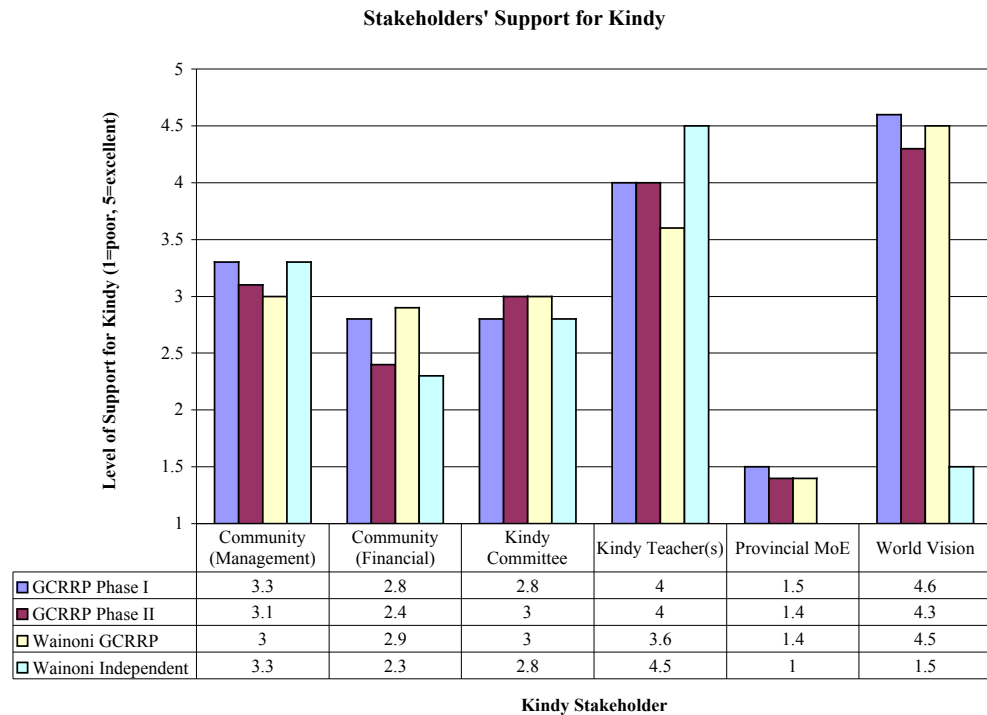
Notably, community support within classrooms has also been identified by teachers as insufficient, such as when parents are unaware of the child-centered learning approach. As a result, they criticize teachers' teaching methods and teacher requests for seemingly “illogical” classroom learning materials, perceived as toys or rubbish. Furthermore, when community members and parents did refer to their involvement levels within the kindy, instead of identifying a barrier as *lacking community support*, they consistently referred this as *disunity and lacking cooperation* throughout the village, thereby removing direct blame for responsibility taking and situating the issue more abstractly at the community-level.

Overall, poor community support for kindies was associated with insufficient awareness about ECE, lacking general parental knowledge about “responsibilities” to children, and educational priorities as a low practical community concern. This was suggested to relate to low community literacy levels: not only regarding reading and writing, but Kahua participants also extended this term to include community members' ability to think critically and implement newly acquired knowledge. Although community ECE awareness levels on average were self-reported by villagers as 3.3 on a 5-point scale (with 5 being most aware), and as such received a very low percentage of overall kindy barrier rankings across research communities, some prominent community-level

awareness short-fallings did appear to have a greater impact than locally valued/perceived. One men's focus group participant stated, "Knowledge alone is not the problem, and as such is it never 100% of the solution. Awareness is only reaching the immediate parents with children in the kindy." And thus, although all communities reported having received a one-off awareness program, and as such claimed to be "fully informed" of the pertinent information associated with having functioning kindies, these figures were not entirely accurate/informative. Those who did recognize the need for further community-wide learning regarding ECE consistently expressed a caveat that such must be given by "big men" (i.e. ECE experts, such as provincial ECE coordinator, as communities hold little respect for awarenesses given by kindy teachers who are thought to be on an equal intellectual level despite having received FBT). Other focus groups also took a more pragmatic approach to analyzing insufficient understandings of kindy parents by inferring that the root problem was people having children at too young an age. One man explained, "The issue lies with parents. Parents must love children, and thus it is their obedience to attend awarenesses and be involved in kindy."

Additionally, significant ECE stakeholders in communities are the children attending kindies. Although barriers to children's kindy attendance were infrequently raised by research participants, a variety of children's issues were identified by the researcher:

- × Distance to travel (throughout Makira research communities: average of 10 minutes each way to kindy, with some traveling upwards of 90 minutes each way), terrain (e.g. muddy hills, flooded rivers), and school closed on rainy days for fear children will get sick if wet.
- × Locally termed "naughty" children in classroom requiring extensive disciplinary attention from teachers.
- × Inappropriate teacher-child ratios, with increased demands on teachers with high numbers of underage children attending as "observers."
- × Parents not bringing children to class: keeping at home, taking to garden, or requiring walk to school alone.
- × Children refusing to attend or leaving the classroom throughout the day as they please.
- × Not enough clothes for children, so when washing/wet, unable to attend.



(Based on 52 surveyed MUP communities' kindy committees - Appendix A.4)

**Figure F.1** Levels of Key Stakeholder Support for Kindy.

### *F.1.2 Kindy Committee*

Another highly significant barrier affecting the functioning of kindies, relatively consistently across communities included in the study, were kindy committees:

- × Kindy committee members unaware of their particular roles/responsibilities in supporting kindy.
- × Kindy chairman main culprit cited for poorly functioning committee due to poor leadership skills, prioritizing other community commitments/committees, poor cooperation with other committee members by solely following his/her own ideas, and lack of awareness of chairman duties.
- × Poor cooperation with teachers: following own ideas without consulting with kindy teachers (who are the true ECE experts in the community).
- × Poor cooperation with community for working as the intermediary between teachers/kindy and the community.
- × Non-existent or inactive kindy committees.

### *F.1.3 Government and NGO Support*

The vast majority of communities expressed unsatisfactory levels of support being received from the provincial education authority, most significantly the provincial ECE Coordinator. This appears to be related to a lack of awareness of the partnership she has with WV in working on Makira ECE. Community frustration for lacking provincial government support for their kindies was a significant community focus group theme (Figure F.1). It must be understood, that currently there is only one provincial ECE employee (Provincial ECE Coordinator) who is independently (on a government level, outside WV support) responsible for supporting community ECE awareness building, establishing community-based kindies, running FBT, and participating in National ECE policy and planning with the National Coordinator and six other Provincial Coordinators.

Most notably, she has had to prioritize her time to monitoring “certified” ECE teachers in Makira (i.e. those who have recognized college ECE degrees) due to the greater support they are receiving from the government (i.e. salary of SBD\$600/month) as of 2009, thus requiring a greater degree of accountability, as opposed to FBT teachers who are essentially voluntary teachers as far as the national government is concerned. This however is changing, with increased provincial support for FBT kindy teachers pledged by the MUP MoE in 2009, through small monthly monetary “allowances” (as the National ECE policy states that FBT teachers cannot receive a government “salary” [MEHRD 2008]). Further, improvements in support from the national level have increased since the 2008 ECE policy was passed, declaring ECE an independent division of the MEHRD, and as such greater funds becoming available to support rural kindies through grants and classroom resource packages.

Contrastingly, WV support for ECE in most communities was ranked highly due to community perceptions as them often being solely responsible for supporting all kindy initiatives, and a lack of recognition of their partnership with the MEHRD (Figure F.1). Contrastingly, there is a feeling of unsupported entitlement by non-WV supported Wainoni communities, who for the majority were not selected as communities involved in Phase I of the GCRRP, and thus feel that WV should return to offer the same support as surrounding communities previously received. Yet, due to the nature of funding, and wide need across the province, WV has proceeded to support different political wards outside Wainoni. Further, WV defends itself by proclaiming not to take an “A-Z” approach to development projects. Therefore, what locally some villages are calling a “pulling out” of WV support is in reality their efforts to encourage a complete handing over of project/kindy ownership to communities, as opposed to creating full dependency and thus lacking program sustainability.

Participants identified government and WV support barriers as:

- × Insufficient visits from ECE authorities (i.e. ECE Coordinator and GCRRP staff) for ongoing awareness talks; financial and human support; and evaluations of kindies and teaching practices to reassure teachers of their abilities, or re-advise if changes are necessary. Furthermore, GCRRP Phase II teachers are eagerly long awaiting the final two evaluations of their classrooms and teaching practices so as to complete their FBT program and thus become recognized teachers.
- × Lack of clarity on support promised by WV, where either misunderstandings or unfulfilled promises are resulting in ill-feelings between some communities and WV (i.e. particularly for WV declared “model kindies” where greater support was expected by communities for making exemplar classrooms, including more contributions in learning resources and tools to help build better indoor/outdoor resources).

#### *F.1.4 Teachers*

Although not self-identified, community members and committees raised some barriers caused by teachers that affect the functioning of kindies. Overall, GCRRP Phase I and II communities ranked teachers at an equal level of support for their kindies, but in separating out the two types of kindies in Wainoni, a significant difference was reported (Figure F.1). A possible explanation for the higher ranking support of teachers from independently-established kindies, without the support of WV, is that these kindies have been more recently established (majority independently-established kindies: 2009, versus WV-supported kindies: 2005), and thus over time the longer functioning kindies have more often functioned on a sporadic basis. Some communities suggest this is a failure of teachers to maintain sufficient support to keep the schools working. In contrast, independently-formed schools arguably require a greater dedication level of teachers to

support new kindy houses in the absence of external support to them and their communities. Other key barriers relating to teachers included:

- × Teacher absences and finishing classes early.
- × Lack of teachers for appropriate student-teacher ratio (although reported on average 1:14.5, yet often rotating schedule of teachers resulting in higher ratios).
- × Low teacher qualifications, suggesting teachers must be trained beyond FBT level (64% completed FBT), due to community perceptions of teachers' insufficient understandings of learning areas, appropriate languages (i.e. vernacular) to use in classroom, and how to properly plan for short and long term. Furthermore, some teachers' low levels of basic education are affecting their ability to meet literacy demands within the classroom and during ongoing trainings.
- × Poor gender ratio between classroom teachers; however, a few participants claimed that men are inappropriate for the role of kindy teacher due to not being compassionate enough with young children.
- × Teachers' husbands preventing them from teaching, when receiving no salary, as they would rather their wives work in the home or garden.
- × Lack of communication between teachers within the kindy, outside of kindy hours, and when teachers quit their job and new ones take their positions.
- × Teachers overburdened as disciplinarians when reverting to teacher-centered approaches and making overly academic/structured lessons beyond children's developmental levels (i.e. particularly with reading and writing), thus having insufficient time for child observation records, guiding children's individual learning, and lacking general record keeping (i.e. daily record books as well as future planning records, due to the significant time they consume and overwhelming number required to keep).
- × Government exacerbates teacher barrier by posting trained teachers (i.e. those with SICHE certificate) anywhere in province (i.e. not within one's own village/ward/district) thus raising linguistic/cultural differences/challenges; and further, the kindy at which the teacher is posted receives grants (i.e. not the teacher's home village, which most likely originally sponsored her education), therefore discouraging teachers from obtaining further training/degree and being sent away from family/village.

Financial support for kindy teachers was also a barrier extensively discussed by most participants, with the notable exception of male focus groups, where this issue was not raised. Barriers included:

- × Many communities not supporting teachers financially or in kind, and thus teachers are “weak” to teach due to low morale, therefore instead prioritizing family and gardening obligations over teaching.
- × Communities finding paying teacher salaries and running yearly fundraisers “burdensome,” so discontinue support.
- × Most communities express a desire for the provincial government to begin paying kindy teachers' salaries, particularly citing the fact that untrained primary teachers receive a salary from the government yet FBT kindy teachers still do not.

## *F.2 Infrastructural Barriers*

### *F.2.1 Kindy Classroom Resources*

Of 52 surveyed kindies throughout Makira, on average 18.5% reported having sufficient bush resources for all children in classroom, while 1.25% reported sufficient manufactured resources. Although very infrequently identified by communities, kindy teachers, or kindy committees, through researcher observation, it became evident that the majority of kindy classrooms had significantly insufficient resources to support the learning and development of all attending children. Therefore, in accordance with ECE policy guidelines and researcher interviews and observations, the following barriers were identified:

- × Lack of manufactured resources for children (e.g. paper, crayons, pencils).

- × Lack of manufactured resources for teachers (e.g. stationeries for record keeping and child observation notes).
- × Poor lighting and ventilation inside classroom (i.e. insufficient natural light and air circulation).
- × Lack of, or non-existent, outdoor resources.
- × Lack of knowledge and resources (e.g. paint, varnish, tools) to make longer lasting kindy materials.
- × Limited bush materials, leaving some learning areas empty, due to lack of community and teacher support for making resources on a (necessary) reoccurring basis.
- × Kindy committee not working with teachers to notify communities when more resources are needed.
- × Teachers not holding class when sufficient resources are not contributed to classroom by the community.

### *F.2.2 Kindy Classroom*

Of 52 surveyed kindies, 49.25% reported sufficient classroom space for all attending children. As is a common burden throughout Makira, where most buildings are made of local bush materials, the reoccurring need to make repairs to kindy classrooms creates a barrier to their functioning when communities are slow or unwilling to assist in doing timely repairs/construction, and instead prioritize personal and other community commitments. Further barriers regarding kindy infrastructure, raised by focus group participants, include:

- × Kindy building too small for all attending children.
- × Location of classroom too far away for children to walk, or requires crossing a river (thus affecting children's safe attendance in rainy weather when rivers flood).
- × Lack of outdoor space and resources.
- × Lack of sanitation facilities, including appropriate toilets and water for drinking and hand washing.
- × No tools to properly construct outdoor resources.
- × Land disputes over location for kindy, difficulty getting enough land for classroom and outdoor play area, and people with surrounding properties neglecting upkeep of their land.
- × Large number of community requests for proper permanent kindy houses to address school building maintenance problems: frequent repairs, particularly to leaky leaf roofs, which is a highly significant barrier due to increasingly limited bush resources (most notably, Sego Palm leaves which are woven to create walls and roofs to huts and Gue used as rope to tie building framework together) available for construction, particularly in wards 15 and 16 (small islanders) where resources must be transported from mainland.

### *F.2.3 Location: Primary-Based Schools*

Kindies attached to primary schools face unique challenges, in contrast to stand-alone kindy classrooms. This will inevitably become an increasingly influential matter in coming years due to a new (as of 2009) MEHRD ECE emphasis on linking all kindies with a primary school (where possible, within reasonable distance) as opposed to having stand-alone kindies. Although primary schools have been made aware that they should build separate classrooms away from primary buildings, such is not the case in numerous communities, typically due to allocation of an existing classroom for kindy use), thus resulting in the following barriers:

- × Noise disturbances between primary and kindy classrooms when classrooms are attached or near together.
- × Lack of community support for kindy due to assumptions that since it is part of primary it is no longer the communities' responsibility but instead must be the government's responsibility to support.
- × Poor support from primary administration with unclear guidelines as per what contributions/support is expected (e.g. supply of stationeries to kindy).