A survey of educational language policies in the Pacific region

By Robert Early

Recent decades have seen significant evolution in the educational language policies of many Pacific nations. The language situations in Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian states vary widely, from relatively straightforward bilingual settings (e.g. Samoa) to highly complex multilingual societies (e.g. Vanuatu), but some shared dynamics appear to be in place. These include the aspiration for greater recognition to be given to mother tongues in at least the early stages of education. Each context also presents distinct challenges, but there are also commonalities in many of the obstacles that arise.

This paper tracks educational language policy developments across a number of Pacific nations, looking at backgrounds, how the changes came about, and progress towards implementation. It also considers the potential of these new approaches to sustainably address and meet the aspiration to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all” across this complex multilingual region.