

FTU condemns Minister for Education and the PS's comments regarding replacing unqualified teachers

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Fiji Teachers Union General Secretary Agni Deo Singh.

The Fiji Teachers Union has condemned the comments of Minister for Education, Premila Kumar and the Permanent Secretary for Education, Anjeela Jokhan for labeling teachers unqualified and going to the extent of threatening to replace them with graduates.

General Secretary, Agni Deo Singh says certificate and diploma qualifications have always been recognised for decades and there is no record of the Ministry of Education ever stating otherwise.

Singh says the Minister's and the Permanent Secretary's actions are insulting, derogatory, demoralizing and a display of contempt against teachers.

He says all these years the entry point for primary school has been a certificate or diploma and the entry point for secondary school has been a diploma or degree.

Singh adds many teachers who graduated with a certificate in teaching have 20 plus years of service with a distinguished career and remarkable performance and hold positions as heads or assistant heads of schools.

The General Secretary of the Fiji Teachers Union further says many teachers have been teaching in remote and maritime schools and have not had the opportunity to upgrade their qualification where they have dedicated a large proportion of their teaching careers to serving the underprivileged.

Singh goes on to say many teachers have retired with a certificate or diploma, and have played a vital role in nurturing the young minds.

Permanent Secretary for Education, Doctor Anjeela Jokhan had said the Ministry is in the process of recruiting teachers for early childhood education, primary and secondary schools and is also using this opportunity to replace some unqualified teachers with qualified teachers.

Jokhan says the recruitment will continue until they have all teachers in place and they know this will improve teaching in schools. She says the Teacher Remuneration Policy of 2018 describes a fully qualified teacher as one having a Bachelors in Education Degree at the appropriate level, including early childhood education, special and inclusive education, primary and secondary. Jokhan adds a person with the relevant Diploma in Education is appointed as assistant teacher and therefore they have a mixture of teachers in these categories.

She says the Ministry would like to appoint more teachers with degrees to better resource its schools.

We have contacted the Minister for Education Premila Kumar and the Permanent Secretary for Education, Anjeela Jokhan regarding the concerns raised by Singh and are awaiting their responses.