



# FIJI TEACHERS UNION

(THE CHILD OUR HOPE)

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## PRESS RELEASE

### FTU Responds to Ministers Attacks on Teachers

The Fiji Teachers Confederation had earlier made a press release expressing its discontent and dismay with the recent comments made by the Education Minister Honourable Premila Kumar while visiting schools around Fiji.

The Honourable Education Minister continues her scathing attacks on teachers and this time around she talks about unqualified teachers, especially those who have a certificate and diploma in teaching. The Fiji Teachers Union strongly condemns the statement of the Honourable Education Minister where she has labeled teachers unqualified and has gone to the extent of threatening to replace them with graduates. This is factually incorrect as certificate and Diploma qualifications have always been recognized for decades. There is no record of MEHA ever stating otherwise.

The Fiji Teachers Union labels this action by the Minister concerned as insulting, derogatory and demoralizing, and a display of contempt against teachers. In a press release the Honourable Education Minister reiterated the call for teachers to upgrade their qualifications from diploma to a bachelor's degree or be replaced. She explained that the qualifications were tied to salary upgrades.

**Fact:** All these years the entry point for primary school has been a certificate or diploma and the entry point for secondary school, a diploma or degree. The union disputes the Minister's statement that those who have upgraded their qualification, have had a salary upgrade as the Unions records show that there are teachers who have upgraded their qualification in 2018 but have not been put on

All correspondence to the General Secretary Fiji Teachers Union, Please.

Branches: Suva, Nasinu, Rewa, Tailevu, Ra, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka, Nadi, Sigatoka, Navua, Labasa, Bua, Taveuni, Savusavu, Levuka.

the graduate salary as determined by the Job Evaluation Exercise of 2017 despite numerous submissions by the Union.

It sounds more like a joke that the Honourable Minister intends to replace the experienced certificate and diploma holders by those with a higher qualification.

**Fact:** Bulk of these teachers graduated with a certificate and diploma as this was the avenue provided at teacher training institutions which are highly recognized to-date.

**Fact:** These teachers went through intensive training before they graduated from Nasinu Teachers College and subsequently Lautoka Teachers College (now part of Fiji National University).

**Fact:** Both the teachers training institutions have produced teachers who have delivered the goods and nurtured citizens who have made a mark. These teachers were not only trained on content, but were given training with regards to their dressing, behavior and attitude as well as agricultural activities.

**Fact:** Many of these 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 heads of schools, for instance, have been doing an excellent job in and out of the school environment.

**Fact:** Many school heads, who have a certificate or diploma, have only a few years left in the teaching service before they retire at the age of 55.

**Fact:** In 2006, the Fiji National University began to offer Diploma in Teaching- again a two-year rigorous training course.

**Fact:** In 2010, FNU introduced BED Primary and BED Secondary.

**Fact:** Many teachers have been teaching in remote and maritime schools and have not had the opportunity to upgrade their qualification. They have dedicated a large proportion of their teaching career to serving the under privileged.

**Fact:** Due to the absence any meaningful budgetary allocation for in-service training, these teachers missed out the opportunity to pursue further studies. The Education Ministry has been hesitant to send teachers with pay for higher studies.

**Fact:** One must not forget that these teachers are human beings, and like all others have financial commitments to meet so it would have been very difficult for them to take leave without pay for further studies.

**Fact:** There are many many success stories about teachers with a certificate or diploma. There are also those diploma holders teaching up to Year 13 in secondary schools and producing top results.

**Fact:** Many of our teachers who have retired from service, have retired with a certificate or diploma, and these teachers have played a vital role in nurturing the young minds. Apart from being educators, they have been counselors and parents to the children under their care.

**Fact:** The Honourable Education Minister has started with her fear mongering tactics that are creating unnecessary tension and stress. This is evident from the press releases. She must show respect to our teachers. Openly ridiculing teachers, who are nation builders, is not the solution and is not right.

**Concluding remarks:** The Minister has once again made a statement that is unrealistic, factually incorrect, void of any rational as well as grossly unjust to the hardworking teachers of the nation. The Unions advice to her is to refrain from making baseless remarks and to first familiarize herself as to how the system works. She is most welcome to have a session with the Union.



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**Agni Deo Singh**  
**General Secretary**