



FIJI TEACHERS UNION

(The Child Our Hope)

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Warm greetings to all our members. Wishing you all a successful and rewarding Term 3, 2018.

88th ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018

The 88th Annual Conference was held successfully at Swami Vivekananda College Auditorium in Nadi. Guests, delegates and members turned up in large numbers in the opening and there was healthy deliberation on the theme. We wish to thank and appreciate the time and effort of all the guests, delegates and members for the support and solidarity shown in the 4-day Conference in Nadi.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Mr. Grahame McCulloch, the General Secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union, Australia in his keynote address congratulated Fiji Teachers Union on its proud 88 year history of representing the economic and professional interests of Fiji's teachers. He added that this has been evident in:

- Direct and vigorous engagement with Governments of all political persuasions.
- A central role in robust teacher job evaluation schemes from the 1970s onwards (although as I shall comment on in a moment, for reasons beyond its control this has not been the case in the Government's most recent teacher work value and job evaluation process).
- Strong support for, and the promotion of, professional ethics in teaching.
- Membership of, and an active role, in the wider Fijian trade union movement.
- And affiliation to international education union bodies – COPE and EI.

He highlighted the role of Education in Sustainable Development and stated that Education is an essential and indispensable element of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of

sustainable development because education at all levels:

- Provides the skills and knowledge necessary for work of all kinds.
- Produces informed citizens capable of complex problem solving – and the problems confronting twenty-first century societies and nations are exceptionally complex.
- Drives scientific and cultural innovation.
- Promotes an understanding of the need for tolerance, diversity and equality which are fundamental requirements for social cohesion and harmony.
- Enables individual and collective achievement and progress.

He stressed that a key issue remains - the quality of education provision particularly in schools. Class sizes remain very high and there appears to be insufficient support for teachers in meeting their professional development needs as the curriculum moves increasingly towards student centered learning.

He stated that teachers and their unions are central actors and stakeholders in the education system and effective Government strategies critically depend on their direct involvement. He added that the World Bank has recognized that sustainable education policy including quality improvement, curriculum development, central and local school management improvements and equitable financing require a genuine partnership with teachers and their unions. Partnership helps to solve problems and make genuine solutions stick in the long run.

He concluded by stating that the trends in education are symptomatic of a lack of wider engagement with the Fijian trade union movement as a whole. He stressed that Fiji is well placed to build an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development strategy and that this is

important not just for Fiji but for the wider region of Pacific Island states.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Bro. Muniappa Goundar in his Presidential Address stated that the Fiji Teachers Union will continue to fight for justice, continue to fight for the restoration of rights of the teachers and continue to be the voice of teachers. Governments would come and go but the Union will stay to fight all injustice against those members who feel insecure.

He stated that the Ministry of Education should work with the teacher unions in a genuine effort to realize the Education 2030 targets. He stated that the Ministry must rethink and revisit its current stand and include the teacher unions in dialogue and genuine consultation in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education policies, including the implementation of Education 2030.

He also dwelt on industrial matters such as Job Evaluation Exercise for teachers, Open Merit Based Recruitment and Selection [OMRS] and Salary Band For teachers.

He summed up his address by highlighting the achievements of the Union till date:

- The notorious Disciplinary Services Board was disbanded after the Union met the Minister for Civil Service. Some of its decisions were challenged in court and the decision was reversed.
- Consequently, officers, who were victimized and punished by the DSB, were put back at their substantive positions without loss of salary or benefits.
- Unfair Transfers – cases were taken to Employment Relations Tribunal.
- ED 9A salary – Agreement was signed with MOE where the teachers who were put on \$12,360 salary grade in 2015 received the difference of the correct salary. In other words, there was a salary increase for these teachers. About 1300 teachers benefitted.

- MOU was signed on 13/7/17 where MOE agreed to put all Diploma Holders on ED8A Step 12 w.e.f 15/1/17. About 1900 teachers benefitted. Ministry also agreed to recognize the “letter of completion” from the universities as full qualification.

- Duty Hours for teachers – it was long struggle to get the teachers’ duty hours sorted out. The former PS for Education, Mr. Iowane Tiko is thanked for clarifying that teacher’s duty hours are between 8am – 3.30pm.

PUBLIC SERVICE DISCIPLINARY GUIDELINE

The Union is concerned that the Guideline gives the Permanent Secretary unfettered powers to terminate an employee after considering the report of the three member investigation panel. Members would note that the panel members are appointed by the PS. The Union’s position is that all cases must be referred to the PSDT as the independent Tribunal to adjudicate. This is to ensure natural justice is accorded to the accused.

INCREMENT DIFFERED!! OR GONE WRONG!!

Members would recall that the much talked about My APA was rushed and completed by 30th April, 2018 with the commitment that increments and bonuses would be paid w.e.f 1/8/18. Upon inquiry, the Director CSRMU responded that the exercise was not completed yet and any increase would be paid on 31/12/18. Those of us who were in service in mid 2000 would recall a similar exercise was done but the payment never came because 95 percent of the teachers qualified for increment.

We wonder what will happen to this one!! Perhaps they are worried about the number of FC’s and EE’s!!! Is moderation the remedy?

It would be most unfair for anyone to change the grades agreed to by the staff and the supervisor. The Union call: why wait till December? Expedite and pay ASAP.

OMRS – UNION CONCERN ON NON RECOGNITION OF PERFORMANCE

The Union has consistently been submitting to the Ministry to consider proven performance on the

job, but it has fallen on deaf ears. We now sadly see some of the top performing school leaders missing out and being faced with very humiliating and depressing predicaments.

Redeployment of unsuccessful candidates has seen senior [earlier confirmed] post holders relegated to ordinary classroom teachers.

RESOLUTIONS 2018

The 88th AGM unanimously approved the following resolutions to be submitted to the relevant authorities for appropriate action. The Secretariat continues to engage in dialogue for implementation of the same.

1. FTU ON CURRICULUM ADVISORY BOARD

Noting that National Policies and Action Plans to achieve Education For All and for Sustainable Development, the Curriculum must be developed and implemented in partnership with civil society, including NGOs and Teacher Unions.

Fiji Teachers' Union's 88th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to ensure that there active participation of teachers in the development and implementation of education policies, plans and curricula through their respective teacher unions.

2. TRAINING FOR TEACHERS – SPECIAL EDUCATION

Recognising that quality education is a human right,

Accepting that education must be provided by the state, Noting that education must be available freely to all, Further noting that education should be all inclusive and people with special needs need assistance to achieve their maximum potential,

The Fiji Teachers Union 88th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to provide more funding towards the training of the teachers for effective teaching and learning in Special Education Schools.

3. TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME

Considering that today's teachers encounter

a range of classroom and social conditions; multilingual classrooms, increase mainstreaming of special education students, growing number of students in poverty and students from single parents,

Agreeing that although students are of similar age and in same class, their achievement levels varies greatly,

Noting that teachers would be needing different teaching methods to reach different students,

Fiji Teachers Union 88th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to ensure that training programmes at Fiji National University are well equipped to meet the needs of the trainee teachers mentioned herein.

4. CLASS SIZE

Noting the increase in teacher workload arising out of the changes in the assessment system and the Curricular,

Further Noting the rapid increase in class sizes especially in urban area schools arising from internal migration,

Acknowledging the recommendations of the Job Evaluation Exercise 1993 and JEE of 2017 and recognising that its implementation is long overdue,

The Fiji Teachers Union 88th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to implement the recommendations of 1993 JEE to achieve class sizes of 30 and below for straight classes, 25 for class one and Form 7 and 20 for composite classes and remove the provision of multiple class teachings.

5. EXECUTIVE TEACHER POSITIONS

Noting that the 1993 JEE saw merit in making recommendation that 854 Executive Teacher positions be created in primary school,

Further noting that the recommendation was implemented in 1997 which had since brought in a marked improvement in the quality of classroom work in primary schools,

This allocation of 854 ET positions was reduced to 427 by Ministry of Education as a cost cutting measure in 2009, and which had a negative impact on the delivery of quality education,

The Fiji Teachers Union 84th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to restore the ET positions to its full complement.

6. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Noting that many primary schools have kindergarten/ Early childhood Education attached to their schools,

Recognising that kindergarten teachers play a major role in the moulding of a child,

Further recognising that early childhood education is the foundation of learning and that it needs everyone's attention,

The Fiji Teachers Union 88th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to remunerate the ECE teachers similar to that of primary school teachers.

7. INSERVICE TRAINING

Noting that teaching methods and teaching materials are ever changing,

Acknowledging that new standards for children require that teachers have deep and flexible knowledge of their subject matter and wide repertoire of teaching skills,

The Fiji Teachers Union 88th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to inject more funds into the in-service programmes and ensure that these programmes are structured and provide opportunities for greater number of teachers to enhance their teaching / learning skills through in-service courses.

8. OPEN MERIT AND RECRUITMENT SYSTEM [OMRS]

Noting the fact that many very senior heads of schools, both primary and secondary, have not been considered for the job test and that they have been screened "out of the way" through the application process [KESA],

Further noting that OMRS is not in tangent with the local situation,
Realising that the low morale of the heads of schools will have a detrimental effect on the education system,

The Fiji Teachers' Union 88th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to put on hold the recruitment process and engage with the teacher Unions to find the best way forward.

9. JOB EVALUATION EXERCISE 2017

Noting with concern that the Job Evaluation Exercise was carried out without the involvement of the teacher unions,

Further viewing with concern that the JEE had serious flaws salary grades for teachers and which had to be corrected in liaison with CSRMU,

Recognising that salary grades of AHT 5A, 5B, 5C, Assistant Principal ED3A, ED5E needs re-evaluation to put these post holders on appropriate salary,

Further recognising that there are anomalies in the entry point salary of graduate teachers,

The Fiji Teachers Union 88th Annual General Meeting calls upon the Ministry of Education to immediately convene the consultative process with the teacher Unions to re-look at the flaws and correct the anomalies.

INTERNAL RESOLUTIONS

I. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS

Recognising the invaluable service provided by the ECE teacher to the foundation of teaching and learning for decades,

Acknowledging that their salaries / wages were far below the poverty threshold until lately,

Further acknowledging that they could not afford to join the union although they wished to,

Considering the need for union to continue pursuing for full teacher status,

Responding to numerous requests from ECE teachers to join the union in the recent past,

The 88th AGM approves the waiver of the bar [45 years] until 31.12.2018 to allow ECE teachers to join the Union and the In-House Medical Scheme. The AGM further approves that new ECE recruits in 2019 be allowed the same till 28th February 2019.

INHOUSE INSURANCE MEDICAL SCHEME

The Scheme inception in 2011 has assisted hundreds of members with medical treatment locally and abroad. The benefits have been enhanced on an annual basis.

- 1) Under local hospitalization the limit of payout increased from \$7,500 to \$8,500 plus 50% of the balance of actual incurred cost on approval of private clinic facility for those members including dependents who require medical surgery but are on waiting list at Government operated hospitals.
- 2) Medical Insurance eligibility – teachers must be below the age of 40 years.
- 3) Local Hospitalization limit increased to \$25,000.00 from \$20,000.00.
- 4) Accommodation allowance of \$100.00 to be paid in cases where the covered members' treatment is approved and they prefer to be accommodated with their family in the locality of the health facility [inclusive of meal and transport allowance].
- 5) Local Repatriation to be fully covered.
- 6) Dependent child's age limit more than 25 years to be included provided he/she is fully dependent on his/her parents [insured member] due to a covered medical condition.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

It is pleasing to note that the Union membership has seen steady growth in the recent years. There are however, a good number of those who need to be

educated on the benefits. Members are requested to enlighten these teachers on the various services they enjoy. Larger membership means more benefits.

PUBLICITY MATTERS

Members are requested to collect the FTU Journal 2018 from their respective branch executives.

2018 CONFERENCE SPORTS RESULTS

<u>SPORTS</u>	<u>WINNER</u>	<u>RUNNER UP</u>
Soccer	<i>Labasa</i>	<i>Nasinu</i>
Netball	<i>Nadroga</i>	<i>Suva</i>
Men's V/Ball	<i>Suva</i>	<i>Bua/Taveuni/Savusavu</i>
Women's V/Ball	<i>Navua</i>	<i>Suva</i>

Best Player Soccer	<i>Edwin Sahayam - Labasa</i>
Best Player Men's V/Ball	<i>Waisale Suka - Suva</i>
Best Player Women's V/Ball	<i>Terola Ravonowale - Rewa</i>
Best Player Netball	<i>Nawari Nais - Suva</i>
Best Dressed Team Soccer	<i>Nadroga</i>
Best Dressed Team Men's V/Ball	<i>Nadi</i>
Best Dressed Team Women's V/Ball	<i>Navua</i>
Best Dressed Team Netball	<i>Rakiraki</i>



irrevocably agrees that non renewal of this contract will not give rise to any course of action of any sort whatsoever against the government.” This is a clause in the contracts which have been imposed upon civil servants.

There are several other contentious issues that continue to affect the teachers and the Union will continue to seek redress and bring about necessary changes via collective bargaining, industrial mechanism and negotiations with the employer. We will remain relentless in the pursuit of Union goals and stand up to challenges placed before us.

Contrary to the Statement by the Minister for Education that the Union bosses are not amenable to change and are irresponsibly misinforming to spread fear and confusions, the Unions only state facts and inform members of the current developments through regular publications.

Union leaders are only guided by the objectives for the common good of the membership.

Our publications clearly state our intent to take collective action to ensure the terms of collective bargaining are retained. It has nothing to do with holding onto our jobs or having a political future.

The Unions stand firmly united against attempts by the Minister to malign the Unions and falsely asserting that MOE is focused on creating a better future for teachers by itself. The imposition of individual contracts, in fact, is the opposite.

These are the facts:

I. a) Annual Leave

- Teachers annual leave is the school holidays as stipulated in the General Orders.
- With effect from 2018, 7 days from the holidays is included as working days.
- Professional development, like workshops are being conducted during school holidays. Teachers are required to attend them. So school holidays, contrary to what is being said, have been further whittled down. The Unions have challenged this decision in the labour court.



JOINT STATEMENT BY FTU AND FTA

Preamble

The two teacher unions in Fiji (FTU and FTA) since inception some 88 years ago have remained focused on being the voice for the teachers as workers. The Unions have been engaged in the core function of engaging the government in collective bargaining in the interest of quality education and upholding the rights and obligations that are lawful and legitimate entitlements of workers as per provisions of the 2013 Constitution, Labour Laws and international conventions ratified by the Government.

Individually members are given their contractual employments and the conditions therein are open to exploitation; Now we highlight one such clause.

“Renewal of contract is at the absolute discretion of the Government. For the avoidance of doubt the officer

b) Compassionate Leave

Compassionate leave was negotiated from the colonial era, time immemorial but has been repealed in early June. The Union wrote to the Ministry on 7th June 2018 seeking clarification. No response received. Action filed with the Employment Court on 25th June 2018. Family care leave announced on 13th July 2018. The Union was neither advised nor consulted on the matter at all. Family care leave will be effective from 01.01.19. But from July 2018 to 31.12.18, the teachers will have to opt for leave without pay. This period, during which members are deprived of the compassionate leave provisions, is a matter of grave concern to the Unions as our members are serving away from their loved ones in isolated geographical locations including maritime schools.

The extended maternity leave from 84 to 98 days and the provision of 5 days paternity leave is not an additional benefit by the Ministry. This is simply a result of the tripartite Employment Relations Advisory Board agreement reached after years of negotiations. It applies to all workers, not only teachers. The paternity leave and extension of maternity leave is not a gift or generosity by MOE but simply compliance to the ILO convention ratified by the government of Fiji.

c) Teacher Salaries

The rhetoric that teachers received a hefty salary increase is a misnomer. As stated by the Unions on numerous occasions that JEE is for salary adjustments after periodic market surveys and not salary rise.

The maximum salary of \$110,400.00 for principals of large schools is actually an illusion. The salary bands clearly stipulate that the maximum a large school principal can reach is \$87,000 (Step 4). Thereafter, only bonuses apply to exceptional “superflyers”. The same applies to all other grades.

2. Consultative Structures

The consultative structures of the past have been dismantled in the last decade. These included

the JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE, the CENTRAL STAFF BOARD, the CURRICULUM ADVISORY COMMITTEE, the IN-SERVICE TRAINING COMMITTEE and the like. The process of consultation gave transparency and fairness to the policies that were implemented. The numerous reforms implemented in the recent years were generally borrowed from elsewhere and imposed. The Unions were invited to some “consultations” to be “told” what was being implemented.

For example, Job Evaluation Exercise Guideline Clause 4.45 reads “*Observers may be included at the discretion of PS. Observers may include staff representatives*”. So the claim by the Minister is incorrect.

3. Demotions

The JEE, arising out of which salary adjustments were made is in reality not a salary/pay increase. The last JEE that was implemented was the one conducted in 1993. So the reality is that the JEE of 2017 occurred after 24 years. That is the fact. An average adjustment of 3% per annum only would have resulted in 72% increase across the board.

The claimed salary rise actually is a salary adjustment and in reality is well below what the teachers deserve.

FACT: SALARIES REDUCED

Entry point salary on new graduates has been reduced from \$23411(pre-JEE) to \$19000.00 to \$22000.00 (depending on the scores in the Job Test.) w.e.f 2018.

Graduate Salary as per JEE should be \$26823.00.

Entry point salary of Graduates without teacher training reduced from \$21000.00 (pre - JEE) to \$14000.00 post JEE. w.e.f 2018.

CONTRACTS

Civil Servants HAD to sign individual contracts to receive salaries adjusted as a result of the JEE. Those who did not sign were not given any increase.

The positions that were adjusted upwards by 15% plus as a result of the JEE were declared vacant. A

large number of confirmed post holders including Principals, headteachers, vice principals, senior education officers, Heads of Departments, etc who had been promoted by MOE through the normal process and were performing very well were effectively demoted and contracted at a lower substantive post that they held. They were then appointed to act on the previously confirmed positions to be advertised and processed via the imposed OMRS.

Out of the 32 schools in the large category (16 Primary and 16 Secondary) advertised at the beginning of 2018 only 6 were filled through OMRS. The same Heads who were demoted and declared unsuccessful by OMRS continue to act and are performing well above average as they had been doing in the past. Many of them have been assessed as fully competent by their supervisors in the Annual Appraisal completed on the 30th April 2018. The story is the same for small schools.

DEMOTIONS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF OMRS

FACT: Assistant Principal with 25 years experience (HOD since 2012 and AP since 2015) relegated to assistant teacher. His boss (acting HOD) has 3 months experience.

FACT: Confirmed Head of Department with 18 years service demoted to assistant teacher, supervised by Acting HOD with 3 years.

FACT: Head Teacher small school relegated to assistant teacher.

FACT: Principal of a rural school reknown for producing high quality results in External Exams for the past 4 years demoted Head of Department.

FACT: Principal of urban school produced 100% pass in year 12 exam demoted Assistant Principal. Numerous other similar cases

FACT: Letters written to the Minister to review the OMRS and adapt it to suit the local situation were not acknowledged. It is interesting to note that when the posts are re-advertised the same people will apply. The only expected improvement in their performance in the job tests will be through improved typing speed.

4. Unfair dismissals as per the Public Service Disciplinary Guideline.

The Union is concerned that the Guideline gives the Permanent Secretary unfettered powers to terminate an employee after considering the report of the three member investigation panel. Members would note that the panel members are appointed by the PS. The Union's position is that all cases must be referred to the Public Service Disciplinary Tribunal (PSDT) as the independent tribunal to adjudicate. This is to ensure natural justice is accorded to the accused as required under the 2013 Constitution.

As per the requirement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 which the Fiji Government is a signatory to, the involvement of the Teacher Unions in the planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review of all Education policies is imperative. Unfortunately this has not been the case so far.

The Teacher Unions are of the firm belief that the way forward is to engage in genuine dialogue in good faith. Merely informing of telling the Unions what is to be done or is being done is not acceptable.

CASE IN ARBITRATION COURT

The Union has filed a case in the Arbitration Court seeking the renewal of the Contracts that existed prior to the Job Evaluation Exercise.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COURT RULINGS

Fiji Teachers Union had sought relief from the ERC by way of an order that MOE renew the Contracts of all the Heads of Schools.

The ERC dismissed the Union's claim on the basis that *"it was 'time barred' inn that the grievance was not filed within 21 days from the time it first arouse."*

However, the good news is that ERC also ruled that *"the Court has the jurisdiction to hear the matter filed before it."*