

ANNUAL CONFERENCE ISSUE



FIJI TEACHERS UNION JOURNAL
VOLUME 96
2026

Published by:
Fiji Teachers Union
P. O. Box 2203
Government Buildings, Suva
Phone: (679) 331 4099 / 331 4668
Fax: (679) 3305962
Email: ftu@connect.com.fj

Printed by:
Max Marketing and Publishing Pte Ltd.
12 Jepsen Rd., Viria East, Vatuwaqa
P.O. Box 400, Suva, Fiji
Phone: (679) 337 5041 / 337 5042 / 337
5043
email: info@maxmarketingfiji.com

All articles in this issue are copyright of Fiji Teachers Union



**PUBLICITY OFFICER
FIJI TEACHERS UNION**

Vishal Raj Goundar

"The purpose of human life is to serve and to show. With solidarity, you will be more talented and handier, you will be taller and stronger, faster, and wiser!" (Mehmet Muratildan)

It is with immense pride and pleasure that I present to you the 2026 Fiji Teachers Union journal. This year's FTU AGM and Annual Conference returned to Ba after the success of 2017, and it is once again the time to have dialogue and debate on the theme for this year's Annual Conference which is 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start'.

We last gathered in Ba for the Annual Conference in 2017 and it is after some nine memorable and hard-fought years that the soccer crazy town of Ba is ready to welcome delegates and well-wishers for the 96th AGM and Conference. Hence, I extend my profound gratitude and sincere thanks and appreciation to the hard-working Executives of Ba branch for taking the initiative to host a gathering of such a magnitude.

Organising a conference involves a lot of planning and commitment, and the leadership of the host branch, Bro. Manoj Kumar and his team deserve a round of applause and pats for setting the platform for some healthy and robust discussions and deliberations during the three-day annual event. The work done by the National Executive Committee Member,

Bro. Nakul Deo Barman, is also highly appreciated. The support from members in Ba has been great, resulting in the success of the biggest gathering of teachers in Fiji.

As the union's Publicity Officer, it is my responsibility to ensure that alongside my industrious team, union literature is disseminated in a timely and accurate manner, and I salute the Publicity Committee for working on the newsletters, Activities Report and the union journal which contains a lot of interesting articles and messages.

The theme for the 2026 Annual Conference, which is 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start', is a thought-provoking one as it brings back communication, collaboration, *talanoa* and partnership. The good old days when the Ministry of Education and FTU joined hands to make programs a success come to the fore.

The theme is appropriate considering that the Ministry of Education and the Minister Honourable Aseri Masivou Radrodro have opened their doors to the two teacher unions for dialogue and discussions to move forward. Hence, every effort must be made to ensure the sustainability of this partnership. With the change in government, things look bright now for both teacher unions in terms of meaningful dialogue and participation in decision making.

The Coalition Government led by PM

Sitiveni Rabuka has paved the way forward with meaningful discussions with trade unions. The presence of Honourable Agni Deo Singh, the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations at the FTU Conference as the chief guest shows the Coalition Government's commitment to working together with trade unions to address workers grievances.

I wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions in the form of messages and articles that have been contributed. I acknowledge the commitment of my team- the Publicity Committee (Bro. Rajnesh Lingam, who held the fort alongside Bro.

Pranesh Kumar and Sis. Urmila Singh) for their dedication, perseverance, and unity. I thank the management and staff of Max Marketing for their guidance and assistance in making this journal a success. A special word of appreciation is extended to the graphics designer, Janine, for her efforts and layout!

I wish the guests, delegates, members, and readers an illuminating reading of this year's FTU journal. I wish everyone a superb stay in Ba! May you leave with beautiful and fond memories!





BRANCH CHAIRPERSON - BA

Manoj Kumar

As the Chairman of the Ba Branch of the Fiji Teachers Union, it is both a privilege and an honour to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to all delegates, executives, invited guests, and fellow educators to the 96th Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting.

We are delighted to host this significant gathering once again at Xavier College, Ba—the very venue that last welcomed this esteemed Annual conference in 2017. The return to Ba after nearly a decade is both symbolic and meaningful. It reflects not only our readiness as a host branch, but also our continued commitment to advancing the noble cause of education and teacher empowerment in Fiji.

This year's theme, 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start', captures the essence of our profession. Teachers are not merely facilitators of knowledge. They are the foundation upon which societies are built. From the earliest stages of a child's learning journey, teachers ignite curiosity, nurture potential, and instill values that shape future generations. Progress in any nation begins in the classroom, and at the center of that progress stands the teacher.

As we gather over these few days, this Annual conference provides us with a valuable opportunity to reflect, engage, and re-energise. It is a platform where ideas are exchanged, challenges are addressed, and solutions are forged collectively. In an ever-evolving educational landscape, it is crucial that we remain united, innovative, and forward-thinking. The role of teachers continues to expand beyond academics, encompassing mentorship, emotional support, and community leadership.

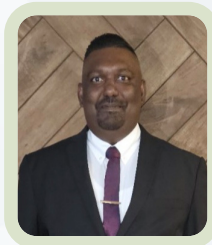
The Ba Branch has worked diligently to ensure that this Annual conference is both productive and memorable. We have taken great care in organising arrangements that reflect our warm Ba hospitality, and we hope that your time here will be comfortable, engaging, and enriching. Beyond the formal proceedings, we encourage all the participants to take the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and build lasting professional relationships.

Hosting this Annual conference is not just an event for us, it is a moment of pride. It allows us to showcase the strength, resilience, and unity of our branch while reaffirming our shared mission as educators. We acknowledge the tireless efforts of the organising committee, volunteers, donor partners and all those who have contributed behind the scenes to make this event possible.

As we move forward with the Annual conference deliberations and AGM proceedings, let us remain guided by our shared purpose: to advocate for quality education, to uphold the dignity of the teaching profession, and to ensure that every child in Fiji receives the best possible start in life. Every child remains our hope to reshape this beautiful nation.

In closing remarks, I once again welcome you all to Ba. May this Annual conference inspire meaningful dialogue, strengthen our collective resolve, and reinforce the vital role we play as teachers at the heart of progress.

Vinaka vakalevu and best wishes for the successful Annual Conference!



BA TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Moshim Khan

Greetings to all!

As Chairperson of the Ba Town Council Special Administrators, it is my distinct honour to extend warm greetings to all members of the Fiji Teachers Union on the occasion of your Conference and AGM 2026.

Ba is privileged to once again serve as your host, having last welcomed this esteemed gathering in 2017. It gives me great pleasure to welcome all delegates, especially those travelling from across the seas and distant parts of our beautiful nation, to our vibrant town. Your presence reflects the unity, commitment, and strength of the teaching fraternity in Fiji.

This year's theme provides a timely and meaningful focus, guiding important conversations that shape the future of education. I encourage all participants to engage actively and contribute thoughtfully, ensuring that the deliberations are productive, insightful, and forward-looking. Your collective voice and shared experiences are vital in advancing the standards and aspirations of our education system.

This Annual Conference will bring together thousands of teachers, friends and well-wishers from all districts and will unite the teachers throughout the Fiji for four days of full of activities and joy depict the theme itself ie 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving

Progress from the Start'

Teachers are the pulse of progress. They spark curiosity, nurture resilience, and guide every learner toward discovery. From the first step in the classroom to the milestones that shape society, teachers remain the steady force propelling us forward. Their dedication is not just about imparting knowledge—it's about inspiring futures and igniting change.

At the heart of every achievement, there is a teacher. May your time in Ba be both professionally rewarding and personally enjoyable. I trust that alongside your important discussions, you will experience the warmth of our community and create lasting memories during your stay.

I also wish to sincerely thank the National Executive for the opportunity to contribute to this journal. It is a privilege to be part of this significant event.

Wishing you all a successful conference, fruitful deliberations, and a memorable stay in Ba.

Vinaka vakalevu!





MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Honourable Aseri Masivou Radrodro

Ni sa bula vinaka!

It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the 96th Fiji Teachers Union Journal.

I am pleased to note the dedication with which the Fiji Teachers Union (FTU) has served our educators in providing a conducive learning environment to the children of our beloved nation. This reflects a commitment of serving our children through education so that we can collectively achieve building a strong nation.

We must recognise that education is more than simply communicating facts. It must be more than the transmission of concepts. Now is the time for education to focus on the formation of moral character and this is what I wish to convey to the readers of this journal.

It is imperative, therefore, that we build a nation whose institutions will help support a strong ethical upbringing of our children. The dynamics to make this happen will require every single one of us to be realistic and committed. We must have the tenacity and determination to overcome the obstacles along the way together.

The theme for this year, 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start', is apt as I strongly believe that a teacher serves as the most important pillar of strength for development, progress and success in our society.

We need to produce scholars, who have gone on to make a meaningful difference in Fiji and beyond. Their successes are a testament to the foundation laid in the four walls of our classrooms.

It is imperative, therefore, that we build a nation whose institutions will help support a strong ethical upbringing of our children. Building this future requires a committed partnership. It requires us, as policymakers, to create an education system that values character alongside curriculum.

As the Minister for Education, I urge our teachers to model integrity in the classroom, and our families to reinforce universal morals values at home. This is a shared responsibility, and it will demand realism about the work involved and a collective determination to see it through.

Your legacy is not only written in textbooks and the classrooms, but in the character of all the students who leave your school gates ready to serve, lead, and uplift our nation.

Together, let us continue shaping an education system that empowers every child to realise their full potential and contribute meaningfully to the future of Fiji.

With these words, I wish you all the very best for the rest of the academic year.



NATIONAL PRESIDENT FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Sashi Mahendra Shandil

Presidential Address

I quote the words of Douglas MacArthur, "A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent."

The Chief Guest, Honourable Agni Deo Singh, the Minister for Employment Productivity and Workplace Relations, distinguished dignitaries, colleagues of the Fiji Teachers Union, retired and serving educators, and friends from every island and community!

It is a profound honour to stand before you at the 96th Annual Conference and AGM of the Fiji Teachers Union here at Xavier College in Ba. Ninety-six years of collective struggle, service, and sacrifice- nine decades and more of teachers shaping minds, building character, and forging the future of our nation.

On behalf of the Executive and our entire membership, I warmly welcome you to this important gathering of our union. I extend my deepest gratitude to the Ba branch for hosting us with such generosity and excellent arrangements. Their hard work, local leadership, and hospitality have made it possible for us to meet in the true spirit of unity and purpose. Please join me in acknowledging and thanking the Ba branch for holding the fort in organising an Annual Conference of such magnitude.

We gather today under the principle of non-interference- a principle that safeguards the integrity of our democratic processes, ensures a fair and transparent deliberation of Union business, and protects the rights of every member to participate freely. Our commitment

to non-interference reflects our dedication to democratic values, collective responsibility, and the professional solidarity that sustains our work for teachers and learners across Fiji. I thank the Government of the day for enshrining and advocating these rights as per the constitution of the land.

This occasion also gives us the solemn duty to honor those who have built the Fiji Teachers Union and carried its mission forward. I pay tribute to our former leaders and our predecessors- men and women whose vision, courage, and tireless service laid the foundation on which we stand. To those who led through challenge and change, who negotiated, organized, and mentored with conviction and compassion: we remember your contributions, we salute your sacrifice, and we pledge to preserve the legacy you entrusted to us. My salutations to those who are in attendance today.

This year's theme, 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start', captures both our identity and our mandate. Teachers are not peripheral. We are essential. From the first lesson to the last diploma, teachers set the course for progress. When teachers are strong, nations flourish. When teachers are neglected, societies pay a price for generations.

To the men and women in classrooms across Fiji- you are the heartbeat of this country. Let us be guided by the adage, Teachers at the heart make nations whole'.

My FTU members, you are the wake-up calls, mid-morning encouragements, and evening reassurances. You are counselors, nurses, mentors and sometimes the only steady adult in a child's life. You do not merely transmit knowledge; you nurture dignity, hope, citizenship, and resilience. For that, you deserve not just thanks but tangible respect- fair pay, decent working conditions, transparent promotion, and policies that keep our best teachers here rather than seeing them leave in search of survival and dignity abroad. I must call upon the Government

to invest in teachers now and reap a harvest of prosperity in a lifetime. This is a budgetary truth and our moral claim.

This evening, I will be direct because the moment requires so. We gather in an era of urgent choices. Our children's future hinges on whether our nation places teachers at the heart of its development priorities. Yet, too often policy decisions say something different: wages that lag behind living costs; promotion systems that reward process over performance or that are opaque and slow; workloads that stretch teachers beyond the classroom; infrastructure gaps that hamper learning; and a steady stream of educators departing our shores for better pay and conditions overseas. These are not isolated problems, but they are systemic failures that demand bold remedy.

To our Chief Guest- the former General Secretary of this union and now the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations- Sir, your presence is significant. You know our classrooms, our challenges, and the human cost of policy choices. The 2026 Fiji Teachers Union Annual Conference welcomes your attendance and your ear. We ask for your voice in Cabinet and your leadership in policy reform. We will press firmly, respectfully, and persistently for changes that restore dignity and stability to the teaching profession.

Before I express our disappointments and concerns, I acknowledge the good work of the Government and the Ministry of Education for the consultative approach taken in the last four years. I am grateful for the removal of the contract, extending the retirement age, relooking into some of the very old and obsolete policies and acts, including the Education Act, and embracing a partnership to work in collaboration. The success stories of the union in the last fiscal year have also been elaborated in the Activities Report which I will be dwelling upon tomorrow.

Honourable Singh, let me at the outset address the core issues:

Salaries and dignity

Teaching is a skilled profession requiring training, commitment, and daily excellence. Yet our

remuneration does not reflect that reality. When teachers struggle to pay mortgages, when they take second jobs to feed their families, and when bright new graduates look abroad for wages that respect their worth, the alarm bells should ring. Salaries are not merely numbers on a pay slip: they are a public acknowledgment of value. We call for a multi-year, realistic plan to restore teacher incomes, aligned with cost of living and comparable to similar professions both locally and regionally. Incrementalism without ambition will not suffice. We need a credible roadmap that guarantees progress and protects teaching as a viable, respected career.

Working conditions and classroom environment

A teacher's work is shaped by the conditions in which students learn. Overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated buildings, lack of basic resources, poor sanitation, inadequate transport in rural areas- these degrade learning and demoralize staff. We demand a national commitment to safe, well-resourced, and dignified learning environments. Class sizes must be manageable. Schools must have libraries, laboratories, and technology where feasible, and functioning water and sanitation systems. Support staff- counselors, teacher aides, maintenance personnel are not luxuries, but they are essential to quality education.

Promotion, professional pathways and development

Career progression must be transparent, fair, and merit based. Too often promotion is slowed by bureaucracy, subjective evaluation, or criteria divorced from classroom reality. Teachers must see clear pathways for professional growth, access to meaningful and relevant professional development, and recognition for teaching excellence. Continuous learning opportunities, that are well-funded, accessible, and tied to career advancement, will keep teachers engaged and growing. We reject tokenistic training that is neither practical nor resourced.

Teacher well-being and workplace safety

Teaching is emotionally demanding. Exposure to violence, abuse, or chronic stress without

institutional support undermines teachers' ability to perform. We insist on robust well-being programs: counseling services, proactive anti-violence policies, clear mechanisms for reporting and addressing harassment, and health provisions that protect educators and their families.

Teacher Exodus- a national emergency

We face a teacher exodus that threatens the very fabric of our educational system. Young educators, newly trained and full of promise, are leaving our shores to teach overseas. Seasoned teachers, fatigued by ever-increasing workloads and stagnant salaries, are retiring early or stepping away from the classroom. This is not just a labour problem. It is a national crisis. When other countries offer better pay, clearer career trajectories, and safer working conditions, our teachers leave and with them go experience, mentorship capacity, and institutional memory. This is not just an employment issue; it is an issue of national sovereignty over our educational future. We must implement retention strategies: targeted incentives for rural and high-need placements, housing support, scholarships with retention bonds for publicly funded teacher education, and accelerated promotion tracks for those committing to serve in Fiji. We must create workplaces where teachers can raise families, build lives, and prosper.

Recurring issues- a concern

The message we are sending to teachers through policy, through pay, through systems that reward not merit or commitment, but paperwork and bureaucratic whim is that teaching is not valued and when a society does not value its teachers, it devalues its future.

Budget priorities and political will

We recognize fiscal constraints, but recognition alone is insufficient. Budget choices are moral choices. When a government prioritizes short-term gains over long-term human capital, it gambles with the nation's future. We urge transparent budgeting that places education and specifically teacher remuneration and school infrastructure at the center of national development strategy. We will hold governments

accountable for those choices.

The 2026 FTU Annual Conference proposes a 15% pay rise.

To Honourable Singh, 'Invest in teachers now and you harvest a lifetime of prosperity'. This must be a budgetary truth and our moral claim.

What else do we want? FTU proposes concretely the following:

- A phased, binding salary adjustment plan for teachers over the next three to five years with measurable benchmarks and protections against inflationary erosion.
- Job Evaluation Exercise- Already our call for many years.
- A national audit of school conditions and a targeted infrastructure fund prioritizing the worst-affected schools within the first two years.
- A rewritten promotion framework drafted jointly by the Ministry of Education and FTU, with clear criteria, timelines, independent appeals, and linkage to professional development.
- A national retention package: housing allowances or housing programs for remote teachers, hardship differentials, and scholarship bonds for government-sponsored teacher trainees.
- A teacher well-being and safety protocol, including mandatory reporting, counseling support, and regional helplines.
- A national campaign to elevate teaching as a profession, emphasizing status, career prospects, and public respect to counter the narrative that success requires emigration.

Sir, I bring to your attention the following concerns that need the Ministry's immediate attention:

- Ensuring qualified external investigators to better understand and handle members' grievances.
- Payment of the pending MyAPA from 2017.
- A Job Evaluation Exercise to correct anomalies in the 2017 JEE.
- Reducing class size in urban schools to foster learning.

- Ensuring the provision of in-service training for teachers.
- Making provisions in the 2026-2027 budget for the establishment of counsellor positions in schools, bearing in mind that corporal punishment is illegal, and counselling services are needed.
- Showing compassion to teachers who must travel abroad to accompany their sick spouse or child by allowing them to travel with full pay.
- Payment of the long-service allowance which was taken away on the hidden by the previous administration.
- Doubling up allowances paid to teachers.

As we move forward, the Fiji Teachers Union stands ready to work in partnership with the Ministry of Education. We propose the establishment of a Joint FTU-Ministry Summit to develop a Teacher Empowerment Charter that addresses these critical issues. Together, we can create an education system that attracts and retains talented teachers, provides every child with quality learning opportunities, and builds a brighter future for our nation.

To the Government, Ministry, and our Chief Guest- FTU is ready to negotiate, to collaborate, and to advise. We bring evidence, frontline experience, and the moral imperative of advancing public education. Partnership requires action. Words and promises must translate into budgets, policies, and timelines that produce results for teachers and students.

To our members- unity and professionalism remain our greatest assets. We will pursue constructive engagement and, where necessary, lawful and disciplined industrial action to protect our profession and the children we serve. Let us document challenges, collect evidence, support each other, mentor young teachers, and raise community awareness. Our advocacy must be principled and persistent.

To all other stakeholders and education communities- your voice matters. When communities stand with teachers, policymakers listen. Demand that your representatives put education first. Visit schools, speak at meetings, and join us in calling for a future where teachers are valued and children learn in dignity.

In the end, this is not just a union's concern. It is a national mission. Fiji's strength will be measured not by slogans or statistics alone but by the dignity of its classrooms and the permanence of its teachers. We must not accept decline. We must demand renewal, and we must act with unity, courage, and clarity.

To our Chief Guest- your experience in our ranks gives you unique credibility. We ask you to use your office to be a bridge between our lived realities and the corridors of power; between rhetoric and the resources needed; between commitment and implementation. We will hold you and all policymakers to account, but we also extend the hand of partnership. Work with us. Design solutions with us. Deliver outcomes for our teachers and our children.

Let the 96th Annual Conference be the point at which rhetoric becomes results. Let us leave here with a clear plan, a credible timeline, and a renewed commitment to place teachers at the center of national progress. We are not asking for charity; we are asking for justice and wisdom. We are asking for investment. We are asking for policy that aligns with the truth that when teachers thrive, the nation thrives.

We are asking for fair pay, safe schools, and clear promotion- dignity for every teacher.

Thank you for your service. Thank you for your courage. Thank you for your resolve. Let us move from words to action in solidarity.

I conclude with the words of Samora Malcolm, "Solidarity is not an act of charity, but mutual aid between forces fighting for the same objective. When 'I' is replaced with 'We', even the illness becomes wellness."

Thank you so much brothers and sisters for listening!



GENERAL SECRETARY FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Muniappa Goundar

The Fiji Teachers Union proudly convenes its 96th Annual Conference and GlobalCare FTU Sports in Ba, hosted at Xavier College and 4R Stadium respectively, from Tuesday May 5 to Friday May 8, 2026. This annual gathering remains the pinnacle of our union calendar - an opportunity for reflection, renewal, unity, and forward planning as we continue to champion the welfare and professional standing of teachers across Fiji.

We are deeply honoured that the official opening of the Annual Conference will be conducted by Honourable Agni Deo Singh, the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations. The invitation was initially extended to the Honourable Prime Minister. However, due to a scheduled Cabinet sitting on the same day, the Honourable Minister was duly appointed to represent the Government of the day. His presence underscores the Government's recognition of the pivotal role teachers play in national development and reaffirms the importance of sustained dialogue between the teaching profession and policymakers. The GlobalCare FTU Sports, commencing on Wednesday May 6, was officially opened by the Managing Director of Global Care and Homeland Enforcement, Mr. Yogendra Sharma. His leadership and commitment to supporting teachers have been exemplary. The partnership forged with Global Care and Homeland Enforcement is a testament to the power of collaboration between corporate Fiji and the education sector.

Through sports, we celebrate teamwork, discipline, wellness, and unity- values that resonate deeply within our profession.

This year's Conference and Sports have been intentionally expanded to include more vibrant and meaningful programmes, enhancing both professional engagement and fellowship. A notable addition is the separation of the official opening ceremony on its own evening, allowing it the prominence it deserves. Furthermore, we introduced the much-anticipated President's Nite, scheduled for Wednesday May 6 from 7.00pm, proudly sponsored by Remington Limited.

This special evening provided a platform for celebration, recognition, and camaraderie - an occasion where we honour our shared journey, acknowledge contributions, and strengthen the bonds that define us as one union family.

The Break-out sessions will once again be conducted in structured groups, each focusing on four distinct thematic areas. Delegates will have the opportunity to select the group that best aligns with their interests and expertise. This participatory approach is deliberate. It ensures that every voice is heard, every idea considered, and every member empowered. More importantly, these discussions are not merely academic; they are strategic. They will directly inform the direction of our union as we prepare for a historic milestone-

our centennial celebrations in 2030. As we approach this landmark, we must ask ourselves not only where we have been, but where we aspire to go.

The theme for this year's Annual Conference, **'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start'**, captures the essence of our mission. Teachers are not just participants in national development. They are its architects. From the earliest years of a child's education, it is the teacher who lays the foundation for knowledge, values, innovation, and citizenship. To place teachers at the heart is to recognise that no reform, no policy, and no vision for progress can succeed without empowering those who stand on the frontlines of education.

I allude to the words of the great educator Nelson Mandela, **'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'**. At the centre of that power is the teacher. This theme is therefore both a recognition and a call to action, that we must continue to invest in, support, and elevate the teaching profession as the driving force of national progress.

In closing, I extend my deepest appreciation to our principal sponsor, GlobalCare and Homeland Enforcement, and its Managing Director, Mr. Yogendra Sharma, for their unprecedented and generous sponsorship. Their support in providing sports uniforms for all 15 participating soccer and netball teams, along with sponsoring all trophies and medals, marks a historic first for our union. This contribution goes beyond material support. It reflects a genuine commitment to the wellbeing and unity of teachers.

I also wish to sincerely acknowledge Vinod Patel and Company PTE Limited, Remington PTE Limited, Life Insurance Corporation of India, Vodafone Fiji and Niqua Construction for coming on board to support this year's Conference. Their partnership strengthens our efforts and demonstrates that investing in teachers is investing in the future of our nation.

As we gather in Ba, let us embrace this moment with pride and purpose. Let us engage with open minds, celebrate with open hearts, and leave with renewed determination. In unity, there is strength, and in purpose, there is progress.





MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Honourable Agni Deo Singh

Education is the foundation upon which a nation builds its future. In Fiji, every child represents hope, potential, and the promise of a better tomorrow. Investing in children through quality education is not only a moral responsibility but also a national priority. Teachers, parents, communities, and policymakers all share the duty of ensuring that every child's right to education is respected, protected, and fulfilled.

The right to education is a fundamental human right recognised internationally and within Fiji's commitment to inclusive development. Education empowers children with knowledge, critical thinking skills, and the confidence needed to participate actively in society. When children are given access to quality education, they gain the tools necessary to break cycles of poverty, contribute to their communities, and shape a stronger nation.

Teachers play a central role in safeguarding this right. Every day in classrooms across Fiji, from urban schools to the most remote islands, teachers work tirelessly to nurture young minds. Beyond delivering lessons, teachers provide guidance, encouragement, and support that help children grow academically and emotionally. The Fiji Teachers Union continues to advocate for improved teaching conditions, adequate resources, and professional support so that teachers can effectively deliver quality education to every learner.

However, ensuring the right to education requires more than classrooms and textbooks. It demands a supportive environment where children feel safe, valued, and motivated to learn. Schools must be places free from discrimination, violence, and inequality. Inclusive education ensures that children with disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those living in rural areas are not left behind. Every child, regardless of their circumstances, deserves equal opportunities to succeed.

Communities also have an important role in protecting children's educational rights. Parents and guardians are partners in the learning journey. When families actively support their children's education, the impact on learning outcomes is significant. Communities that value education create environments where children are encouraged to attend school regularly, work hard, and believe in their potential.

In Fiji's rapidly changing world, education must also prepare children for the future. Digital literacy, problem-solving skills, environmental awareness, and cultural understanding are increasingly important. Teachers must be supported with training and resources to help students adapt to these changes and thrive in a globalised world while valuing Fiji's rich traditions and cultures.

The theme calls upon all stakeholders which includes government, educators, parents,

and communities to strengthen their commitment to education. Policies must prioritise equitable access to schooling, improved infrastructure, and continuous professional development for teachers. Investments in education are investments in Fiji's sustainable development.

The Fijian Government has made significant contributions to ensuring that every child has access to education. Key initiatives such as free school fees, free textbooks, and transport assistance help reduce financial barriers and allow more students to attend school regularly.

The government also provides \$200 back-to-school support, which assists families with purchasing essential school items such as uniforms, stationery, and bags at the beginning of the school year. In addition, scholarship programs create opportunities for students to pursue further education and develop skills that contribute to national development.

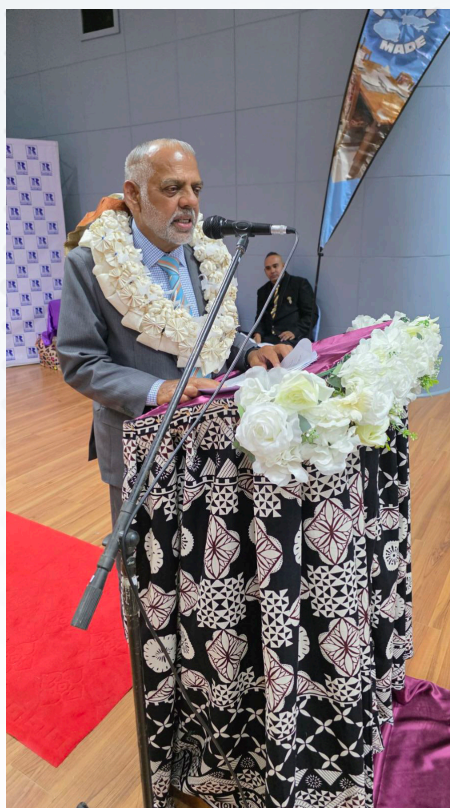
Teachers play a crucial role in protecting every child's right to education. In Fiji and around the world, they serve not only as educators but also as mentors, advocates, and role models who guide students toward reaching their full potential.

By creating safe, inclusive, and supportive classrooms, teachers ensure that all children regardless of their background have access to quality learning opportunities. They nurture curiosity, encourage confidence, and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of every learner.

Beyond teaching academic content, teachers also provide guidance and support to students facing challenges, helping them grow both academically and personally. We acknowledge and appreciate teachers for their invaluable contribution to shaping the lives of future citizens of this nation. Their

dedication and commitment play a vital role in building a knowledgeable, responsible, and empowered generation for the future.

In conclusion, every child deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. When we protect the right to education, we protect the future of our nation. Let us work together to ensure that no child is left behind, because our children are not only our responsibility today, they are the leaders of tomorrow.





**GENERAL SECRETARY
COUNCIL OF PACIFIC EDUCATION**

Neselinda Meta

The theme of the Fiji Teachers Union Annual Conference, '**Teacher at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start**' captures a fundamental truth meaningful progress in education begins with teachers. From early childhood to secondary and post-school education, teachers shape not only learning outcomes, but the social, economic, and democratic futures of our nations.

Across Fiji and the Pacific, teachers work in diverse and often challenging contexts remote communities, climate-affected islands, under-resourced schools, and rapidly evolving digital environments. Yet despite these pressures, teachers remain deeply committed to their students and communities, demonstrating innovation, resilience, and leadership every day. This dedication, however, must not be taken for granted. Sustainable progress requires deliberate investment, strong policy support and genuine respect for the profession.

Council of Pacific Education work across the region consistently reinforces that **teaching is a human-centred profession**. While technology and innovation, particularly the responsible use of ICT and Artificial Intelligence can support learning, they must complement, not replace, professional judgement and human connection. Teachers must be centrally involved in shaping how reforms and innovations are introduced, supported through professional development, and protected through robust safeguards for privacy, wellbeing and professional autonomy.

At the regional and international level, this vision is strongly reflected in **Education International's Go Public! Fund Education campaign**, advanced in the Asia-Pacific by EIAP and championed in the Pacific by COPE and its affiliates, including FTU. Go Public! calls on governments and international financing institutions to reverse decades of underinvestment in public education and, critically, in teachers. UNESCO's estimate that the world needs 44 million additional teachers by 2030—300,000 in Oceania alone—underscores the urgency of action.

Teacher shortages are not inevitable they are the result of policy choices. Overwork, inadequate pay, insecure employment, and limited professional voice have driven skilled educators away from the profession. Go Public! demands a change in direction: fair salaries, manageable workloads, secure employment, and teachers recognised as essential partners in education reform. For Pacific nations, where education is foundational to sustainable development, investing in teachers is investing in national resilience.

Strong teachers also require **strong unions**. In this context, the **PSI/EI Building Union Power campaign** is a vital regional initiative one that FTU actively participates in. Building union power means strengthening membership, enhancing leadership capacity, organising women and young teachers, defending collective bargaining, and ensuring unions remain democratic and independent. In an era

of fiscal pressure, privatisation, and shrinking civic space, education unions play a critical role in safeguarding both professional rights and the right to quality public education.

The 2025 COPE Triennial Conference reinforced these priorities, affirming the importance of gender equality, youth leadership, digital inclusion, climate resilience, and solidarity with smaller and vulnerable unions across the Pacific. These commitments reflect a shared understanding that progress in education is inseparable from social justice and collective action.

Placing teachers at the heart of progress means more than symbolic recognition—it requires sustained commitment from governments, employers, communities, and

unions alike. It means listening to teachers' voices, investing from the start of the profession, and creating conditions that allow educators to thrive throughout their careers. As COPE Secretary General, I commend the Fiji Teachers Union for foregrounding this message through its Conference theme. FTU's leadership—locally, regionally, and internationally—demonstrates how teachers, when organised and empowered, truly drive progress from the start. Through collective advocacy, solidarity, and campaigns such as **Go Public!** and **Building Union Power**, we can ensure that teachers remain at the heart of education systems that are fair, inclusive, and future-focused.

Long Live FTU!





VICE CHANCELLOR FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Unaisi Nabobo

TEACHERS MATTER!

Teachers are at the heart of national development, shaping the trajectory of societies from the earliest stages of learning. In Fiji and across the Pacific Islands, where geography, culture, and economic vulnerability present unique development challenges, teachers are not only educators but also nation builders, community leaders, and agents of transformation. Their work lays the foundation for progress by shaping the knowledge, skills, values, and aspirations of every generation.

From the beginning of a child's learning journey, teachers influence how individuals understand themselves and the world around them. In this sense, education is not a neutral process. It is a structured pathway through which societies reproduce or transform themselves. In Pacific Island contexts, where communities are closely interconnected and culturally diverse, teachers play an especially significant role in bridging traditional knowledge systems with modern educational demands. They ensure that learners are grounded in their identity while also being equipped to participate in a globalised economy.

Human Capital and the Economic Role of Teachers

One of the most widely used explanations of education's role in development is the Human Capital Theory, developed by economists such as Gary Becker. This theory argues that education is an investment that increases the productivity and economic value of individuals. Teachers are therefore central to national development because they are the primary agents through which human capital is formed.

In Fiji and the Pacific Islands, where economic diversification and skills shortages remain key development challenges, teachers provide foundational competencies such as literacy, numeracy, communication, and problem-solving. These skills enable learners to become skilled workers, professionals, and entrepreneurs who contribute to national productivity. Without strong teaching systems, economies struggle to grow sustainably, and nations remain dependent on external expertise. Thus, teachers are not only shaping individuals but also strengthening the economic resilience of entire nations.

The Fiji National University and Teacher Development

A critical institution in this development ecosystem is the Fiji National University (FNU). As a national university with a strong mandate in vocational, professional, and higher education, FNU plays a central role in preparing and strengthening the teaching workforce in Fiji and the wider Pacific region.

Through its teacher education programs, professional development pathways, and research initiatives, FNU contributes directly to improving teaching quality and educational leadership. The university's approach emphasises accessible, industry-relevant, and community-responsive education, ensuring that teachers are trained not only in pedagogy but also in contextual understanding of Pacific societies. In doing so, FNU supports national development goals by ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to respond to the evolving needs of learners and communities.

Beyond initial teacher preparation, FNU also contributes to continuous professional development, helping teachers upgrade their

skills in areas such as inclusive education, curriculum innovation, and digital learning. This strengthens the capacity of schools across Fiji and the Pacific Islands to deliver quality education that is both equitable and future focused.

Social Constructivism and the Role of Teachers in Learning

From a learning perspective, the Social Constructivist Theory, particularly the work of Lev Vygotsky, highlights that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. Learning is most effective when guided by a knowledgeable facilitator within the learner's 'Zone of Proximal Development'.

Teachers, therefore, are not passive transmitters of information but active facilitators of learning. In Pacific classrooms, where students come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, teachers play a crucial role in shaping meaningful learning experiences. They encourage dialogue, collaboration, and critical thinking, helping students move from basic understanding to higher-order reasoning. This approach is essential for preparing learners to engage with complex global challenges while remaining grounded in their local and cultural contexts.

Humanistic Education and the Development of Values

Education in Fiji and the Pacific is not only about academic achievement but also about character formation. Humanistic Educational Theory, associated with Carl Rogers (1943), emphasises the development of the whole person, including emotional, social, and ethical dimensions.

Teachers nurture values such as respect, empathy, discipline, cooperation, and responsibility. These values are essential in the Pacific Island societies, where communal living and social relationships are central to cultural identity. Teachers help reinforce social cohesion by fostering inclusive classroom environments where diversity is respected and celebrated. In this way, education becomes a powerful tool for strengthening national unity and regional solidarity.

Equity, Inclusion, and Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

Another important theoretical lens is Pierre Bourdieu's the Theory of Social Reproduction (1970), which explains how education systems can either reinforce or challenge existing social inequalities. Without deliberate intervention, students from disadvantaged backgrounds may remain marginalised due to unequal access to resources and opportunities.

Teachers are key to breaking this cycle. In Fiji and across the Pacific Islands, they often serve in remote and rural communities where access to services is limited. Their presence ensures that education reaches all learners, regardless of geography or socioeconomic status. By adapting teaching strategies to meet diverse learning needs, teachers promote equity and inclusion, helping to ensure that education becomes a tool for social mobility rather than social reproduction.

Teacher Unionism and Professional Strengthening

Teacher unionism also plays a critical role in supporting education systems in Fiji and the Pacific. Teacher unions advocate fair working conditions, professional recognition, and the welfare of educators. These functions are essential because teacher motivation and stability are directly linked to the quality of education delivered in classrooms.

In Fiji, teacher unions engage in dialogue with government and education stakeholders to influence policies related to salaries, workload, curriculum implementation, and professional standards. By protecting teachers' rights and promoting professional integrity, unions contribute to a more stable and effective education system. This stability ultimately benefits students and strengthens national development outcomes.

Capability Approach and Human Development

The Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen in 1979, provides a broader understanding of education as the expansion of human freedom and opportunity. According to this view, development is not only about income or

economic growth but about enabling people to lead lives they value.

Teachers are central to this process because they empower learners with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to make informed choices. In the Pacific Island contexts, where vulnerability to climate change and economic shocks is high, education becomes a vital tool for resilience. Teachers help learners develop adaptability, problem-solving skills, and environmental awareness, ensuring that future generations can navigate in the oceans of uncertainty.

Conclusion: Teachers at the Heart of Nation-Building

Teachers truly are at the heart of progress, driving development from the earliest stages of learning. In Fiji and across the Pacific Islands, their role extends far beyond the classroom. They are builders of human capital, shapers of values, promoters of equity, and facilitators of national identity and resilience.

Institutions such as the Fiji National University strengthen this mission by preparing competent and responsive educators, while teacher unions ensure that the profession remains supported and sustainable. Together, they form a critical ecosystem that sustains education and development.

Through the combined lenses of the Human Capital Theory, Social Constructivism, Humanistic Education, Social Reproduction Theory, and the Capability Approach, teachers are not peripheral actors but central architects of national development. A nation that values its teachers, invests in their growth, and supports their profession is a nation that secures its future.

In Fiji and the Pacific, sustainable development begins in the classroom—guided by dedicated teachers who drive progress from the start.

TEACHERS MATTER!

Reference

Chu-Fuluifaga, C., & Reynolds, M. (2023). Teachers responding to Pacific community voice. *Education Sciences*, 3(2), Article 20.

Coxon, E., Tolley, H., Mara, D., & Wendt-Samu, T. (2019). *Education for development in Oceania*. Springer.

Crossley, M., Sprague, T., & Tuioti, S. (2017). Quality education and the role of the teacher in Fiji. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 47(4), 1-17.

Day, C., Sammons, P., Stobart, G., Kington, A., & Gu, Q. (2007). *Teachers matter: Connecting work, lives and effectiveness*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Hunter, J., Airini, & McNaughton, S. (2024). Re-framing Pacific education and teacher practice. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 50(1), 1-15.

Koya Vaka'uta, C. F. (2012). Re-thinking Pacific teacher standards. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(3), 219-232.

Koya Vaka'uta, C. F. (2023). *Teacher education in the Pacific Islands*. University of the South Pacific.

Nabobo-Baba, U. (2006). *Knowing and learning: An indigenous Fijian approach*. Institute of Pacific Studies.

Nabobo-Baba, U. (2013). *Education for indigenous Fijians: Aspects of history, policy and practice*. Institute of Pacific Studies.

Serelini, K. (2023). Elevating teacher quality in the Pacific region. *Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF)*.

Te Ava, A., & Devi, Y. (2019). Culturally responsive pedagogy in the Cook Islands. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 28(5), 1-10.

New Zealand Council for Educational Research. (2024). *Role of teachers and role models in Pacific education*. NZCER Press.



**VICE CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF FIJI**

Shahista Shameem

Learners and teachers are often said to be part of the same spectrum. Without learners, there can be no teachers. Hence, teachers should be able to recognise the absolute responsibility bestowed upon them by the profession to take learners to heart and drive progress not only for the child in the classroom but for the nation as a whole.

The best teachers I ever had in my primary and secondary schools were those who were progressive- in ideas, teaching methods, focus and had the ability to listen to those under their care. My favorite teachers were visionary, methodical in their teaching techniques, kind and gentle in their demeanor, elegant in speech and habit, and creative in all they taught us. I remember these teachers with fondness, even love, long after they have passed on.

It is a mistake to think that all teachers trained in the Fijian context are the same just because they were taught the same teacher training curriculum. Many are not suited to the profession and this shows in the way they define progress or manage their classrooms. No matter how much teacher training institutions try, unless teaching is seen as a vocation and not just a job, progress will be ill-defined as a national goal.

A person with a human values approach to life itself will, from the start, always make a good teacher, not just in the classroom

but in the corporate world, in public office and anywhere they wish to work. Teachers are not just in the classrooms- they are managers, department heads and supervisors. Anyone who is in charge of someone becomes a teacher by default. However, no one can be taught to be a progressive teacher; he or she has to be a progressive person. It is the character of a person, namely, possessing integrity, a strong sense of ethics and consideration and compassion for those less fortunate that will make a progressive teacher.

In the teaching profession, only the teachers with heart can drive progress from the start for the nation as a whole.





GENERAL SECRETARY FIJI PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION

Judith Kotobalavu

The 2026 Fiji Teachers Union Conference theme, 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start,' is a powerful reminder of the central role educators play in shaping not only individual lives, but the future of our nation. Teaching is more than a profession. It is a lifelong commitment to nurturing potential, instilling values, and building the very foundations of progress.

Across Fiji, teachers continue to serve at the frontline of development. From early childhood education to secondary and vocational learning, they are the driving force behind knowledge creation, skills development, and social transformation. The phrase 'at the heart' is particularly fitting, as it speaks to the compassion, dedication, and resilience that define the teaching profession. It is this human connection between teacher and student that truly drives progress from the very start of a child's educational journey.

Yet, while teachers remain committed to their calling, the environment in which they operate is becoming increasingly demanding. The rapid pace of change in education through digital transformation, curriculum reforms, and evolving societal expectations has placed additional pressure on educators. Teachers are now expected to be facilitators, mentors, counsellors, and innovators, often all at once. These expanding roles must be matched with adequate support, resources, and recognition by government in increasing education funding.

From the Fiji Public Service Association's perspective, the challenges faced by teachers mirror broader issues within the public service. Workload intensification, limited career progression pathways, and concerns around occupational wellbeing are persistent realities.

Of particular concern is the growing impact of stress and burnout, which underscores the urgent need for policies and systems that prioritize teacher welfare. If teachers are truly at the heart of progress, then their wellbeing must be at the heart of our national priorities.

At the same time, there is much to celebrate. Teachers across the country are embracing innovation in remarkable ways integrating technology into classrooms, adopting student-centered approaches, and fostering inclusive learning environments. These efforts demonstrate that progress in education does not begin in theory, but in practice within classrooms where teachers are continuously adapting to meet the needs of their students.

The role of the union movement is critical in sustaining this progress. Strong collaboration between the Fiji Teachers Union, FPSA, and other trade unions ensures that the voices of educators are represented in key national discussions. Through collective advocacy, we can work towards policies that enhance professional development opportunities, improve working conditions, and ensure fair and equitable treatment for all teachers.

As we reflect on the theme, 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start' let us reaffirm our shared responsibility to support and uplift the teaching profession. True progress begins with empowered teachers those who are valued, supported, and equipped to inspire the next generation.

To all teachers, we extend our deepest appreciation. Your dedication continues to shape the future of Fiji. You are, and will always remain, at the heart of progress.



NATIONAL SECRETARY FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

Felix Anthony

profession and deeds much more priceless than any other.

As teachers are the cornerstone of education, policy makers must value the effort that is required to produce the results that cannot be measured by any scale. A pass rate in a subject or in an exam is not the only indicator of the effort you have put- the role that you have played as nurtures, as role models and leaders, whether it is during working hours or after, during your personal time- you never stop being on the job. You never cease to be a teacher even when out of the classroom. Your students look upon you, trust and imitate you and carry your words as gospel.

In Fiji, while we grapple with various other societal issues such as indiscipline and drugs creeping into the corridors of our school, your role has been put to test and seeks further effort than ever. I encourage you to not lose the stride in which you approach your role as mentors. As policy makers dwell on the extent of how much and how to reward you for your hard yards, I implore them to treat this with urgency as we lose teachers to our neighboring countries. Measures that could make departing teachers change their mind and remind in Fiji classrooms and those that appreciate and value the visible and invisible effort that makes you the teachers you are today.

In my concluding remarks, I encourage you to persevere without any hesitation for what the heart emits, is rewarded in tenfold. You beam with pride when you see the fruits of your work in students graduating, becoming leaders and leading change in our society. Indeed, your hearts are the drivers of education, dictating progress from the start. May I wish you beautiful reconections at the Conference, fruitful deliberations and a successful teaching career in the year to come. Go forth to serve!

My sincere greetings to all of you in the teaching profession and in the organization that promotes and protects your interests at your workplace! Teaching has been regarded a noble profession and the enabler of all professions that emanate from classrooms. As you convene for your high-level annual event, I have much pleasure once again addressing you on another innovative theme 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start' for this year's Annual Conference. Indeed, you as teachers have been at the frontline to ensure learning continuity despite the challenges faced. True teaching comes from the heart, using empathy, dedication and patience to nurture students, it is beyond the regular effort you would put in any other profession, enriching the children under your care with knowledge.

As the world in which students are exposed to various obstacles and can easily be distracted, your immense effort to steer them in the right direction sometimes is ignored or not adequately acknowledged and rewarded. This puts your union, the Fiji Teachers Union, at a greater pressure to support your demands for enabling work environments matched with adequate resources and rewards system. Their efforts can only be as strong as your belief in them. Your unity and resilience help achieve outcomes no matter how long and difficult the struggle is.

As you progress to another year at school, your actions propelled by your heart is what makes progress possible. While pastures are greener across the sea, student welfare remains your priority anywhere you will go. Your hand in developing the minds of tomorrow makes your



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER BULA FOOTBALL CLUB

Anushil Kumar

Bula Vinaka!

It is my great pleasure to congratulate the Fiji Teachers Union on your 96th Annual Conference. Reaching 96 years is a proud milestone, and I commend the entire FTU family for your continued service to education and to our nation.

This year's theme, 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving progress from the start', truly reflects the powerful role you play in shaping lives. As teachers, you are not only educators but also mentors and role models who guide young people towards success. The sports theme, 'Play as one, Rise as one', reminds us of the strength we find in unity, teamwork, and shared purpose.

Your contribution goes far beyond the classroom and plays a vital role in the growth of sports as well. Teachers are often the first to identify and nurture young talent. Many of our footballers begin their journey in schools, guided and encouraged by teacher. These young players move on to youth competitions, represent Fiji at national level, and today, some are even stepping into the professional stage.

We are proud to be part of this new chapter through Extra Bula FC, Fiji's first professional football club. This is a major step forward for football in our country, and it would not be possible without the strong foundation built at school level. Your efforts continue to support and strengthen the future of our game.

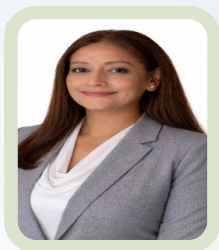
I would also like to offer a friendly challenge. Let us take another positive step by including

women's football in FTU sports. There is so much talent and passion among female teachers, and this will be a great opportunity to promote inclusivity and growth in the game.

I commend the leadership of the National President, Mr. Sashi Mahendra Shandil, and the General Secretary, Mr. Muniappa Goundar, along with the entire FTU team, for your dedication and hard work behind the scenes.

I wish you all a successful conference and a wonderful sports event. Play together, support each other, and continue to inspire the nation.





SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER RESEARCH MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Deveena Prasad

Abstract

Teachers are central to educational transformation across all levels of schooling. This article argues that sustainable progress in education is achieved when teachers from early childhood education (ECE) to secondary are empowered through strong professional capacity, well-being support, and innovative pedagogical tools. Drawing on recent research, the paper highlights the interconnected role of teachers across the learning continuum and emphasises that teacher efficacy, inclusive practices and technological integration are critical to improving student outcomes. The discussion is contextualised within Fiji's education priorities and global frameworks such as SDG 4 and PacREF.

Introduction

Education reform efforts globally continue to affirm one fundamental principle: teachers are the most influential in-school factor affecting student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2023). While policy, curriculum, and infrastructure are important, it is the teacher who translates these into meaningful learning experiences.

In the Fijian context, where education reforms are aligned with the Fiji National Curriculum Framework (FNCF) and regional commitments such as PacREF (2018–2030), the role of teachers becomes even more critical. However, progress cannot be

achieved by focusing on a single level of education. Instead, a continuum approach spanning ECE, primary and secondary education is essential.

Teachers Across the Education Continuum

Early Childhood Education: Establishing Strong Foundations

ECE teachers play a vital role in shaping children's early cognitive, social, and emotional development. High-quality early childhood teaching has been linked to improved school readiness and long-term academic success (OECD, 2023). At this stage, teachers employ play-based learning, language development strategies, and socio-emotional support to build foundational competencies.

Teacher efficacy in ECE is particularly important, as it influences how effectively educators engage young learners and respond to diverse developmental needs.

Primary Education: Consolidating Core Learning

Primary school teachers are responsible for strengthening literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills. This stage is pivotal in ensuring that foundational learning gaps are addressed early. Research shows that teachers with strong self-efficacy are more likely to implement effective instructional strategies and maintain positive classroom

environments (Jerrim et al., 2024).

In Fiji, where improving literacy and numeracy outcomes remains a priority, primary teachers serve as the bridge between foundational learning and advanced education pathways.

Secondary Education: Transforming Learning for the Future

Secondary teachers extend learning into specialised subject areas and prepare students for tertiary education, employment, and civic engagement. They foster higher-order thinking skills, digital literacy, and problem-solving abilities.

According to UNESCO (2024), effective secondary education is critical for improving student retention and successful transitions into further education and the workforce. Teachers at this level play a strategic role in shaping national human capital and economic development.

Teacher Efficacy as a Driver of Progress

Teacher efficacy remains a unifying factor across all levels of education. It influences instructional quality, classroom management, and student engagement. Studies indicate that teachers with high self-efficacy demonstrate greater adaptability, innovation, and commitment to student success (Shah, 2023).

However, recent research also highlights that efficacy must be supported by enabling environments, including access to resources, professional development and institutional support (Jerrim et al., 2024). Without these, even highly motivated teachers may struggle to achieve desired outcomes.

Teacher Well-being and Professional Support

Placing teachers at the heart of education

requires prioritising their well-being. Teacher stress, burnout, and workload pressures can significantly undermine effectiveness. Evidence shows that teachers with higher well-being demonstrate improved instructional performance and stronger student relationships (Mendez et al., 2024). In contrast, declining well-being leads to reduced motivation and lower teaching quality (Clayden, 2025). Therefore, education systems must implement policies that support teacher welfare, recognition, and work-life balance.

Innovation and Artificial Intelligence in Teaching

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents new opportunities to enhance teaching and learning. AI can support personalised learning, automate administrative tasks, and provide data-driven insights into student progress.

However, successful integration depends on teacher readiness and confidence. Viberg et al. (2023) found that teachers' trust and self-efficacy in using AI significantly influence its adoption in classrooms. This underscores the need for targeted professional development and digital capacity-building initiatives.

For Fiji, aligning AI integration with national frameworks such as the FNCF and the Denarau Declaration will ensure that technological advancements enhance, rather than disrupt, teaching practices.

Discussion: A System-Wide Approach to Teacher Empowerment

The evidence clearly demonstrates that educational progress is cumulative and interconnected across all levels of schooling. Teachers in ECE, primary and

secondary education each play distinct yet complementary roles:

- ECE teachers build the foundation
- Primary teachers strengthen and consolidate learning
- Secondary teachers extend and transform knowledge

To fully realise the potential of teachers as drivers of progress, education systems must adopt a holistic approach that includes:

- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) across all levels
- Strong policy alignment with national and regional frameworks
- Investment in teacher well-being and retention
- Integration of innovative technologies such as AI

Conclusion

Teachers are undeniably at the heart of educational progress not only at the start, but throughout the entire learning journey. From nurturing early development to preparing students for future challenges, their role is central to achieving quality education.

This article affirms that a continuum-based approach to teacher development spanning ECE to secondary education is essential for sustainable progress. For Fiji and similar contexts, investing in teacher efficacy, well-being, and innovation will ensure that education systems are resilient, inclusive, and future-ready.

References (APA Style)

Clayden, D. (2025). Teacher well-being and educational outcomes. *Educational Psychology Review*.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2023). Teacher

effectiveness and student learning. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*.

Jerrim, J., et al. (2024). Teacher self-efficacy, instructional practice, and student outcomes. *American Educational Research Journal*.

Mendez, P. Z., Corpuz, G. G., & Comon, J. D. (2024). Teachers' well-being and instructional efficacy. *Education Management and Social Sciences Journal*.

OECD. (2023). *Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care*.

Shah, D. (2023). Teachers' self-efficacy and classroom management practices. *Journal of Education and Research*.

UNESCO. (2024). *Global Education Monitoring Report*.

Viberg, O., et al. (2023). Teachers' trust in artificial intelligence in education. *Computers & Education*.





NATIONAL PRESIDENT FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Sashi Mahendra Shandil

Educational researcher and author Linda Tuhiwai Smith underscores the moral responsibility of the vital role that teachers play. She writes, "Education is not neutral. It can reproduce inequities, or it can challenge them". When teachers are adequately supported and trusted as professionals, they are empowered to drive the latter to disrupt cycles of disadvantage and widen the horizon of opportunity from the earliest years. The best teachers are, therefore, those who can transform their learners into self-believing, agentic, and critically aware and active individuals who engage with every aspect of life in order to not only improve their own environments but of everyone.

Such individuals can only be produced within a system where teachers are heard, engaged in policy and curriculum development, and then placed at the centre of the delivery of the planned curriculum with support from governments, communities, and school administrations to effectively teach. No sustainable and desirable progress is achievable without this. This is especially critical in Indigenous and Pacific contexts, where schools are often the meeting place of multiple knowledge systems.

Teachers who are culturally responsive, who listen before leading and learn alongside their students, become agents of equity rather than instruments of compliance. Progress that is human, not merely measured. Modern education systems often emphasise outcomes: grades, benchmarks, and international rankings. While accountability has its place, progress driven solely by

metrics risks overlooking education's human purpose. Aristotle warned centuries ago that 'Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all'.

Teachers sit at the intersection of these two domains, attending to intellectual growth while cultivating empathy, resilience, and ethical judgement. Not all communities and societies are the same, thus, without properly understanding such data comparisons, conclusions could be drawn that do not necessarily reflect the truth. Teachers are the necessary catalysts within schooling systems who engage with the individuals represented by the numbers.

Teachers encounter the challenges that cause weaknesses in learning, and teachers also witness the strengths that are present and utilised to overcome such challenges. Simply put, without the presence of committed teachers all the best made plans to resolve educational issues with facts and figures would attain negligible success. From the first day of early learning and schooling there is a teacher who notices the quiet child finding their voice, the struggling learner discovering a breakthrough, the classroom becoming a community.

These moments rarely feature in data dashboards, yet they underpin every meaningful measure of success. To place teachers at the heart of progress is not rhetorical. It requires deliberate action. It means investing in initial teacher education, mentoring, and ongoing professional learning. It means valuing teacher voice in policy design

and acknowledging teaching as intellectually demanding, emotionally complex work.

As the National President, it gives me immense pleasure to contribute to this year's 96th Conference and Annual General Meeting. The Fiji Teachers Union has long been the voice of the teachers and will continue to do so. We are not merely puppets whose strings will be pulled, but we are the driving force and

catalyst of change. I am proud that under my leadership a lot has been achieved and will continue to be achieved. While I acknowledge the efforts of the host branch, I salute the membership for their continued support and camaraderie that make the work of their union leaders easy. May this Conference be that beacon of hope and light for the entire membership who look up to FTU as the engine room for change.





VICE PRESIDENT FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Pratosh Kumar

Teachers are described as the 'heart' of education. In the classroom, teachers not only teach reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also shape confidence, character, curiosity, and capability of a child. Therefore, it's fundamental that teachers are placed at the heart of education systems, and supported from the start so that progress begins early and lasts a lifetime.

Early childhood and primary education have a lasting impact on academic success and personal development. Today, our ECE and primary schools curriculum writers have reviewed and improved foundational areas of learning development. These key foundational areas are: physical development, cognitive development, language and communication development, social development, emotional development, approaches to learning, and moral & ethical development. All areas are interconnected.

Early childhood educators should be provided utmost support and guidance so that the ECE curriculum is effectively implemented for the best outcome. The Fijian government is on the right track by increasing the ECE graduate teachers' salary, and instigating whole day ECE program for early childhood education. However, there's a need for more support in areas of financial grants, quality of teachers, resourcefulness, and infrastructure development.

Moreover, across the world, teachers drive social and economic progress. Teachers are very well known to close achievement gaps, foster inclusive classrooms, inspire innovative

and lifelong learning, and serve as mentors and role models. Nation's education systems, that invest in teacher training, professional development, and teacher well-being, consistently see better student outcomes. Thus, teachers are known as prominent change-makers for some of the following reasons:

1. Teachers are the ground-level implementers of innovative ideas-without their active embrace of new strategies, systemic progress in schools would not occur.
2. Strengthening the teaching profession is viewed by organisations like the World Bank as a way to generate economic growth and build human capital for the future.
3. Beyond teaching subjects, teachers act as mentors and role models, often having twice as much impact on student achievement as any other classroom variable.

Some of the Key Aspects of 'Teachers at the Heart' are:

- i. Education Recovery and Transformation- Teachers are essential for fast-tracking progress toward inclusive, equitable, and quality education, especially after natural disasters and pandemics. In Fiji, this has been evident after many Category 5 cyclones, floodings and the COVID-19 pandemic. We recall how teachers crucially adapted to diverse learning needs, and utilised educational technology during and after those challenging times. They used all their experience, skills and abilities to fulfil the demands of educational needs.
- ii. Support and Conditions- 'Driving progress from the start' requires

prioritising teacher well-being, safety, and continuous professional development. According to research, teacher well-being directly impacts educational quality. Therefore, I personally recommend that there's a need to:

- audit teacher workload and reduce unnecessary administrative tasks.
- reduce the teacher student ratio to 1:25 for primary schools, and 1:12 for ECE.
- get away from composite class or multiple class teaching in primary schools of rural, remote and maritime zones.
- schools must provide psychological safety so that teachers feel heard. This will reduce teacher burnout, improve team performance, reduce staff turn over, strengthen trust and collaboration, and improve instructional quality.
- The Ministry of Education at national and district levels should continue to involve teacher unions, engage in dialogue, maintain genuine partnership, and address grievances.
- allow teacher voice in curriculum and policy decisions.
- school leaders must conduct regular check-ins focussed on well-being (not just performance), act on staff feedback, and be transparent about decisions.

iii. Addressing Critical Shortages-To make progress, there is an urgent need to address teacher shortages. Teacher shortages in Fiji aren't just about numbers, but they affect learning outcomes, increase workload and burnout among existing teachers, and worsen education quality in rural and remote areas. The main causes of teacher shortage in Fiji are: migration, low salaries and benefits, heavy workload and burnout, and rural and maritime posting challenges. Some of the potential strategies to address the shortage are:

- Improve salaries and incentives by increasing teacher pays, increase rural and location allowance, and bring back the long service allowance or leave.
- Bring in fair and better promotion criterion

that is impartial and transparent.

- Minimum Qualification Requirement (MQR) for ECE teachers to be reviewed.
- Increase in-service trainings and provide more scholarships to teachers for qualification upgrade.
- Carry out new Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE) and review the 2017 JEE to rectify all the anomalies.

This year's Annual conference theme underscores that investing in teachers is the most effective way to improve education systems and student outcomes. Teachers are the heart of every education system. They inspire learners, shape futures, and drive progress in the country. Fiji is a developing nation, and needs proper education systems to keep developing in a sustainable way.

I urge all to keep teachers at heart, value education and make Fiji progress.

Wishing everyone a successful and a meaningful Fiji Teachers Union conference 2026 at Xavier College in Ba. Let solidarity be for ever. Long Live Fiji Teachers Union!





**VICE PRESIDENT
FIJI TEACHERS UNION**

Urmila Singh

The 96th edition of the Fiji Teachers Union Annual Conference journal celebrates the union's commitment to empowering educators and advancing education standards in Fiji. Such contributions support the union's role in promoting professional excellence and advocating for teacher welfare.

Teachers are widely recognised as the foundation of educational recovery and progress. Educators are the driving force for change. They are the pioneers who impart knowledge and lay the groundwork for developing responsible global citizens. A successful education recovery starts with ensuring teachers well-being and empowering them with the necessary tools and training.

Teachers empower a future-ready generation by fostering curiosity, creativity, and essential values in their students. Effective teaching involves connecting on a human level before focusing on academics.

Positive emotions in the classroom allow teachers to be more flexible, creative, and adaptive to their students' unique needs. For many, teaching is a 'calling' rather than just a job. The commitment provides a deep impact on student lives. Teachers need to continuously integrate new technologies and adapt to diverse learner needs. Global campaigns, such as, Go Public! Fund Education!, call for uplifting teacher standards and recognizing their vital role in shaping society.

Teaching as a lifelong mission rather than just a job, where the 'heart' fuels dedication even amidst challenging conditions. Great minds ignite minds and cultivate curiosity.

Educators often point to specific 'habits of the heart' that drive this progress, which includes nurturing attitude. This will allow time to understand and develop the unique strengths of students. Believing in students' capability leads to success.

Best wishes for the 2026 Annual Conference!!!





GENERAL TREASURER FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Pranesh Kumar

It gives me immense pleasure to contribute to the 96th edition of the Fiji Teachers Union Conference Journal - 2026

Teachers are more than instructors; they are the foundation of progress. From the first day of school to the moment a learner gains confidence, teachers guide, encourage, and challenge minds in ways that shape futures. The theme '**Teachers at the heart, Driving progress from the Start**' captures a simple truth: when teaching is valued, supported, and empowered, learners thrive and communities move forward.

Teaching is where progress begins - Progress is often measured in outcomes grades, literacy rates, exam results, and employment opportunities. Yet, these indicators are only visible results of something deeper. At the beginning of every learning journey is the classroom, and in the classroom is the teacher. A teacher's work starts with understanding students as individuals. Some learners need more time; others need greater challenge. Some learn best through conversation and teamwork, while others benefit from visual explanations or hands-on practice. When teachers recognize these differences early, students are more likely to stay engaged, develop confidence, and build strong learning habits. When progress begins 'from the start', it means literacy, numeracy, social-emotional learning, and curiosity are nurtured early before gaps grow too wide

to close.

The heart of teaching: care plus clarity.

At the heart of effective teaching is a balance between compassion and structure. Learners need to feel safe enough to take risks, ask questions, and make mistakes. But they also need clear expectations and consistent routines. Teachers provide both. The following is an attribute of a teacher:

- Care helps students believe they can learn.
- Clarity helps students understand what success looks like.
- Consistency builds trust and reduces stress.
- Feedback helps students improve rather than guess.

Teachers do not only deliver content. They interpret student needs, break down complex ideas, and translate learning goals into achievable steps. Over time, this approach turns a classroom into a place where progress becomes normal—not accidental.

Teachers shape futures beyond academics

Education is not just preparation for a test; it is preparation for life. Teachers influence how students see themselves and how they approach challenges. A student who struggles with reading might feel embarrassed at first. With a teacher's encouragement, paired with targeted

support, reading can become a skill rather than a barrier. A student who lacks confidence in math can learn to reason step by step. A shy student can gain voice through inclusive classroom participation. These changes matter because they affect attendance, motivation, and long-term achievement. In many cases, a supportive teacher is the first adult who truly sees a learner's potential.

Empowering teachers drives system-wide improvement

If teachers are central to progress, then they must be supported systematically, not only celebrated publicly. Driving progress from the start requires investment in the profession and in school conditions, including:

- Professional development - Continuous training helps teachers stay current with learning science, classroom strategies, and inclusive practices.
- Resources and learning materials - Students benefit when lessons can move beyond textbooks—through reading materials, technology access, and practical activities.
- Reasonable class sizes and manageable workloads - When teachers have time to plan, mark thoughtfully, and support students, learning becomes more responsive.
- Supportive leadership and collaboration - Strong school leadership fosters a culture where teachers can share effective strategies and solve challenges together.
- Recognition and fair pathways for career growth - Motivation grows when teachers see their work valued and their career development supported.

When these elements align, teachers can focus on what matters most; teaching well and learning deeply.

Starting strong means closing gaps early

One of the biggest reasons teachers must be at the heart of progress is that early learning is the best time to address differences. The earlier educators identify barriers such as language gaps, limited foundational skills, learning disabilities, or lack of learning support, the easier it is to intervene effectively. Early intervention does not mean lowering standards. It means raising the right supports so every learner can reach expectations. When teachers collaborate with families and specialists, students receive guidance tailored to their needs. This approach helps create a more equitable education system—where fewer students are left behind.

To conclude, 'Teachers at the heart, Driving progress from the start', is more than a slogan. It's commitment to recognizing that real educational progress depends on people especially teachers who guide learners with skill, patience, and belief. From the first lesson to the first success, teachers create momentum. They turn struggle into understanding and potential into achievement. When teachers are supported and placed at the center of education policy and school culture, progress grows steadily which is carried forward into communities, thus shaping the future. God Bless Fiji!





**ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY
FIJI TEACHERS UNION**

Rajnesh Ishwar Lingam

In his play *As You Like It*, Shakespeare writes, "The world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts." In the playing of all these parts, men and women inevitably leave their mark on history; some remarkable, some admirable, and some in infamy. It can be confidently assumed that not every illustrious historical figure like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King or Mother Theresa commenced their life journey with the goal of leaving the world with teachable moments, but they unconsciously became teachers to whoever was paying attention.

This raises the notion that if untrained and unintentional teachers can impart lifelong lessons, what impact can trained professionals with qualifications, training, experience, and drive have on those they intentionally teach. Teachers have increasingly become victims of ignorance and underappreciation as a direct consequence of being taken for granted whereby their genuine and intentional efforts to mould the next generation has been perceived as 'just another job'. Teachers have been the hearts that have pumped life through educational systems in all societies and communities timelessly and universally.

Teachers have also been the frontline defenders against ignorance, and they have fought against the opposition to evolution of critical thinking knowledge creation thereby driving forward movement and preventing stale societies with stagnant mindsets devoid of progress which is crucial for the survival of healthy civilisations.

Every society that has sustained progress, one truth quietly endures: transformation begins with teaching. Long before policies take shape or economies turn, it is teachers who light the first spark shaping minds, nurturing confidence, and anchoring young people to purpose. When teachers are placed at the heart of education systems, progress does not simply follow; it accelerates. However, the ability to misuse that information without the necessary wisdom to make sense of it has also materialised as swiftly and quite concerningly.

Teachers are the apparent and most reliable of resources that can be activated now to lead the changing social setups that we are inadvertently evolving into. A nation needs to cognize that education is the key to sustainable futures; and at the core of every educational system are the teachers who build the bridge between policies and the results of their application in real life contexts.

Teachers are the qualified and responsible assets that can be counted on to sieve through the drawbacks and strengths of the next new trends, the next new ideas, the next new directions, and the next new fads. Teachers should be called upon- equipped, empowered, and engaged in the development of the curriculum and its delivery that will prepare the next generation of leaders, workers, parents, and everyday citizens.

Nelson Mandela famously observed that 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'. Yet weapons require skilled hands. Education's power is realised only through teachers who understand not just content, but context- social, cultural, and human. From the first days of schooling, teachers are the stewards of possibility, guiding learners to see themselves

as capable contributors to their communities and the wider world. Driving progress from the very beginning early educational experiences shape lifetime outcomes.

Maori scholar Professor Mason Durie reminds us, 'To live well is to live according to one's culture'. Teachers who honour cultural heritage while opening pathways to new knowledge create learning environments where students are not required to choose between who they are and who they might become. The Pacific communities have always had strong cultural foundations that have informed and stabilized their education systems.

The next generation of learning should not discard these pearls of wisdom but build upon these tested and tried value systems which have allowed us to enjoy remarkable growth and advancement in all areas of life while still keeping our humanity intact so that virtues like hope, empathy, kindness, and determination have not been lost as sacrifices at the altar of progress.

The late Epeli Hau'ofa, one of the region's most influential thinkers, challenged deficit views of Pacific societies by declaring, 'We are the sea, we are the ocean'. Applied to education, his words remind us that learners do not arrive empty or lacking. They carry histories, languages, and values of immense depth. Teachers at the heart of education recognise this abundance and build progress upon it. Teachers are the rational autonomous tools that can shape futures so that societies are woven with the best of the past with what is to come. Teachers act as the cultural and intellectual leaders.

Teaching is often described as a profession, but in practice it is leadership exercised daily. Teachers translate curriculum into lived experience. They interpret policy through relationships. In doing so, they shape not only what students learn, but how they understand the world. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence there is perhaps a fear that screens would replace faces in classrooms in time, however, it must be argued that whilst a

computer may harness more knowledge, does it harness the capacity to build relationships, comprehend and empathise with complex human emotions, or employ the sensitivities needed to teach within diverse cultural and social contexts.

Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* proclaims that the 'Longest journey is not the one across the earth but into the human soul' and the capacity to take this journey, with a discernment of why such a journey is even necessary, is housed only with human beings. In becoming a teacher, an individual is acting within their awareness of the intricacies of this undertaking where the transactions between teachers and learners are always going to be more than just transfers of knowledge but the constructions of psyches, the discovery and enactment of potential, and the a helpful contribution towards the realisation and materialisation of personal and professional goals.

As educational philosopher John Dewey argued, 'Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself'. If this is so, then teachers are not merely preparing students for the future- they are shaping the present. From the first day a child enters a learning space, teachers influence how that child understands knowledge, power, culture, and possibility. Progress does not begin at the end of schooling, nor does it emerge suddenly in adulthood. It starts early, quietly, and relationally in classrooms, early learning centres, and community spaces where teachers work with intention and care.

When teachers are trusted, supported, and placed at the heart of educational vision, societies lay the strongest possible foundation for progress. Not growth that is fast but fragile, or success that is narrow and exclusive but progress that is enduring, inclusive, and deeply human.

I wish the 96th Annual Conference and General Meeting happy deliberations and fruitful discussions! Long live, the Fiji Teachers Union!



PERSONNEL OFFICER FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Rameshwar Lal

I am truly honoured to contribute to this year's journal on the theme 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start'. This theme beautifully highlights the invaluable role teachers play in shaping individuals, communities, and the future of society. Teachers are not only providers of knowledge but also the guiding force that drives progress from the very beginning of our lives.

From the moment we first enter a classroom as young children, teachers begin to influence our journey. They introduce us to the world of learning, teaching us how to read, write, think, question, and understand the world around us. These early lessons form the foundation upon which the rest of our lives are built. Without this strong foundation, it would be difficult for anyone to achieve their full potential.

Teachers truly stand at the heart of education. They are the individuals who dedicate their time, energy, and passion to helping students grow. Every lesson they teach, every question they answer, and every piece of advice they offer contributes to the development of young minds. They do much more than simply explain subjects from textbooks. They inspire curiosity, build confidence, and encourage students to dream bigger.

One of the most remarkable qualities of teachers is their patience and dedication. Every student learns differently. Some

grasp concepts quickly, while others may need more guidance and support. Teachers understand this and work tirelessly to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed. They spend countless hours preparing lessons, marking assignments, and finding new ways to make learning engaging and meaningful.

Teachers also play a crucial role in shaping our character. In school, we do not only learn academic subjects such as mathematics, science, literature, or history. We also learn important life values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, respect, and kindness. These values help us become not only successful professionals in the future but also responsible citizens who contribute positively to society.

When we look at the achievements of great leaders, innovators, and professionals around the world, one thing becomes clear behind every successful person, there was once a teacher who believed in them. Teachers encourage students to push beyond their limits and discover their true abilities. Sometimes, a single word of encouragement from a teacher can change the direction of a student's life.

Teachers are also powerful agents of change in society. Education is one of the most effective tools for development and progress. Through education, people gain knowledge, skills, and the ability to solve problems. Teachers make this possible by guiding students and preparing them to face the challenges of the modern world. In this way, teachers help build stronger communities and nations.

The theme 'Driving Progress from the Start' reminds us that progress begins with education. When teachers educate young minds, they are shaping the future workforce, leaders, and innovators of tomorrow. Doctors who save lives, engineers who build bridges, scientists who discover new technologies, and pharmacists who develop medicines all began their journeys in classrooms under the guidance of teachers.

However, the role of teachers extends far beyond academics. Teachers often act as mentors and supporters for students who may be facing personal challenges. They notice when a student is struggling and offer guidance and encouragement. Their kindness and understanding can make a significant difference in a student's life.

In today's rapidly changing world, the role of teachers has become even more important. Technology, global challenges, and new opportunities require individuals who can think critically, adapt to change, and continue learning throughout their lives. Teachers help students develop these essential skills so that they are prepared for the future.

During the difficult times, such as global crises or changes in the way education is delivered, teachers have shown incredible resilience and commitment. They adapt to new teaching methods, learn new technologies, and continue supporting students despite many challenges. Their dedication proves that teaching is not just a profession, it is a calling.

It is also important for us as students to recognise and appreciate the efforts of our teachers. Sometimes students may not fully realise the hard work that goes into planning lessons, guiding students, and creating a positive learning environment.

Teachers invest their hearts into their work because they genuinely care about the success and well-being of their students. Showing gratitude to teachers does not require grand gestures. Simple actions such as listening attentively in class, working hard, respecting teachers, and striving to do the best can be powerful ways of honoring their efforts. When students succeed, teachers feel proud because they know their work has made a difference.

As we reflect on the theme, we are reminded that teachers truly stand at the center of educational progress. They ignite the spark of curiosity in young minds and guide that spark until it grows into knowledge, innovation, and achievement. Teachers are the ones who encourage the students when we doubt ourselves.

They challenge students to aim higher and believe in their abilities. Their lessons extend far beyond classrooms and remain with their students throughout their lives. In conclusion, teachers are indeed at the heart of progress. From the earliest stages of education, they guide, inspire, and nurture the minds that will shape the future. Their dedication, patience, and commitment make them one of the most important pillars of society.

So, let us take a moment to celebrate and thank our teachers for everything they do. Let us appreciate their efforts, learn from their wisdom, and strive to make them proud through our achievements.

To all the teachers, thank you for your passion, your guidance, and your unwavering dedication. Because of you, progress truly begins from the start!



**PUBLICITY OFFICER
FIJI TEACHERS UNION**

Vishal Raj Goundar

In Fiji's rural and maritime schools, the principle that 'teachers are at the heart, driving progress from the start' is both a promise and a challenge. Remote communities depend on educators not only for instruction but as pillars of opportunity, mentorship, and community stability. Yet a quiet crisis undermines this vision: across nearly every primary school in rural Fiji, secondary school graduates with no formal primary teacher training are placed in classrooms. These young people have never studied child development from years 3 to 13, its lesson planning, classroom management, or assessment strategies. They are, in effect, children teaching children at in most of the cases.

This practice is a systemic response to chronic teacher shortages. When qualified teachers refuse postings to remote areas, heads of schools and ministry officials turn to local secondary school graduates as stopgap measures (Kumar, 2025). The consequences are severe. Young learners miss foundational literacy and numeracy skills, creating lifelong educational deficits that rural students cannot easily overcome. Without trained teachers, classrooms become places of rote memorisation and passive supervision rather than active, engaging learning.

Unsatisfactory Learning Outcomes and Leadership Failures

Unsatisfactory student learning outcomes

clearly indicate the need for heads of schools to refocus on their core principles of effective leadership. Poor learning outcomes have been recorded over a long period in a range of national and regional assessments. The roots of the learning crisis lie in the foundational years, where there is too little attention to the role of parents to support and monitor their children's education. This parental gap, combined with worsening problems with student discipline, places an even heavier burden on already struggling teachers.

Furthermore, there are serious gaps in the professional development of teachers, both recently recruited and those who have been working for years. Many teachers enter the classroom without adequate preparation, and once there, they receive little ongoing support or training. School and classroom physical conditions are often poor, and limited teaching resources, such as textbooks, learning materials, and technology, severely constrain what teachers can accomplish. In remote schools, these problems are magnified by unreliable electricity, lack of internet, and inadequate housing that discourages qualified teachers from staying (Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific, 2025).

Policy Responses and the Path Forward

However, policy reforms are underway. The Ministry of Education has introduced

targeted transfer policies aimed at addressing staff shortages in remote schools. Digital investments have brought Starlink satellite internet to 15 schools, with another 40 receiving internet and solar systems. Dedicated teacher housing is also being constructed in rural regions through international partnerships (FBC News, 2025; Fiji introduces new policy, 2025). These investments are essential steps toward improving conditions for rural educators.

Yet, these investments will fail without urgent, systematic programmes to train the thousands of unqualified secondary school graduates currently teaching in primary classrooms. Open and distance learning pathways must be subsidised, flexible, and accessible to allow these untrained teachers to study while continuing to work. Heads of Schools must refocus on instructional leadership, parent engagement, and professional development.

When teachers are properly trained, valued, and empowered, they drive student achievement and community progress.

Placing untrained secondary school graduates in primary classrooms betrays Fiji's most vulnerable students. Investing in qualified teachers for rural schools is investing in the nation's equitable and sustainable future.

References

1. Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific. (2025, May 22). Solar power transforms learning for primary school students on Fiji's remote Rabi Island.
2. FBC News. (2025, November 26). Major upgrades to boost education in remote areas.
3. Fiji introduces new policy to address staff misconduct in schools. (2025, September 30). Xinhua/China.org.cn.
4. Kumar, R. (2025, August 24). Schools struggle as teacher hiring takes months. Fiji Sun.





NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Nakul Deo Barman

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the future of societies. In Fiji, where cultural diversity, geographical dispersion, and socio-economic challenges intersect, the role of teachers is both foundational and transformative. This article examines how Fijian teachers are central to educational progress, community development, and national resilience. Using both research and real-world examples from schools across Fiji, it underscores that progress truly begins with teachers—motivated, skilled, and supported.

At the core of every strong education system are teachers, professionals who not only deliver curriculum but also inspire, mentor, and nurture young minds. In the Fijian context, teachers do more than educate, they safeguard cultural values, support community cohesion, and often serve as role models beyond the classroom.

The theme *'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start'* highlights the critical contribution of teachers to national development. Progress in education cannot be achieved through policy alone. It must be driven daily by dedicated teachers who work tirelessly to ensure that every child has the opportunity to succeed.

Fiji's education landscape is shaped by its geography, culture, and history. With schools spread across remote islands and urban centers like Suva, Rakiraki and Yasawas, diversity in student needs is vast. Teachers in rural schools may contend with limited resources and infrastructure, while their urban counterparts navigate overcrowded classrooms and learner diversity shaped by migration and socio-economic disparity.

In addition, Fiji's multicultural society means that

teachers often deliver instruction in environments where multiple languages are spoken and cultural sensitivities must be respected. Teachers are not only educators but also cultural ambassadors, balancing the Fijian language and culture with English proficiency and global competencies.

In Fiji, high-quality teaching has shown strong links to improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, especially in early grades where foundational skills are built. Teachers are trained to use culturally relevant stories and local resources to teach reading. Over several terms, teachers reported not only higher engagement but also measurable improvements in early literacy assessments.

Teachers introduced lessons using Fijian folk tales, familiar environmental themes like yaqona planting, and bilingual exercises that made English language learning more accessible. Their approach demonstrated that when teachers are empowered to contextualise learning, children grasp foundational concepts more quickly and meaningfully.

Fijian teachers often extend their work beyond the classroom. Their roles sometimes overlap with community leadership, health promotion, and social support, particularly in rural locations where resources are limited.

Parents are invited to participate, strengthening school-community partnerships. The project not only enriched learning but also contributed to improved student nutrition, reducing absenteeism and supporting overall well-being. This example illustrates how teachers can drive progress that spans academic, social, and health outcomes.

Despite their central role, Fijian teachers face significant challenges that must be addressed for progress to be sustainable.

1. Resource Constraints

Many schools, especially in isolated island

communities, lack basic teaching materials, textbooks, and multimedia resources. Teachers often improvise with local materials, which, while commendable, places additional workloads on them.

2. Professional Development Gaps

Continuous professional learning opportunities can be limited due to geographic isolation or budget constraints. While some teachers access workshops in urban centers, others rely on remote training that may not be tailored to local classroom realities.

3. Retention and Morale

Teacher retention remains a concern, particularly in rural and maritime areas. The isolation, housing challenges, and heavy workloads contribute to burnout. Without systemic support, many experienced teachers leave the profession early, creating gaps in mentorship and instructional continuity.

For teachers to lead progress effectively, there must be aligned support from educational stakeholders and government agencies.

Investment in both initial teacher education and ongoing professional development must be a priority. Training should focus on:

Learner-centred pedagogies: Equipping teachers with strategies that respond to diverse learner needs.

Cultural competence: Helping teachers integrate local languages and cultural practices into curriculum delivery.

Technology integration: Preparing teachers to use digital tools, which are increasingly essential in modern classrooms.

Teachers benefit from mentorship and collaboration. Schools that have instituted peer mentoring, cluster training, and professional learning communities report improved teacher confidence and student outcomes. For example, networks of teachers meet quarterly to share practices and support each other, reducing isolation and building professional camaraderie.

Recognition of teaching excellence motivates

sustained high performance. The introduction of awards, leadership opportunities, and career progression pathways acknowledges teachers' work and encourages innovation.

Teachers in Fiji contribute far beyond academics. They:

Promote **social cohesion** by modelling respect for cultural diversity.

Support **student well-being** through pastoral care and counselling roles.

Facilitate **life skills** that prepare students to navigate social and economic transitions. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers worked tirelessly to maintain learning continuity through zoom lessons, viber platforms and learning packs. Their dedication ensured that students remained engaged even when school buildings were closed, demonstrating resilience and adaptability.

Teachers do more than teach, they nurture. In our classrooms every child's story matters. Being a teacher in a village means you are part of every family's journey. Every teacher's success is our students' success. They see beyond lessons and tests. They envision futures shaped by confident, capable, and responsible young citizens.

Finally, teachers are undeniably at the heart of progress—especially in a nation like Fiji where education intersects with cultural identity, community values, and national development goals. From early childhood classrooms to secondary school laboratories, teachers lay the foundation upon which all future learning is built.

For progress to be genuine and sustainable, it must be rooted in strong teaching. This requires investment, recognition, and systemic support that places teachers not as implementers of policy but as partners in educational transformation.

As Fiji continues to chart its development path, teachers will remain central to achieving equitable education and fostering a generation of learners ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow. *True progress begins with teachers—today, and always.*



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Madhur Prakash

'Teachers at the heart, Driving progress from The Start' encapsulates the fundamental belief that educators are not merely conduits for information, but the foundational force that shapes a child's cognitive, social, and emotional trajectory from their earliest educational experiences. By creating nurturing, safe environments, teachers cultivate the curiosity and confidence necessary for lifelong learning, serving as architects of student success long before standardized measures take over.

The foundation of early development is creating safe spaces in early childhood. Teachers provide the first crucial interaction outside the family, establishing a sense of safety and trust. This emotional security is critical for children to take risks, ask questions, and engage in new learning experiences.

Holistic growth is another fundamental part of teachers. Teachers do more than instruct; they foster social-emotional skill such as empathy, teamwork, and conflict resolution that are as crucial for future life success as academic skills.

Driving progress through passion and connection and inspiring learners are part of daily teachers' routine. Teachers act as mentors who, through their own passion, ignite a love for learning that lasts a lifetime. By offering a supportive and encouraging atmosphere, teachers help students develop grit, self-esteem, and a growth mindset, allowing them to view challenges as opportunities.

High-quality teaching can offset up to

50% of the learning disparities caused by socio-economic factors. Studies show that strong teacher-student relationships in early elementary school lead to improved executive functioning, motivation, and social-behavioural skills that last into adulthood.

In conclusion, placing teachers at the heart of education means investing in their ability to provide the nurturing guidance necessary for young learners. When teachers are supported as the primary drivers of educational progress, they ensure that every child has the firm foundation required to thrive.





BRANCH REP- NASINU FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Ashween Raj

- Surrogate parents
- Organisers
- Communicator

The Fiji Teachers Union is always at the helm to celebrate the exceptional dedication and courage of all teachers as well as their capacity to adapt and innovate under very challenging and uncertain conditions. Teachers are at the heart of global education efforts and are key in accelerating progress towards quality education for every learner in every circumstance.

Teachers are the central core of education, not merely deliverers of curriculum but wear different hats at different occasions. Primary school teachers core roles and duties are:

- Plan lessons
- Teach core subjects
- Do investigations
- Differentiate learning
- Monitor progress
- Reporting
- Create positive environment
- Disciplinarian
- Safeguard students
- Do professional development
- Collaborating with each other's
- Engage in Extra Curricular Activities
- Monitoring
- Partnership with parents
- Janitor – cleaning classrooms
- A nurse – giving first aids
- An investigator
- Diagnostician
- Councillor
- Catalyst for change
- Guide
- Role model

With so many exceptional roles, teachers should be well recognised and empowered with trainings and professional development sessions, attractive salary, support and working conditions for them to deploy their talents. Continuous learning opportunities will enable teachers to new pedagogies, technologies and student needs. Valuing teaches work through fair compensation, supportive leadership and safe working environment will boost our teacher's morale to provide heartfelt education to our students.

Involving teachers in decision making will see that our reforms become more practical and recognizing their central role will lay a foundation for more educated, equitable and prosperous future.

While the Fiji Teachers Union is involved in looking after our teachers health issues through medical insurance, teacher transfer and promotion issues, it should also focus and ask the Government of the day to do the following

- Invest in quality teachers;
- Conduct more professional developments; and
- Allow teachers to participate more in the decision making process.

Wishing all a wonderful AGM and 2026 Annual Conference. Long Live Fiji Teachers Union!



**BRANCH REP- NADI
FIJI TEACHERS UNION**

Kamlesh Deo

'Dharma protects those who protect it',
Ramayana

Education remains the cornerstone of any nation's development, and at the centre of this noble mission stands the teacher. The 2026 Annual conference theme, 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from Start', captures the essence of what it truly means to be an educator in today's ever-changing world.

To be a 'teacher at heart' is to go beyond delivering lessons and completing syllabi. It speaks of a deep-rooted passion for nurturing young minds, a commitment that extends beyond school hours, and a genuine concern for the holistic development of every child.

Teachers play multiple roles, as mentors, counsellors, role models, and community leaders. In Fiji, teachers continue to demonstrate resilience and adaptability despite numerous challenges. From adverse weather conditions disrupting schooling to limited resources, teachers have ensured learning continues through dedication and innovation. The phrase 'driving progress from start' emphasises the importance of strong educational foundations.

Early education is critical in shaping literacy, numeracy, values, and lifelong learning habits. When teachers invest their best efforts at the beginning, they

set learners on a path toward meaningful progress. As members of the Fiji Teachers Union, we must uphold professional standards while advocating for better conditions, resources, and continuous development. Collaboration and teacher wellbeing remain essential for quality education.

In conclusion, being 'teachers at heart' requires passion, while 'driving progress from start' demands commitment. Let us continue to inspire and transform lives from the very beginning of a child's educational journey.





BRANCH REP- NADROGA FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Subramani Krishna

In the vast landscape of nation-building, there is a singular, quiet engine that powers the machinery of progress: the teacher. As we reflect on the theme, '**Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start**', we recognise that education is not merely a service, but the fundamental heartbeat of Fiji's future.

The Architect of the Human Soul

The great Victor Hugo once wrote, "*He who opens a school door, closes a prison.*" In the context of our beloved Fiji, this sentiment rings with profound truth. From the remote hills of Naitasiri to the coastal stretches of Nadroga, teachers are the first responders to the challenges of ignorance and poverty.

The famous writer Kahlil Gibran described the teacher not as one who imposes their wisdom, but as one who "*leads you to the threshold of your own mind.*" By sparking curiosity in a Year 1 student in a rural maritime school, a teacher is initiating a journey of progress that will eventually contribute to our national GDP, our social stability, and our cultural richness.

Navigating the Fijian Context

Driving progress is rarely a smooth ride. Our educators face unique **educational challenges** that require more than just pedagogical skill—they require resilience.

- **Geographical Isolation:** Teachers in our outer islands often serve as more than just instructors; they are counsellors, mentors, and community leaders, often with limited resources.
- **The Digital Divide:** While we move toward a 'Digital Fiji', the reality in many

classrooms involves shared textbooks and inconsistent internet access.

- **Curriculum Pressures:** Adapting to evolving national standards while ensuring 'no child is left behind' places an immense psychological load on our workforce.

Union Solidarity: Our Shield and Strength

Progress cannot be driven by exhausted or undervalued professionals. This is where **union solidarity** becomes vital. The Fiji Teachers Union (FTU) stands as the collective voice that ensures the 'heart' of education continues to beat strongly.

As **Alice Walker** noted, "*The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.*" Through the union, we reclaim that power. Our focus remains steadfast on **action regarding teacher welfare policies**, including:

1. **Fair Compensation:** Advocating for salaries that reflect the rising cost of living in Fiji.
2. **Working Conditions:** Pushing for manageable teacher-student ratios to prevent burnout.
3. **Policy Advocacy:** Ensuring that any reform, be it in assessment or teacher licensing, is done with teachers, not just to them.

A Call to Action

Progress starts in the classroom, but it is sustained by the dignity of the profession. We must remain united. When we stand together for better housing allowances, rural incentives, and mental health support, we aren't just fighting for ourselves we are fighting for the quality of education our children receive.

Let us continue to be the heart of Fiji. Let us drive progress, but let us do so with the protection and strength of a united union.



**BRANCH REP- SUVA
FIJI TEACHERS UNION**

Shabneez Shazmine

Education serves as the cornerstone of societal development, shaping the minds that will lead the future. At the heart of this educational framework are teachers, whose roles extend beyond mere dissemination of knowledge. Teachers are pivotal in fostering intellectual growth, critical thinking, and personal development in students.

Teachers are instrumental in guiding students towards academic success. By crafting engaging and challenging curricula, teachers inspire students to explore subjects in depth and acquire a robust understanding of various disciplines. Research has indicated that teachers' expectations and instructional methods significantly impact students' academic outcomes (Hattie, 2009). Effective teachers employ diverse pedagogical strategies to cater to the different learning needs of students, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention. Furthermore, teachers assess students' progress and provide constructive feedback, which is essential for continuous improvement and motivation.

Beyond academics, teachers play a crucial role in the social development of students. The classroom environment, shaped by teachers, serves as a microcosm of society where students learn essential social skills such as communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Teachers model respectful and empathetic behavior, guiding students in developing interpersonal skills that are vital in personal and professional settings (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Moreover, teachers create inclusive environments that celebrate

diversity, teaching students to appreciate and respect differences among their peers. This foundational social education empowers students to contribute positively to society.

Teachers instill a love for learning that extends beyond the classroom. By fostering curiosity and encouraging inquiry, teachers motivate students to pursue knowledge independently. The habits and attitudes towards learning developed during early education often persist throughout life, influencing career choices and personal growth. Teachers who emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving equip students with skills necessary for adapting to the ever-evolving demands of the modern world (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). As lifelong learners, individuals are better prepared to navigate challenges and seize opportunities for advancement.

The relationships teachers build with their students have profound implications for educational outcomes. Positive teacher-student relationships are associated with increased student engagement, higher academic performance, and improved behavior (Roorda et al., 2011). Teachers who demonstrate genuine care and support for their students create a safe and nurturing environment that encourages risk-taking and innovation. These relationships also provide students with emotional support, contributing to their overall well-being and resilience in the face of adversity.

Despite their critical role, teachers face numerous challenges that can impede their ability to drive progress. Issues such as inadequate resources, large class sizes, and lack of professional development opportunities can hinder teachers' effectiveness (OECD,

2019). Additionally, societal undervaluation of the teaching profession can lead to low morale and high turnover rates, affecting educational continuity and quality. Addressing these challenges is essential to empower teachers to fulfill their potential in shaping the future. Teachers are at the heart of educational progress, influencing the intellectual, social, and personal development of students from the start. By fostering academic excellence, social competence, and a passion for lifelong learning, teachers lay the foundation for a prosperous and equitable society. To maximize the impact of teachers, it is imperative to address the challenges they face and provide them with the necessary support and resources. As we recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions of teachers, we must also commit to investing in their development, ensuring they remain at the forefront of driving progress for generations to come.
Compiled by:

References

- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for Educational Practice of the Science of Learning and Development. *Applied Developmental Science, 24*(2), 97-140.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge.
- Jennings, P. A., & Greenberg, M. T. (2009). The Prosocial Classroom: Teacher Social and Emotional Competence in Relation to Student and Classroom Outcomes. *Review of Educational Research, 79*(1), 491-525.
- OECD. (2019). *Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care: Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018*. OECD Publishing.
- Roorda, D. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., Spilt, J. L., & Oort, F. J. (2011). The Influence of Affective Teacher-Student Relationships on Students' School Engagement and Achievement: A Meta-Analytic Approach. *Review of Educational Research, 81*(4), 493-529.





BRANCH REP- TAILEVU FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Rohit Prasad

the cultural custodians who preserve identity while preparing students for global citizenship. They are innovators who introduce digital tools and critical thinking, even in resource-constrained settings. Their dedication ensures that every learner, regardless of background, is given the chance to thrive.

Education is the cornerstone of national development, but at its very centre are teachers the individuals who transform policy into practice and knowledge into empowerment. Research consistently shows that teachers are not passive actors in education systems; they are catalysts of progress, shaping both academic achievement and social transformation.

Studies in *Teaching and Teacher Education* highlight how teachers drive school improvement by crossing boundaries between leadership and classroom practice. They act as mediators, ensuring that reforms are not just written in policy documents but lived in classrooms. Similarly, global reviews in the *International Journal of Educational Dynamics* emphasise that teachers are central to achieving basic education goals, particularly in contexts where resources are limited. These findings resonate strongly in Fiji and the Pacific, where teachers often balance cultural traditions with modern innovation, ensuring education remains both relevant and transformative.

Teachers are the **heart** of education. They nurture curiosity, resilience, and empathy from the very first day a child enters school. Their influence extends beyond academics, shaping values that ripple outward into communities. At the same time, teachers are the **engines** of progress. By embracing professional development, adapting to evolving curricula, and championing inclusivity, they drive systemic change. Research in the *Educational Research Review* confirms that investment in teacher training directly correlates with improved student outcomes, underscoring the importance of empowering teachers to empower others.

In Fiji, teachers embody this dual role. They are

At the same time, we must acknowledge the rapid changes in curriculum and pedagogy. More reforms are on the horizon, and teachers must remain motivated to keep upgrading themselves. Continuous learning is not optional, it is essential. To understand, implement effectively, and achieve efficiency in our work, we must embrace professional growth. By doing so, we ensure that the planned elaboration of subject areas we teach is not only delivered but mastered. This commitment to lifelong learning strengthens our ability to adapt, innovate, and lead progress from the start.

As we reflect on the theme 'Teachers at the Heart' Driving Progress from the Start', it becomes clear that national advancement begins with those who stand at the chalkboard, the whiteboard, or behind the screen. Teachers are not just part of the system; they are its pulse. Their work is the quiet revolution that drives progress from the very start.

References (APA Style)

- Educational Research Review. (2021). Teacher professional development and student achievement. Elsevier.
- International Journal of Educational Dynamics. (2023). Contribution of teachers in achieving the goals of basic education: A literature review on best practices and challenges.
- Teaching and Teacher Education. (2022). Teachers involved in school improvement: Analysing mediating mechanisms of teachers' boundary-crossing activities between leadership perception and teacher involvement. Academia.edu. (n.d.). Role of teachers in teaching and learning. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/>



BRANCH CHAIRPERSON- NASINU FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Rohitesh Chand

The theme 'Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start' speaks to something I have come to understand deeply over the years. Through my journey as a classroom teacher, head teacher, education officer, my work with the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority, my current role at the university, and as President of a school management committee, one truth has remained constant: education in Fiji starts with teachers, but it does not succeed without the systems around them working well.

In the classroom, teachers continue to carry the greatest responsibility. They are the ones shaping learning every day, often in very challenging conditions. In many of our schools, large class sizes, limited resources, and increasingly complex student needs are part of daily reality. From my own experience, this often means teachers focus on "getting through" rather than truly engaging students in meaningful learning. That is not a reflection of their ability. It is a reflection of the conditions they work in.

From a school management perspective, I see another layer of the challenge. As President of a school management committee, I have seen how committed communities are to supporting their schools. However, there are real limitations. Too often, teachers are expected to deliver better results while basic issues, like maintenance delays, lack of proper staff facilities, or insufficient teaching resources remain unresolved. These may seem like operational matters, but they directly affect teacher morale and performance. If we are serious about placing teachers at the centre,

then we must also strengthen the systems that support them at the school level.

At the national level, Fiji has continued to adopt reforms influenced by global education trends. These include accountability measures and performance-focused systems. From my time as an Education Officer, I have often seen a gap between what policy intends and what schools are actually able to implement. Teachers and school leaders are left trying to balance expectations that do not always fit their context. Without proper consultation with teachers, school management bodies, and unions, even well-meaning reforms can become burdensome.

One issue that cannot be ignored is the growing challenge of teacher shortages and retention. We are seeing more teachers leave the profession due to workload, limited incentives, and opportunities elsewhere. Schools are increasingly relying on temporary staffing, which affects continuity and stability for students.

My experience with the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority has also shown that while maintaining standards is important, the approach matters. Teachers need to feel supported in their professional growth, not just monitored for compliance. A system that focuses too heavily on accountability without enough emphasis on development risks discouraging the very people it is meant to strengthen.

Now, working in the higher education, I see another important gap, the transition from training to practice. While universities prepare student teachers with the best possible knowledge and skills, the reality they step into is often much more complex. There is

a need for stronger partnerships between universities, schools, and school management committees so that new teachers are better prepared for the environments they will work in, including understanding the role of community and governance in schools.

If we truly believe that teachers are at the heart of progress, then we must act accordingly. This means improving working conditions, providing better support systems, strengthening school management capacity, and ensuring that teachers and their representatives are genuinely involved in decision-making. It also means recognising that education is a shared responsibility. Teachers cannot carry it alone.

In the end, my experience across different roles has taught me that teachers are indeed central to progress, but they cannot succeed in isolation. They need strong, supportive systems around them.

If Fiji is serious about driving progress from the start, then we authorities must invest in teachers together which includes their welfare and workplace conditions. Only then will this theme move beyond words and become a reality in our schools.

Wish everyone a successful conference.





**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER
FIJI TEACHERS UNION NATIONAL WOMEN'S WING**

Keshni Prasad

The theme of this year's 96th FTU Annual Conference is '**Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start**'

A very well-chosen theme and no doubt we, teachers, are always at the heart of the education system. We tend to touch the lives of many innocent children, filling their hearts and minds with memories of their sweet and bitter school days.

Day in and day out teachers prepare lesson notes with lesson plans so that they can build the foundation for a life-long success journey. From early childhood education till the tertiary education, it is not just the textbooks and the classrooms. It is far beyond that!!! Teachers shape character, values and confidence. Introduction of essential reading and writing skills are done by teachers. Students also learn to become critical thinkers through their teachers by participating in quizzes, oratories, debates and workshops. Not just academic growth but teachers also contribute towards the emotional, mental, physical, social, psychological developments of children.

Teachers have always dedicated their own family time for the children under their care. Late night preparations have always taken away the family time of teachers. However, some of these dedicated teachers have not been given their due respect. Some of them have not been paid the remuneration they deserve. Some of them have not been given the post they qualify for. Some of the burden of teachers has been taken away by the innovative technologies introduced in this era although it cannot match the experience

of those learned ones decades ago. Their experience adds more value to the teaching profession.

Children's right to education has always been fulfilled by teachers, but what about teacher's rights? Education is a powerful tool for breaking cycles of poverty and inequality and teachers have been preparing students to face real-world challenges and become problem-solvers in their communities.

I commend FTU for always being with the teachers and taking care of their grievances. Let's keep on reminding our young teachers about our struggles decades ago and to make them realise about the benefits of being part of FTU.

Long live FTU!





BRANCH CHAIRPERSON- TAILEVU FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Pravind Kumar

Education has always been the cornerstone of national development, and at the centre of this foundation stand teachers. In Fiji, where communities are diverse, resilient, and deeply rooted in culture, teachers play an even more critical role, not only as educators, but as mentors, leaders, and agents of change. Placing teachers at the heart of progress is not just an ideal, but it is a necessity for building a stronger, more inclusive future from the very start.

From the first day a child enters a classroom, a teacher's influence begins to shape their understanding of the world. Beyond literacy and numeracy, teachers instil values such as respect, responsibility, and perseverance. In Fiji's unique social and cultural landscape, this role extends further. Teachers bridge traditional knowledge with modern learning, ensuring that students remain connected to their identity while preparing for global opportunities. This balance is essential in nurturing well-rounded individuals who can contribute meaningfully to society.

However, recognising teachers as central to progress must go beyond words. It requires meaningful investment in their professional growth, wellbeing, and working conditions. Continuous training, access to resources, and supportive leadership structures are vital in enabling teachers to perform at their best. When teachers are empowered, classrooms become dynamic spaces where innovation thrives and students are inspired to achieve their full potential.

Equally important is the need to value and respect the teaching profession. Teachers often work under challenging circumstances, balancing large class sizes, diverse student needs, and administrative demands. Despite

these challenges, they remain committed to shaping futures. A strong, unified voice, such as that of the Fiji Teachers Union, play a crucial role in advocating for fair policies, equitable opportunities, and the recognition teachers deserve.

Driving progress from the start also means investing in early childhood and primary education, where the foundations of learning are built. Teachers at this level carry the profound responsibility of sparking curiosity and fostering a love for learning. Their impact is long-lasting, influencing not only academic success but also confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, in an era of rapid technological and societal change, teachers must be supported to adapt and lead. Integrating digital tools, promoting inclusive education, and addressing emerging challenges such as climate change and social inequality require teachers to be at the forefront of innovation. With the right support, they can guide students to become informed, responsible citizens ready to navigate an evolving world.

Ultimately, placing teachers at the heart of progress is about recognising their indispensable role in nation-building. Every doctor, engineer, leader, and skilled worker begins their journey in a classroom guided by a teacher. By investing in teachers today, Fiji invests in its future—one that is educated, resilient, and united.

As we look ahead, let us reaffirm our commitment to supporting and uplifting teachers. Their dedication drives progress from the very start, and their impact echoes across generations. When teachers thrive, so too does the nation.



VICE CHAIRPERSON- NASINU FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Narendra Rao

Education is the foundation upon which strong societies are built, and at the centre of this foundation are teachers who are truly teachers at heart. Teaching is not merely a profession.

It is a commitment to nurturing potential, fostering growth, and shaping the future. Educators, who lead with purpose and integrity, understand that their role extends beyond delivering content. They are responsible for cultivating an environment where students feel safe, supported, and motivated to learn.

From the very beginning of a learner's journey, teachers play a critical role in driving progress. In the early years, they establish the fundamental skills of literacy, numeracy, communication, and social interaction. As students advance, teachers guide them in developing analytical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and independent learning habits. Each lesson is carefully planned to build knowledge systematically, ensuring that students progress with confidence and competence.

Professional educators continuously reflect on their practice to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. They engage in ongoing professional development, collaborate with colleagues, and adapt to evolving educational demands. Through thoughtful assessment and constructive feedback, they identify areas for improvement and implement strategies that support individual student needs. This commitment to excellence ensures that progress is intentional, measurable, and

sustainable.

Moreover, teachers understand the importance of character development alongside academic achievement. They model respect, responsibility, empathy, and resilience, helping to shape well-rounded individuals prepared to contribute positively to society. Their influence extends beyond the classroom, inspiring students to set goals, overcome challenges, and strive for lifelong success.

Ultimately, driving progress from the start requires dedication, vision, and unwavering commitment. Teachers who embrace their calling with professionalism and passion serve as catalysts for growth and transformation. Through their leadership and perseverance, they not only educate minds but also empower futures, laying the groundwork for continued advancement within schools and the wider community.

As we reflect on the theme 'Teachers at Heart, Driving Progress from the Start', we acknowledge the profound and lasting influence educators have on individuals and society. They are the architects of potential, the champions of perseverance, and the steady hands guiding the next generation forward. From the very beginning of a child's educational path, teachers set the wheels of progress in motion.

Therefore, I humbly request all educators to have passion in our hearts and purpose in our actions and continue to shape new future, one lesson, one student, and one meaningful moment at a time.



EXECUTIVE MEMBER- NASINU FIJI TEACHERS UNION

Archana Vandhana

In schools, progress does not always arrive with applause. It begins quietly in a classroom corner, in a hesitant voice, in a child who almost gives up but doesn't. And at the centre of that quiet beginning stands a **Teacher**.

Fourteen years and eight schools later, my journey through classrooms: from Mulomulo Primary to Shri A D Patel Primary, from Nehru Memorial to Mahatma Gandhi Memorial, from Mau Primary to Suva Primary, from Nadi Sangam to Bhawani Dayal Memorial has shown me that teaching is not about places. It is about people. It is about moments that change lives forever. One such moment still lives with me.

It was during my time at a rural school, where mornings began with the sound of roosters and children walked long distances, some barefoot, to reach the classroom. Among them was a boy named Jone. He always sat at the back, quiet and often distracted. His uniform was worn, and many days, he came to school without lunch.

At first, I thought he lacked interest. But one day during recess, while the other children opened their lunch boxes, Jone quietly slipped outside and sat under a tree. The next day, I watched again. The same routine. No lunch. No complaints. So I called him gently and asked, "Jone, why don't you eat with the others?". He hesitated, eyes lowered, before softly replying,

"Madam, there is no food sometimes." His words pinched my heart.

The following day, I packed a little extra from home and placed it on his desk before recess, saying nothing. He looked at me, there was no smile, just a silent understanding. Days turned into weeks. It became our unspoken routine. But

slowly, things began to change. Jone started joining other students during lunch. He laughed more. He became attentive. His confidence grew, his work improved, and the boy who once tried to disappear wanted to be seen.

Last year, I was standing outside a shop in Nadi Town when a young man approached me. Well-dressed, confident, and smiling. "Hi madam, you may not remember me. I am Jone." Before I could respond, he continued, his voice filled with emotions,

"You didn't just teach me: you cared when I had nothing. Those lunches, they meant more than food. They gave me strength. Today, I am the first in my family to finish school."

In that instant, every challenge, every long day, every sacrifice felt worth it. This is what the theme '**Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start**' truly means. It is not just about lessons and results. It is about noticing the silent struggles and responding with compassion. Across Fiji, teachers continue to shape futures often with limited resources, but limitless dedication. They create spaces where hope can grow, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Through the support of the Fiji Teachers Union, we are reminded that we are never alone in this journey. We are part of something greater - a collective force committed to uplifting every child, every teacher, no matter where they come from.

Looking back, I do not count the schools I have served. I remember faces. I remember stories. I remember moments like Jone's. True progress is not measured in numbers, but in lives changed and at the beginning of every dream, every ambition, every success story - **there is a Teacher!**



NADI BRANCH

Ashika Devi

Across Fiji, from busy towns to quiet village communities, teachers remain the strongest force shaping our nation's future. From a child's very first day at school, teachers nurture curiosity, build confidence, and lay the foundation for lifelong learning. This reflects the true meaning behind the theme '**Teachers at the Heart, Driving Progress from the Start**'.

Teaching in Fiji goes far beyond textbooks. Teachers are mentors, counsellors, and role models who guide students both academically and personally. Their influence supports not only learning outcomes but also cultural values, identity, and character development (Crossley et al., 2017). In many communities, teachers stand as pillars of guidance and hope. Progress begins in the classroom. Every lesson delivered and every word of encouragement contributes to building responsible citizens. The Fiji Teachers Union reminds us through its guiding belief, '*The Child Our Hope*', that our role as educators is deeply rooted in nation-building.

Despite challenges such as increasing workload, curriculum changes, and teacher migration, educators continue to demonstrate resilience and dedication. Their commitment ensures that no child is left behind, even in the most demanding circumstances.

As the Head of School in a village-based setting, I witness daily the powerful impact teachers have on children's lives. Teachers go beyond their duty-supporting struggling learners, encouraging attendance, and celebrating even the smallest successes.

These moments remind us that teaching is not just a profession; it is a calling built on care, patience, and hope.

To sustain progress, teachers must be supported through continuous professional development sessions, recognition, and improved working conditions. When teachers feel valued, they are empowered to inspire, innovate, and create meaningful learning experiences.

Teachers are the driving force of education. From the very start, they ignite the spark of learning and guide it into a flame that shapes Fiji's future.

A TEACHERS TRUE LEGACY IS NOT WRITTEN ON PAPER, BUT IN THE LIVES THEY QUIETLY TRANSFORM EVERY SINGLE DAY

References

- Bhindi, B. (2020). The role of teachers. Fiji Times.
- Crossley, M. et al. (2017). Quality education and the role of the teacher in Fiji.
- Fiji Teachers Union. (n.d.). Overview and history.



FORMER PUBLICITY OFFICER

Brij Bhan Singh

Teachers occupy a central position in educational systems, acting as the primary drivers of student learning, well-being, and long-term development. From the earliest stages of schooling, their influence extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to shaping learners' cognitive, emotional, and social growth. Research consistently highlights that early educational experiences are critical, with teachers playing a decisive role in laying the foundations for lifelong learning and development. In early childhood settings, for example, educators are instrumental during the first five years—a period widely recognised as crucial for brain development and future academic success. This underscores the idea that progress in education begins not with policy or curriculum alone, but with the teacher at the centre of practice.

A key factor in driving progress is the capacity of teachers to create supportive and engaging learning environments. Effective teaching requires not only subject knowledge but also the ability to respond to students' needs, foster motivation, and build meaningful relationships. Studies on responsive teaching emphasise how teachers who adapt instruction based on students' ideas can significantly enhance learning outcomes by encouraging deeper understanding and engagement. In this sense, teachers are not passive deliverers of content but active facilitators of learning, shaping how knowledge is constructed and applied in real-world contexts.

Equally important is the well-being of teachers themselves. Evidence shows that

teacher stress and burnout can negatively affect classroom management, instructional quality, and student achievement. When teachers experience high levels of stress, their ability to engage students and maintain positive classroom environments diminishes, potentially creating a cycle of disengagement and underperformance. Consequently, supporting teacher well-being is not merely a matter of staff welfare but a critical strategy for improving educational outcomes. Approaches such as positive psychology and coaching have gained attention for their ability to enhance resilience, self-efficacy, and professional satisfaction among educators, enabling them to thrive in demanding environments.

Professional development also plays a pivotal role in ensuring that teachers remain effective agents of change. Reflective practice, in particular, has been identified as a powerful tool for improving teaching quality and student performance. Teachers who engage in reflection are better able to evaluate their instructional strategies, adapt to diverse learner needs, and continuously refine their practice. This ongoing cycle of reflection and improvement positions teachers as lifelong learners who model the very skills they aim to instil in their students.

Furthermore, teachers contribute significantly to the broader social and emotional development of learners. Beyond academic instruction, they serve as role models, influencing students' values, attitudes, and behaviours. By fostering environments characterised by trust, respect, and inclusivity,

teachers help students develop essential life skills such as empathy, resilience, and collaboration. These competencies are increasingly recognised as vital for success in a rapidly changing world, highlighting the multifaceted role of teachers in shaping not only academic outcomes but also holistic development.

social-emotional growth. However, to fully realise this potential, it is crucial to invest in teacher well-being, professional development, and supportive educational environments. By empowering teachers, education systems can ensure that progress is not only achieved but sustained, benefiting both the learners and society as a whole.

In conclusion, placing teachers at the heart of education is essential for driving meaningful progress from the start. Their impact spans early childhood development, classroom engagement, student achievement, and





Urmila Singh
CHAIRLADY



Um Sharina Bi Riaz
VICE CHAIRLADY



Sunita Devi
VICE CHAIRLADY



Sandhya Goundar
TREASURER



Nandita Kumar
SECRETARY



Salome Vakabuto
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Vikashni Gounder
EX. COMM MEMBER



Karishma Chand
EX. COMM MEMBER



Subashni Lakshmi Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Keshni Lata Prasad
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sanjay Prasad
CHAIRPERSON



Shabneez Shazmine
BRANCH REP



VICE CHAIRPERSON
Rajbindra Singh



VICE CHAIRPERSON
Navitalai Naivalu



Sanjeshni Nand
TREASURER



Josephine Prasad
SECRETARY



Rajesh Sharma
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Shivangani Bhavna
YOUTH REP



Nigel Sukhu
EX. COMM MEMBER



Janesh Adhar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sheetal Artika
EX. COMM MEMBER



Kasilini Lewaqiriwaqa
CHAIRLADY



Sanjeshni Nand
VICE CHAIRLADY



Shabneez Shazmine
VICE CHAIRLADY



Joneti Raucikula
TREASURER



Sheenal Artika
SECRETARY



Pritika Payal
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Josephine Prasad
EX. COMM MEMBER



Shivangani Bhavna
EX. COMM MEMBER



Alisi Tuitubou
EX. COMM MEMBER

Theme: 'Teachers At The Heart, Driving Progress From The Start'

NASINU BRANCH EXECUTIVES



Rohitesh Chand
CHAIRPERSON



Ashween Raj
BRANCH REP



Ashwin Deo
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Narendra Rao
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Daniel Dass
TREASURER



Swastika Kumar
SECRETARY



Subashni Kumar
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Shanil Krishna
YOUTH REP



Avinay Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Archana Vandhana
EX. COMM MEMBER



Jainut Dean
EX. COMM MEMBER

NASINU BRANCH WOMEN'S WING EXECUTIVES



Usha Devi
CHAIRLADY



Subashni L. Kumar
VICE CHAIRLADY



Reshmi Deo
VICE CHAIRLADY



Kamini Sharma
TREASURER



Archana Vandhana
SECRETARY



Neelam Narayan
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Archana Williams
EX. COMM MEMBER



Jessica Raj
EX. COMM MEMBER



Archana Williams
EX. COMM MEMBER



Avinesh Atil Singh
CHAIRPERSON



Dharmendran Swamy
BRANCH REP



Dharmendra Karan
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Navin Singh Guptar
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Sachin Chand
TREASURER



Shiva Sandeep Kumar
SECRETARY



Abhishek Rattan
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Niraj Prasad
YOUTH REP



Ashwin Sen
EX. COMM MEMBER



Ramendra Singh
EX. COMM MEMBER



Shamal Prasad
EX. COMM MEMBER

NAVUA BRANCH WOMEN'S WING EXECUTIVES



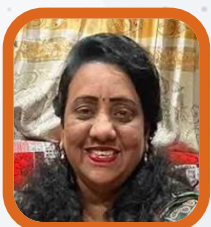
Ranjini Devi
CHAIRLADY



Jacqueline Chand
VICE CHAIRLADY



Karalaini Logaulu
VICE CHAIRLADY



Ashwin Sen
TREASURER



Ashnita Devi Sahrma
SECRETARY



Poonam Kumar
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Kesaia Waqaliva
EX. COMM MEMBER



Jotishma Chand
EX. COMM MEMBER



Ana Biaunikoro
EX. COMM MEMBER



Rimal Chand
CHAIRPERSON



Subramani Krishna
BRANCH REP



Babu Dinesh
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Arvin Narayan
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Aston Kumar
TREASURER



Karishma Dass
SECRETARY



Stanley Mistry
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Sidhanth Maharaj
YOUTH REP



Bindu Chand
EX. COMM MEMBER



Manish Pillay
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sonal Deo
EX. COMM MEMBER



Kimberley Rounds
CHAIRLADY



Bindu Chand
VICE CHAIRLADY



Sheshna Kumar
VICE CHAIRLADY



Etasa Ratunivatulele
TREASURER



Vani Dakunivecena
SECRETARY



Karishma Dass
ASST. SECRETARY



Selina Raju
EX. COMM MEMBER



Darshana Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Shaista Khan
EX. COMM MEMBER



Venith Prakash
CHAIRPERSON



Kamlesh Deo
BRANCH REP



Fazim Tahsheen
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Shamal Gosai
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Fahim Fardeen
TREASURER



Depak Krishna
SECRETARY



Pritesh Sharma
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Sahil Naresh
YOUTH REP



Mohini Datt
EX. COMM MEMBER



Nandita Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Shamal Prahith
EX. COMM MEMBER

NADI BRANCH WOMEN'S WING EXECUTIVES



Jyoti Sharma
CHAIRLADY



Karishma Chand
VICE CHAIRLADY



Ashnita Lata
VICE CHAIRLADY



Farishat Faria
TREASURER



Mohini Datt
SECRETARY



Ilisapeci Nasova
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Nandita Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Kajal Singh
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sonam Prakash
EX. COMM MEMBER



Newal Umarao
CHAIRPERSON



Arvind Kumar
BRANCH REP



Salendra Prasad
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Shekar Sharan
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Kamlesh Deo
TREASURER



DEEPAK KUMAR
SECRETARY



Ritesh Prasad
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Ashish Kumar
YOUTH REP



Dina Mani
EX. COMM MEMBER



Kaveen Chand
EX. COMM MEMBER



Praneel Chand
EX. COMM MEMBER

LAUTOKA BRANCH WOMEN'S WING EXECUTIVES



Keshni Prasad
CHAIRLADY



Sunita Prasad
VICE CHAIRLADY



Vineeta Satya
VICE CHAIRLADY



Shania Naidu
TREASURER



Supriya Chand
SECRETARY



Manshika Reddy
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Renuka Narayan
EX. COMM MEMBER



Ashmin Lata
EX. COMM MEMBER



Miriama Namoumou
EX. COMM MEMBER



Umendran Reddy
CHAIRPERSON



Gulshard Ali
BRANCH REP



Nazeel Ali
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Ravinesh Prasad
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Monish Anish Raj
YOUTH REP



Vinesh Sharma
TREASURER



Marica Meo
SECRETARY



Krishneel Prasad
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Avish Singh
EX. COMM MEMBER



Atish Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Vipin Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER

TAVUA BRANCH WOMEN'S WING EXECUTIVES



Riteshni Singh
CHAIRLADY



Rozina Ali
VICE CHAIRLADY



Marica Meo
VICE CHAIRLADY



Nileema Kumar
TREASURER



Sheenal Prasad
SECRETARY



Maraia Qota
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Mishal Michael
EX. COMM MEMBER



Mere Taka Emosi
EX. COMM MEMBER



Camari Vuniwa
EX. COMM MEMBER



Hazrat Ali
CHAIRPERSON



Semi Gounder
BRANCH REP



Mohammed Shazil
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Asishwar Prasad
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Arvin Kumar
TREASURER



Ashneel Goundar
SECRETARY



Avishek Prasad
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Praneel Dayal
YOUTH REP



Richard Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Mohammed Shafeel
EX. COMM MEMBER



Jitendra Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Vikashni Gounder
CHAIRLADY



Shareeni Chand
VICE CHAIRLADY



Premika Kumar
VICE CHAIRLADY



Madhumetha Goundar
TREASURER



Ashna Lal
SECRETARY



Rani Rekha
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Sherin Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Munita Gounder
EX. COMM MEMBER



Ashna Mani
EX. COMM MEMBER



Divendra Bijay
CHAIRPERSON



Vishnu Sharma
BRANCH REP



Sanjeshwar Prasad
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Rachael Prasad
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Sachindra Govind
TREASURER



Shonal Butturu
SECRETARY



Eka Ralagi
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Ronal Kumar
YOUTH REP



Salome Vakabuto
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sueta Chaudhary
EX. COMM MEMBER



Nilesjni Govind
EX. COMM MEMBER

REWA BRANCH WOMEN'S WING EXECUTIVES



Salome Vakabuto
CHAIRLADY



Nileshni Govind
VICE CHAIRLADY



Sheeren Dutt
VICE CHAIRLADY



Rachael Prasad
TREASURER



Anjalni Dass
SECRETARY



Sueta Chaudhary
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Anasimeci Loga
EX. COMM MEMBER



Miriama Tinai
EX. COMM MEMBER



Roy Fiu
CHAIRPERSON



Arvin Narayan
BRANCH REP



Alvina Veniana
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Milika Tinayau
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Govind Sami
TREASURER



Sandhya Goundar
SECRETARY



Colleen Sokonawai
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Emmanuel Chand
YOUTH REP



Lellah Fisher
EX. COMM MEMBER



Resina Rosi
EX. COMM MEMBER



Nilesh Prasad
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sandhya Goundar
CHAIRLADY



Litia Diraura
VICE CHAIRLADY



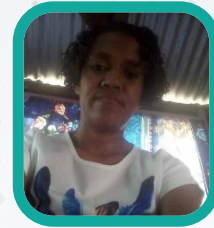
Anjana Prasad
VICE CHAIRLADY



Alvina Veniana
TREASURER



Lellah Fisher
SECRETARY



Resina Rosi
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Milika Tukana
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sainiana Vukicibua
EX. COMM MEMBER



Prashika Prasad
EX. COMM MEMBER



Vikash Karan
CHAIRPERSON



Jitend Narayan
BRANCH REP



Davendra Kumar
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Monit Pratap
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Avilash Kumar
TREASURER



Ashneel Chand
SECRETARY



RONAL LAL
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Sera Waqalaivi
YOUTH REP



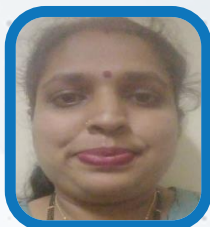
Mohammed Azim
EX. COMM MEMBER



Rajendra Raj
EX. COMM MEMBER



Ritik Sami
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sonam Raj
CHAIRLADY



Sonam Reddy
VICE CHAIRLADY



Ashwini Kumar
VICE CHAIRLADY



Priya Sami
TREASURER



Sanjeshni Devi
SECRETARY



Swarti Narayan
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Sunita Narayan
EX. COMM MEMBER



Ranjita Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Jotishna Devi
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sanjay Kumar
CHAIRPERSON



Divendra Prasad
BRANCH REP



Jotishna Prasad
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Nilesh Prasad
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Nilesh Chand
TREASURER



Shelveen Narayan
SECRETARY



Mohammed Ismail
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Reenal Chand
YOUTH REP



Vinit Chand
EX. COMM MEMBER



Keshwan Mudaliar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Amitesh Pal
EX. COMM MEMBER

BUA BRANCH WOMEN'S WING EXECUTIVES

Theme: 'Teachers At The Heart, Driving Progress From The Start'



Jotishna Prasad
CHAIRLADY



Vaulina Vavitu
VICE CHAIRLADY



Komal Prasad
VICE CHAIRLADY



Sunita Devi
TREASURER



Savleen Narayan
SECRETARY



Wainikiti Sobu
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Seema Sanjoytika Devi
EX. COMM MEMBER



Bandna Deo
EX. COMM MEMBER



Miriama Masilutu
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sean Sagar
CHAIRPERSON



Shamal Karan
BRANCH REP



Kunal Singh
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Heukifaga Kania
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Vinod Prakash
TREASURER



Farisha Bi
SECRETARY



Vikashni Lata Chand
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Ramnesh Deo
YOUTH REP



Sereima Sovosi
EX. COMM MEMBER



Shavineel Lal
EX. COMM MEMBER



Moleen Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Farisha Farnaz
CHAIRLADY



Sereima Sovosi
VICE CHAIRLADY



Raksha Vasantika
VICE CHAIRLADY



Moleen Kumar
TREASURER



Shayal Kumar
SECRETARY



Vikashni Prasad
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Vikashni Lata
EX. COMM MEMBER



Ashni Swami
EX. COMM MEMBER



Meenal Nand
EX. COMM MEMBER



Vincent Sahayam
CHAIRPERSON



Dharmend Shankar
BRANCH REP



Mahesh Kumar
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Bhupen Dutt
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Rajendra Narayan
TREASURER



Mishaal Lingam
SECRETARY



Reeta Faiyaz
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Shavneel Sharma
YOUTH REP



Vinal Chand
EX. COMM MEMBER



Sacheen Dutt
EX. COMM MEMBER



Mukesh Shandil
EX. COMM MEMBER

LABASA BRANCH WOMEN'S WING EXECUTIVES



Saileshni Karan
CHAIRLADY



Rukmani Lal
VICE CHAIRLADY



Kelera Tawai
VICE CHAIRLADY



Sudeshni Kumar
TREASURER



Reeta Faiyaz
SECRETARY



Reena Prasad
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Sangeeta Sharma
EX. COMM MEMBER



Lisi Koveni
EX. COMM MEMBER



Nilesjni Narayan
EX. COMM MEMBER



Pravind Kumar
CHAIRPERSON



Rohit Prasad
BRANCH REP



Varasiko Cegutuilaqi
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Dharmendra Rao
VICE CHAIRPERSON



Log Nadan
TREASURER



Adi Elenoa Koroidimuri
SECRETARY



Kartika Sharma
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Divashna Prasad
YOUTH REP



Rusila Kasaqa
EX. COMM MEMBER



Reshmi Kumari
EX. COMM MEMBER



Ratu Sefanaia
EX. COMM MEMBER



Mereoni Domonakibau
CHAIRLADY



Divashna Prasad
VICE CHAIRLADY



Rusila Kasaqa
VICE CHAIRLADY



Krishti Priya Kumar
TREASURER



Adi Elenoa Koroidimuri
SECRETARY



Kartika Sharma
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Shalini Lata
EX. COMM MEMBER



Reshmi Kumari
EX. COMM MEMBER



Anushma
EX. COMM MEMBER



Niazul Naushad
CHAIRLADY



Geeta Devi
VICE CHAIRLADY



Shaleeni Kumar
VICE CHAIRLADY



Salote Cokomata
TREASURER



Reshma Prasad
SECRETARY



Zoya Ali
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



Moleen Kumar
EX. COMM MEMBER



Fazilat Khan
EX. COMM MEMBER



Swastika Lal
EX. COMM MEMBER

BA WOMEN'S WING

2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUB COMMITTEES

PROTOCOLS COMMITTEE



Left to Right: Bro Naushad, Bro Ronal, Bro Azam, Bro Nakul, Bro Manoj, Bro Jim Seru

GROUNDS COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Sis Niazul, Bro Naushad, Bro Ronal, Bro Azam, Bro Nakul, Bro Manoj, Bro Jim Seru, Sis Geeta

MARQUEE COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Sis Niazul, Bro Naushad, Bro Ronal, Bro Azam, Bro Nakul, Bro Manoj, Bro Jim Seru , Geeta

REGISTRATION COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Bro Ajay, Bro Shalveen, Sis Reshma , Sis Geeta, Bro Praveen

DECORATION COMMITTEE



Left to Right: Bro Roshil, Sis Joselyn, Sis Anoopma, Sis Swastika, Sis Shaleeni, Sis Janita, Sis Reshma, Sis Geeta, Bro Shalveen, Bro Naushad

CATERING COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Bro Naushad, Bro Ronal, Bro Azam, Bro Nakul, Bro Manoj, Bro Jim Seru

VOLLEYBALL / NETBALL COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Sis Swastika, Sis Anoopma, Sis Shaleeni , Sis Joselyn, Sis Janita, Sis Reshma, Sis Geeta, Sis Niazul

DECORATION COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Sis Anoopma, Sis Swastika, Sis Shaleeni , Sis Joselyn, Sis Sonam , Sis Janita, Sis Niazul

USHERING COMMITTEE



Left to Right: Sis Swastika, Sis Anoopma, Sis Shaleeni , Sis Joselyn, Sis Janita, Sis Reshma, Sis Geeta, Sis Niazul

SPORTS COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Bro Roshil , Sis Shaleeni , Sis Reshma , Sis Anoopma, Sis Geeta, Bro Jim Seru

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Sis Janita , Sis Swastika, Sis Joselyn , Sis Shaleeni , Sis Anoopma, Sis Geeta , Sis Niazul , Sis Reshma

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE



Left to Right : Bro Roshil , Sis Shaleeni, Sis Reshma , Sis Anoopma , Sis Geeta , Bro Jim Seru

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The 2026 Fiji Teachers Union journal is another piece added to the union literature. The culmination and publication of this year's journal took time, effort, and dedication.

Hence, it is with utmost gratitude that the following personnel are acknowledged for their immense contribution towards the 2026 Fiji Teachers Union Journal - Publication No. 96:

- Academics and scholars for accepting the invitation to pen a message for the journal;
- Hon. Agni Deo Singh - the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations for accepting the invitation to be the Chief Guest at the 96th AGM;
- The Executives and Branch Reps of FTU;
- The Publicity Committee consisting of Bros Rajnesh Lingam (AGS), Pranesh Kumar (GT) and Sis Urmila Singh (VP)- their untiring and unwavering support is commended;
- The Ba branch Executives for taking up the challenge to organise the Conference of this magnitude;
- The Secretariat and his office staff;
- Friends, well-wishers and family members of our beloved FTU;
- Malik Asghar (owner), and the graphic artist- Janine Lapitan of Max Marketing Limited for their professional input, layout and designing.

The Publicity Committee seeks your apologies for any shortfalls.