



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

TO: Honorable Alitia Bainivalu
FROM: Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education
Date: 5 June 2024

RE: Clarification of Issues – Ministry of Education 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021 Annual Reports

1. What policies are currently in place that guide the implementation of the programs of the Ministry?

From 2018-2021, the Ministry was guided by its own 2019 -2023 Strategic Plan. The 2023 Fiji National Education Summit in Nadi was where the Ministry's 2023 Denarau Declaration Policy Framework was drafted and launched on November 10 2023 in Suva. The Denarau Policy Framework contains the strategic way forward for the Education Sector for the next 10 years. It has 7 Thematic Areas which covers the roles and functions of the Ministry that will be prioritized for the next 10 years. From the Denarau Framework, a 3 years Strategic Plan was also developed detailing the progress of work for the Ministry of Education.

2. How many new schools and ECE centers were registered and established in 2018-2021. Where are these schools located?

Tabulated below is the summary of the newly established ECE centers in the various education district from 2018-2021. Please refer to **Appendix 1**.

| Location by Education District | No of ECE registered |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Ra | 1 |
| Lautoka Nadi Yasawa | 5 |
| Nadroga Navosa | 4 |
| Suva | 6 |
| Nausori | 4 |
| Macuata Bua | 1 |
| Cakaudrove | 2 |
| Eastern | 1 |
| TOTAL | 24 |

| Location by Education District | No Primary registered |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Lautoka Nadi Yasawa | 5 |
| Suva | 2 |
| Eastern | 1 |
| TOTAL | 8 |

| Location by Education District | No of Secondary registered |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ra | 1 |
| Lautoka Nadi Yasawa | 1 |
| Suva | 2 |
| TOTAL | 4 |

3. What is the current status on the renovation and upgrade of the schools that were selected for the works to be carried out from 2018-2021?

Given below is the status of renovation and upgrade of the selected schools in the given period of time. Please refer **Appendix 2**.

School Building Grant Projects

| Location By Education District | No of Schools Assisted | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
| Ra | 2 | 0 | None as funds was directed to TC Yasa rehab. | 0 | 0 |
| Ba Tavua | 0 | 1 | | 0 | 1 |
| Lautoka Nadi Yasawa | 1 | 3 | | 0 | 0 |
| Nadroga Navosa | 4 | 3 | | 0 | 0 |
| Suva | 2 | 4 | | 4 | 0 |
| Nausori | 0 | 11 | | 1 | 1 |
| Macuata Bua | 3 | 8 | | 1 | 0 |
| Cakaudrove | 0 | 2 | | 1 | 0 |
| Eastern | 2 | 7 | | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 14 | 39 | | 7 | 2 |
| <i>Remarks</i> | All projects completed | | | All projects completed | 1 project completed. 1 project 80% completed |
| Upgrading and maintenance | 1 | 22 | | 7 | 1 |
| New Construction | 13 | 17 | | 0 | 1 |

4. What is the Ministry doing to address the issue of Drug and Substance abuse amongst Students?

Since 2010, the Substance Abuse Advisory Council [SAAC] has been providing training to teachers in schools and these trainings have been intensified with the support of the Police Drug Unit and Ministry of Health. This joint effort has resulted in having 1,960 teachers from the 9 education districts attend these organised trainings. These trainings also include the support mechanism available in schools to assist the students who are showing signs of drug use, and possible drug abuse and the positive step towards recovery. The drug recovery plan also include the support that parents, teachers and friends will provide to the students.

The Police Drug Unit [now called the Police Narcotics Bureau] facilitated in-depth drug training session with the teachers on all aspects of drugs and substances; the drug effects, the signs/symptoms, legislation, handling of drugs, reporting and referral. The Police force blue light program which empower students is also a platform for our students to share and take responsibility and consequences of their decisions.

Policies

- The operation of all schools in Fiji are guided by policies that are in place to ensure that the rights to education, safety, health and welfare of all students are protected. Teachers, Heads of Schools and School Management committees are also trained and guided by policies in place by the Ministry of Education in promoting holistic education and discipline for all students. Individual school policies are aligned to the respective MoE policies.
- The Behavioural Management Policy articulates the details of the categories and the offences which include drugs and other volatile substances abuse, bullying, truancy and other types of offences with appropriate procedures to address these. A counselling policy to assist teachers in addressing the drug issues and ensure proper care is provided to the students. The Child Protection Policy of the Ministry of Education is also consulted as a guide along with the Parental consent and presence.
- The inclusion of drug use and its impact on the social, health and behavioral life on a child and/or teenager is embedded in the curriculum both at primary and secondary level.

Training and Awareness on Drug Prevention

- Substance Abuse Advisory Council (SAAC) in collaboration with the Police Narcotic Unit and the Ministry of Health train teachers on basic counselling and how to identify drug users and preventative measures and intervention to be done in schools. The training of teachers and child protection officers on drug awareness, drug prevention and substance abuse offer additional way of empowering teachers to help students in school with drug issues. These teachers conduct awareness in schools.

This includes the provision of training for teachers on:

- how to identify the signs of students who may be using or abusing drugs,
 - the types of drugs available in Fiji;
 - its effects, the legal implications; and
 - also helping our students recover from drugs.
- Furthermore training of student leaders both in secondary and primary schools offer an alternative way of empowering the young leaders with leadership skills, character development, and decision making skills and the Police' Blue Light Program offered during school holidays reaffirm collaboration to fight drug problems amongst our students in our schools.
 - The International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (IDADAIT) engages students in all schools in Fiji creating awareness amongst their peers with the support of the teachers, Police and other stakeholders.

With this partnership training programs, these trained teachers conduct awareness through professional development programmes during school staff meeting sessions sharing the strategies in curbing the use and sale of drugs in their respective schools and mechanisms to actively listen and help students with drug symptoms.

Since the advent of white drugs like methamphetamine, cocaine, and the use of syringes as a mode of drug transmission in the communities, all HOS have also been reminded to handle this equipment with full protective care if white drugs are found in school.

MoE continues to also provide psychosocial support training to child protection officers in schools and counselling for students who are abusing drugs, this is critical for recovery and healing. Psychosocial support can help promote holistic child and adolescent development, including physical, emotional and social development. Providing psychosocial support to a child towards recovery from traumatic events involves understanding the child's emotional reactions through observation and monitoring; decreasing emotional distress by listening, reassuring and modelling healthy behaviour for the child. Psycho social support also helps to unmask the different reasons that push the child to use drugs which can range from curiosity, experimentation, coping skills to mask the trauma due to family or personal problems they encounter.

The Ministry in partnership with the Drug Free Ambassador Australia [DFAA] will be providing a drug and substance abuse training to teachers in the term 2 school holidays for all the education divisions and SAAC is coordinating and supporting this training with DFAA.

5. When will the Ministry reintroduce School Counsellors to schools?

- The school counselling programme started in 2001 where more than 10 large secondary schools counselling position were established within the Ministry of Education.
- The school counsellors were based in secondary schools within the central, western, and northern divisions.

- In 2014 these positions were removed and these counsellors became school teachers again.
- In 2015, the Divisional counsellors was established in the four education divisions, central, west, north and east. They provided counselling support to the students in their own divisions.
- SAAC started its counselling unit in 2014 with three[3] counsellors that provided counselling support to students referred from schools.
- The Unit was also mandated to provide basic counselling training to teachers. Since the inception of the mentoring program in 2018, the student mentees that accessed the mentoring service was 10,438.
- In collaboration with the Australian government under the vuvale partnership, four counselling hubs in all the 4 education divisions have been established. The Counselling Hub are located at Natabua High School, Nasinu Secondary school, Labasa College and Levuka Public School. The Counselling hub can also be accessed by the public at large if they need professional counselling at no cost.
- These hubs are in the selected government schools, however, counselling support is provided to all students in their respective education divisions.
- The ministry plans for the establishment of professional counsellors in the nine [9] education districts to support the divisional counsellors, and this is reflected in our Budget Submission FY 2024/2025.
- Moreover, the ministry is also planning to have a full-time counsellor in the 13 large secondary schools who will be able to assist students in the next financial year.

6. What is the Ministry's policy on addressing the issues of Truancy in schools?

Addressing truancy in schools requires a multifaceted and whole community approach that considers the unique challenges and circumstances present in individual schools. Under the 1978 Education Act (amendment), Part XI on Compulsory Education, every child of educational age is required and shall receive education in a school. This provision has been reinforced through the Free Education Grant and other government assistance rendered by the Fijian government for our local students. Despite these provisions, there is a growing incidence of truancy by students due to multiple factors.

2.0 Legislations

The current legislations that are related to attendance of students are as follows:

- 2.1 The Constitution of the Republic of Fiji – 2013
- 2.2 Education Act, 1966 Parts IX – XI
- 2.3 Child Protection Policy 2012
- 2.4 Behavioural Management Policy 2015
- 2.5 MoE Drugs and Substances Abuse Policy 2011
- 2.6 Policy on FEMIS (Fiji Education Management Information System)

When managing student behavior, legislation 2.4 (above) on the Behavioural Management Policy (2015) 6.2.3 stipulates the management of other related problems such as Truancy:

6.2.3.1 Problems such as Glue sniffing and truancy have a detrimental effect upon the learning process of children. Problems of the above nature need to be analysed procedurally, with proactive actions developed and monitored with the assistance of the family and counsellors as well. Reasoning based on causes and effect should be facilitated to enable children to realize the short and the long term effects of such abuses.

All schools are expected to align their Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to relevant Ministry Policies to ensure that details stipulated in the SOPs are within the legislative frameworks. These may include descriptions of the types of behaviours which will be considered a breach of school discipline that have been determined in collaboration with the disciplinary committee established by the school head.

A description of the range of processes that will apply when student behaviour constitutes a breach of school discipline. The following elements need to be taken into consideration:

- Enabling the child to reason out the causes and the effects of the action
- Counselling by teachers and school counsellors
- Involving parent to solicit their cooperation in helping address the issue without causing embarrassment to the child.

The SOPs are monitored by District Offices and severe cases are forwarded for counselling. Schools keep a log book for students who are being truant. They are then offered internal counselling usually by Child Protection Officers.

3.0 Other strategies include:

3.1. Community Engagement through CAPs

These platforms involve parents, guardians, and the local community in the education process and emphasize the importance of regular attendance.

3.2. Addressing Barriers to Education

Individual schools identify and mitigate the factors that contribute to truancy such as poverty, lack of transportation, child labor, lack of access to resources like textbooks and uniforms, and health issues. Once these factors are identified as reasons for not attending school, Heads of Schools together with their staff make provisions for support services like school meals, transportation assistance, and healthcare to address these barriers.

3.3 Counseling and Guidance (Mentorship Programmes)

The Ministry has trained Child Protection Officers for schools. Schools may offer counseling services to address underlying issues that may lead to absenteeism. Teachers and staff are trained to identify students at risk of truancy and provide them with appropriate support.

3.4. Enhanced Monitoring and Reporting

Schools often implement a robust monitoring system to track attendance patterns and identify students who are frequently absent. The use of FEMIS for attendance tracking apps allows the school to notify parents about their child's attendance.

3.5. Differentiated and Alternative Learning Programs

Schools are also aware that there is room to offer flexible learning options for students who face challenges attending school regularly, such as evening classes, distance learning, or vocational training. School Heads are also encouraged and supported (through FEG and District office) to provide remedial classes and additional support for students at risk of falling behind academically due to truancy.

4.0 Way Forward

- 4.1 Review of the Policy to specifically stipulate behavioural management for Truancy and the severity of truancy.
- 4.2 Train more teachers especially in Primary schools to establish child protection policies.
- 4.3 Liaise with TTIs to embed these policies and related components in their courses.

7. What is the current status of digitization of old examination records?

Examination records prior to 2002 have not been digitized, however, MoE has the soft copies of examination data post 2002.

Examination and Assessment Unit (EAU) started the process of scanning historical Examination records at the National Archives from 2019. This process involved taking apart the bonded record books, which was risky due to the lengthy disassembly and reassembly time.

MoE managed to scan and digitize copies of the following results:

Fiji Intermediate Examination (FIE) 1989, 1991, 1993, 1996 & 1996 and Fiji Eighth Year Examination (FEYE) 1998. However, MoE does not have the right equipment to continue with the digitization which requires a Book-eye scanner (under procurement process 2024-2025 budget submission).

A Book-eye scanner will eliminate the need for disassembly, minimizing damage and ensuring the integrity of the records which will enable MoE to continue with digitization.

Below is the list of the old book results which will be digitized as soon as the book-eye scanner is procured:

1956-2001 for New Zealand University Entrance (NZUE), New Zealand School Certificate Examination (NZSCE), Fiji School Sat Examination (FSSE), Fiji Intermediate Examination (FIE), Fiji Eight Year Examination (FEYE), Fiji Junior Certificate (FJC), Fiji School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) and Fiji Seventh Form Examination (FSFE).

8. How many schools were assisted with lease renewal, and how many is pending?

Tabulated below is the summary of the number of schools on which leases have been renewed and the outstanding ones as well. Please refer **Appendix 3**.

| Year | No. of school lease processed | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| | ECE | Primary | Secondary | Total |
| 2018 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| 2019 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| 2020 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| 2021 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2022 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| 2023 | 2 | 11 | 1 | 14 |
| 2024 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| Total | | | | 43 |
| Remarks Total number of pending lease payment: 4 schools | | 3 | 1 | 4 |

9. How many community libraries and school libraries were set up in 2018-2021?

Libraries Set-Up

| Libraries | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 | Total |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Community | 6 | 3 | - | 9 |
| Schools | 46 ECE + 29 Primary + 9 Secondary = 84 | 22 ECE + 18 Primary + 7 Secondary = 47 | 9 ECE + 17 Primary + 6 Secondary + 1 Institution = 33 | 164 |

(Source: Annual Report 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021)

10. The Committee has noted the immense number of teachers that have migrated during the reporting years. How is the Ministry addressing the issue of shortage of teachers in Fiji?

Addressing teacher shortages requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both short-term needs and long-term solutions. The Ministry of Education from January 2024 has started recruiting final year students who are enrolled in Diploma in Education (Primary/Secondary) and Bachelors in Education (Primary/Secondary) from the following Teacher Training Institutes:

- Fiji National University
- The University of the South Pacific
- University of Fiji
- Corpus Christi Teachers College
- Fulton Adventist University College

| FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Number of Students Graduating in Teaching Programmes | April 2024 | 426 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------|
| Bachelor of Education (Secondary) | Year 3 – Semester 1, 2024 | 484 |
| Bachelor of Education (Secondary) | Year 2 – Semester 1, 2024 | 1241 |
| UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC | | |
| Graduates in Teaching Programmes | April – 2024 | 59 |
| Graduates in Teaching Programmes | September – 2024 | 59 |
| Graduates in Teaching Programmes | April and September – 2025 | 183 |
| UNIVERSITY OF FIJI | | |
| Teacher Graduates | December - 2024 | 50 |
| CORPUS CHRISTI TEACHERS COLLEGE | | |
| Diploma in Primary Education | Semester 2-2024 | 37 |
| National Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care | Semester 2-2024 | 15 |
| Diploma in Primary Education | Semester 2-2025 | 42 |
| FULTON ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY COLLEGE | | |
| Bachelor of Education (Primary) | Semester 1- 2024 | 4 |
| Bachelor of Education (Primary) | Semester 2- 2024 | 30 |
| Bachelor of Education (Primary) | Semester 1- 2025 | 4 |
| Bachelor of Education (ECE) | Semester 1- 2024 | 1 |
| Bachelor of Education (ECE) | Semester 2- 2024 | 1 |
| Bachelor of Education (ECE) | Semester 1- 2025 | 1 |

These final year students fulfill all the requirements of the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority (FTRA) including induction, and pay \$25 registration fees for limited authority to teach and this is valid for 1 year. Over the years a total of 160 teachers have been recruited by the Ministry on limited authority to teach.

Additionally, the students who have graduated with Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degree (or other equivalent programmes) without teacher training units are encouraged to complete the following:

- Graduate Certificate in Education (GCED – Secondary) - offered by USP and FNU
- Graduate Certificate in Education (GCED – Primary) - offered by FNU
- Graduate Diploma in Education (GDT - Secondary) – offered by University of Fiji

A similar practice was already in place in 1989 whereby Form 7 (Year 13) students were recruited, and in 2017, final year FNU teacher trainees were recruited to teach in Primary and Secondary schools and they were given time to complete their teacher training as well. This was part of the in-service teacher training.

The Ministry is encouraging diversity in the teaching profession by actively recruiting teachers from other programmes or courses and providing support and resources to overcome barriers to entry into the teaching profession. Empowering teachers to play a more active role in decision-making and school improvement efforts will increase job satisfaction and retention.

By implementing a combination of these strategies, policymakers, education leaders, and stakeholders can work together to address teacher shortages and ensure that all students have access to high-quality education provided by qualified and dedicated educators. A complete list of the current retention strategies and proposed retention strategies of our Ministry can be made available after our consultation with other government agencies. The proposed retention strategies have also been discussed with the Ministry of Civil Service and the Ministry of Finance, with the intention that budgetary allocation will be afforded in the next FY 2024/2025.

11. Which Legislations and Policies are currently under review if any and why?

The 1966 Education Act, is the umbrella policy of the Ministry of Education. The education landscape has significantly evolved and transformed since the Education Act was last revised, necessitating a thorough review to bring it in line with current best practices, societal changes, and educational priorities. The Education Act review is now a priority for the Ministry of Education and is reflected in the 2023 Denarau Declaration thematic Area 3 and 4.

12. To what extent has the Ministry met its SDG performance targets? What were the challenges for non-implementation?

For Ministry of Education, SDG 4 which entail 17 targets ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Through SDG 4, MoE managed to achieve the following:

| Indicator | Baseline |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Net enrolment rate for Early Childhood Education (%) | 100 |
| Net enrolment rate for Primary Education (%) | 100 |
| Net enrolment rate for Secondary Education (%) | 80 |
| Literacy and Numeracy rate for primary year 5 (%) | Literacy: 83 Numeracy: 93 |
| Literacy and Numeracy rate for primary year 7 (%) | Literacy: 47 Numeracy: 52 |
| Retention rate for primary schools [Cohort of Year 1 – Year 8] (%) | 96 |
| Retention rate for Secondary schools [Cohort of Year 9 – Year 12] (%) | 82 |
| Teacher to Student ratio (Primary) | 1:50 |
| Teacher to Student ratio (Secondary) | 1:40 |

Many of MoE's commitment to achieving the SDG targets are included in the 2023 Denarau Declaration, which is the policy roadmap for the Ministry of Education for the next 10 years.

Some of the challenges that the Ministry faced in the implementation of SDG target include:

- Continuous change in leadership within the Ministry in the past with different priorities.
- High staffing turnover due to the reform done at the Ministry
- Budgetary allocation which affect relevant activities aligned to SDG targets
- Pandemic and natural disaster which have significant impact on our budget allocation as funds has to be diverted to cater for the rehabilitation programs.

-ENDS-