

### Quality Teachers and Teacher Education in Fiji *Identities, Challenges & Priorities*



Research carried out through a partnership between The University of the South Pacific, the University of Bristol and the University of Nottingham.



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Teacher education and preparedness are two core issues that have remained high on the educational agenda in Fiji for some time. Despite numerous interventions towards improving the quality of teachers and teaching in Fiji and the wider Pacific, there remain widely held assumptions about the general lack of professionalism and competency of teachers, with particular concerns regarding the ability of teachers to generate positive learning experiences and student academic success.

The research reported here focuses on the perspectives of practitioner stakeholders recognising the significance of their views for the successful implementation of reforms.

The findings from research with practitioner stakeholders (teachers, teacher trainees and teacher educators) generate insights into the nature of teacher identity and professionalism, identify key challenges faced in practice, and focus on the priorities that these stakeholders believe are important for the improvement of the quality of education.

In the light of the changing education policy context and efforts to improve the quality of education in Fiji, three groups of priorities for attention were identified by practitioner stakeholders: (1) Priorities that are already attracting policy attention; (2) Priorities that need more attention; and (3) Emerging priorities deserving urgent attention. These are detailed over the page.

### **(1) Priorities Already Attracting Policy Attention**

These priorities focus on strengthening support for:

1. Rural and remote schools
2. Improved provision of leadership training
3. Continuing professional development for all teachers
4. Improvement of students' attitudes towards learning, tests and examinations
5. Ongoing adaptation of the curriculum to labour market needs and cultural appropriateness
6. Revision of teacher education curriculum including the practicum.

### **(2) Priorities that Deserve More and Sustained Attention**

These priorities focus on strengthening support for:

1. Consultation and collaboration between the MoE, teacher education providers and the teaching profession
2. Clarification of the place of the NCF in ongoing reform
3. More realistic appreciation of teacher workloads
4. Improved societal recognition and respect for the teaching profession
5. Consideration of time constraints on curriculum coverage and the school year
6. The systematic evaluation of new curricula, text books and content sequencing.

### **(3) Emerging Priorities Deserving Urgent Attention**

These priorities call for more focused attention on:

1. Decision-makers establishing more realistically paced, consistent and coordinated reform
2. Critical reflection on the implications and possible unintended effects of the intensification of examination pressures on the national philosophy of education, pedagogy, the quality of education, the students, the teaching profession and teacher education
3. Resolution of tensions between a re-emergent content and examination-driven curriculum and the benefits of active learning and learner centred pedagogy.

Attention to these priorities could help inform ongoing planning and a possible, future Education Commission. For further detailed research findings, the full report titled: *Quality Teachers and Teacher Education in Fiji* is available from the School of Education at USP.

#### **Research Team**

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