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Teachers will need to be fluent in Hindi and Fijian to graduate from the Fiji National University from next year.

At the opening of the University's National Education Conference in Lautoka yesterday, the Vice Chancellor Dr Ganesh Chand said next year all teacher trainees would be required to be fluent in Hindi and Fijian, and unless they were they would not be able to get a graduation certificate.

He confirmed that the level of competency in both languages would need to be "at Nai Lalakai and Shanti Dut" level.

Vice Chancellor Dr Chand said this move was an initial University response to the number of challenges before Fiji, and in particular one that emerged for teachers in regard to the Peoples' Charter for Change and Development.

He said he hoped it would be a strong motivation for other sectors of society to do the rightful thing in ensuring a society that respects diversity and encourages unity.

"For without language understanding there is not much of a chance for society to be united."

The Vice Chancellor said also commended the issue of school zoning to be introduced Government next year.

"This is the first time in Fiji we have had a serious look at concrete measures to integrate schools and make parents more responsible for the quality of schools in the neighbourhood," he said.

"What used to happen up till now is that parents would have a stake in one school, maybe an elite one, and particularly the more enlightened parents.

"Now with zoning it will be in their interests to ensure that in their neighbourhood schools, quality improves and they become accountable for the quality and efficiency of the delivery of education in those schools."

The Vice Chancellor announced a new Fiji National University programme to capture in print the wisdom of people who had extensive experience in various sectors which had remained undocumented.

"What we intend to do from next year is to establish a special programme to get people to write their experiences so a regular feature of FNU will be what we call 'writers in residence', but they won't be writing stories, they will be writing actual experiences in policy making or their autobiographies, and the rest."

"Because we don't want that wisdom not to benefit the current and future generations," he said.