

Tuesday, February 18, 2014.

Tertiary platform for prison rehab

Fiji National University (FNU) and Fiji Corrections Service (FCS) have embarked on a partnership that will see collaboration between the two entities in the areas of inmate training, professional development programmes, student attachment and research.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two entities was signed yesterday at FNU's Nasinu Campus.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Fiji Corrections Service Commissioner, Lieutenant Colonel Ifereimi Vasu thanked FNU for moving in to assist youths who were at the corrections centres.

He said there was a need to assist the unfortunate so that they were able to find work after being released from prison.

Lt Col. Vasu said it was hard for the inmates to find jobs and there was no support from their families.

"I understand if we can support them in terms of education, they will help the nation," he said.

Lt. Col. Vasu said he wanted the programmes to be tailor made to the demands of the labour market.

He said in the previous years, training for the inmates was focused on courses which were easier to conduct such as carpentry and joinery.

FNU Vice Chancellor, Doctor Ganesh Chand said the idea of an MOU between the two entities was mooted in 2008.

"We have been discussing with the FCS on ways and means in which we as an educational institution can assist the services and particularly the inmates, on giving them appropriate skills for their after-prison life," he said.

He said the then TPAF (Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji) and FIT (Fiji Institute of Technology) – both of which have been assimilated into the FNU structure, had been in discussion separately with FCS on courses for the inmates that would enable them to readjust and rehabilitate in society.

Dr Chand said the MOU would seal the deal on which these institutions had been working on informally.

"As an educational institution and particularly as a national institution established with the very firm objective of empowering the people of Fiji with knowledge, skills and training, it is our responsibility to take the training to wherever it is needed," he said.

Dr Chand said as an institution, FNU could empower the youths to undergo training and after they had served their term, they could be better citizens. He said FCS, like FNU, was operating from a number of locations around the country and working together would not be a difficult exercise at all.

Dr Chand said MOU has a number of very specific ingredients and one of them was aptitude test of the prisoners.

He said the test would enable FNU to find out the different kinds of training that each category of inmate needed and on that basis, develop specific training programmes if necessary.

“It is our obligation as a national institution and we are keen to follow through on that,” he said.

Dr Chand said in future, there may be opportunities for FCS staff to upgrade their qualification.

“We also hope that our collaboration in time to come will expand to areas other than training, such as sports,” he said.

He said there was also a great opportunity for FCS to share knowledge from academic research.

For more information, please contact Communications Office on 3393110.