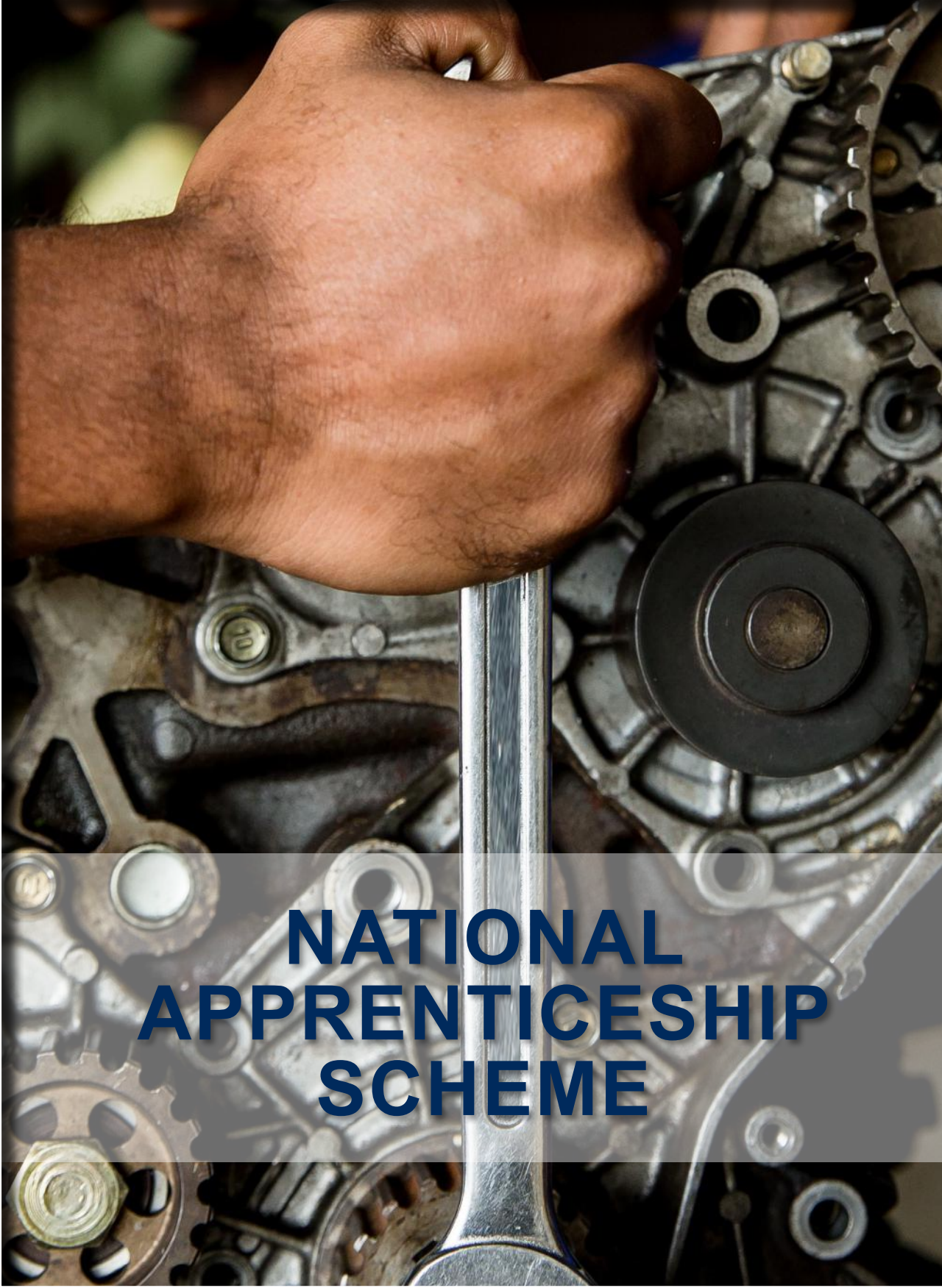


# FNUNIKUA

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## NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME



## Good job prospects for students under Apprenticeship Scheme



*Professor Nigel Healey  
FNU Vice Chancellor*

The competitive employment market can sometimes make it difficult for young people to secure a good job. The apprenticeship programme offered by the Fiji National University's (FNU) National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) provides an opportunity for school-leavers' to boost their long-term career prospects by giving them a solid foundation of on-the-job training at an established organisation.

The NTPC's National Apprenticeship Scheme is designed to work with industry stakeholders to meet their employment needs, by allowing students pursuing relevant trade qualifications to be employed while they undertake their studies.

Under the apprenticeship programme, students have their tuition paid and receive allowances while gaining on-the-job training. The apprenticeship scheme is a paid job that prioritises student's learning and long-term career trajectory by working with established organisations to develop a valuable skill set and business relationships.

### History

Apprenticeships have a long tradition. The system of apprenticeship first developed in Europe in the Middle Ages. A master craftsman would employ young people as his or her assistants, providing them with food, accommodation and pocket money while training them on-the-job to become master craftsmen themselves. Master craftsmen established craft guilds to set standards for their profession, which young people could only enter by serving an apprenticeship.

In modern times, apprenticeships have evolved to include formal education and training – leading to a trade qualification – combined with employment and on-the-job training. Typically, the apprentices are employed by an organisation at a rate which

reflects the fact that they require training, and they get this on-the-job training from their employer while they are working. The employers then release the apprentices to study for a trade qualification at a local college or university. The apprenticeship is completed when they have finished both the requisite amount of on-the-job training and the trade qualification, after which they normally remain with their employer at a higher salary.

### Why become an apprentice?

The advantages to the apprentice are significant. They can start working at age 18, despite having no skills or qualifications, and can be supported by their employer to learn a trade which will set them up for a successful career. In many countries, the employer or the government pays for or subsidizes the formal qualification, so that not only is the apprentice earning money, he or she is saving on the cost of tuition. At the end of the apprenticeship, the individuals are much more employable than their counterparts who studied the same trade qualifications as full-time students, because the apprentices have several years of supervised work experience.

### A plus for employers

The advantages for the employers are that they are developing the next generation of tradespeople by training them – on-the-job – to use the particular machines and instruments needed for their own business. Not only does the system produce qualified, experienced tradespeople, but they have been trained to fit into the employer's organization.

Some companies are sceptical about the value of apprenticeships. They calculate that it may be cheaper to hire a new graduate from a fulltime programme and train them up. Or they may worry that if they invest in training an apprentice, he or she will leave as soon as they are qualified, being poached by a rival company that "freerides" on their investment.

Such companies need to remember that, unlike a fresh graduate, a qualified apprentice has proved that they have the skills and aptitude to do the job. They are a risk-free bet, unlike the new graduate. And if they are good employers and treat their apprentices well while they are being trained, they are not only going to be excellent, productive employees, but loyal and trustworthy – and much more likely to stay than leave for a better offer.

### Apprenticeship in Fiji

The National Apprenticeship Scheme was introduced in 1963 under the Ministry of Labour and known as the Fiji Apprenticeship Council.

The role of National Apprenticeship Scheme is regulated and administered by NTPC through the support from the Industries to address the skills required and to produce competent and certified work force for the organisations.

NTPC is at the heart of the system, promoting the scheme, matching organisations and potential apprentices, arranging the academic study – often undertaken on one of FNU's colleges

– and overseeing the quality of the on-the-job training. The Government supports the scheme, by giving employers tax breaks on the wages paid to apprentices and supporting the costs of tools and travel to study for apprentices.

### Making the best choice

For young people, the alternative to apprenticeships is full-time study at university. In Fiji, the Tertiary Education Loans Scheme (TELS) has made full-time study a feasible option for many students who would otherwise have been deterred by the cost. With the majority of school leavers now going to university, it can be difficult to be the one that says, "No, I am going to start work as an apprentice ...and miss out on student life".

With the rapid economic growth taking place in Fiji, many parents push their children into higher education, rather than TVET, believing their prospects will be better in a white-collar office job. So, for many young people the choice is not between a Cert IV trade certificate studied as an apprentice and the same trade qualification studied full-time; it is between an apprenticeship and a full-time Bachelor of Commerce majoring in accounting, with the lure of a job as an accountant at the end.

For many young people, however, both temptations should be avoided. For those who learn better by doing, an apprenticeship will always guarantee them a more enriching way of gaining work experience and a trade qualification. Organisations will generally choose a qualified apprentice over a graduate fresh out of university. And the job prospects for apprentices are much brighter than for many bachelor's graduates. The construction and hospitality sectors in Fiji are booming; there are plenty of jobs for skilled carpenters, electricians and plumbers. And the chances of setting up your own business in due course are much higher for tradespeople than for accountants and lawyers.

### Challenge and opportunities

NTPC currently has around 270 apprentices on its roll, the highest number in several years. School leavers have a far wider range of study options than a generation ago and TELS has made full-time study at university a feasible option for many students who might otherwise have been deterred by the cost. So many parents push their children into higher education rather than TVET, believing their job prospects will be better in a white-collar office job.

It is because of these challenges there is a need to raise awareness of the benefits of apprentices to both young people and employers. This is a national challenge. Fiji needs a skilled labour force to support the nation's economic development. It needs trained plumbers, electricians, carpenters, aircraft mechanics, automotive engineers. The importance of finding the right balance is key and with the partnership between employers, young people and – through NTPC – the Fiji National University will be on the front foot to meet the future needs of the nation.

*Professor Nigel Healey  
FNU Vice Chancellor*





# Apprenticeship molds leaders

The National Apprentice Scheme, established 56 years ago, has produced high profile alumni who have gone on to become leaders in organisations in Fiji and abroad. National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) Director Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata said this is a testimony to the quality of training provided under the Scheme.

Administered under NTPC, the Scheme provides on-the-job learning for students and enables organisations to grow its own talent, reduce staff turnover and develop specific employee skills set.



Dr Tagicakiverata (pictured left) said there is a lot of knowledge creation as the students are mentored through the programme and the skills are then passed on down the chain.

“This Scheme has been in existence since 1963 and it has definitely come a long way. It benefits both students and business organisations,” he said.

“We have a lot of our older graduates who have gone on to become heads in the public

service and corporate organisations. This shows the level of training they receive and can achieve if they work hard.”

“Over the years, over 8412 apprentices have completed their contracts under the Scheme and are now successful in their respective fields. Currently, there are 277 apprentices in training, which is the highest in comparison to previous years.”

“There’s nothing better than training in real-life work environments with real-life work supervisors and getting exposed to real-life work expectations.”

### Training

The apprentice is required to attend theoretical coursework approved by NTPC based on competency standards set by the Fiji National University for the selected trade.

“For the practical component, the apprentice is required to attend 1,400 hours of practical training per year as required in the training guideline,” Dr Tagicakiverata said.

“During their apprenticeship period, the apprentice will be inspected at the worksite and this will take place on a tri-annual or bi-annual basis, depending on the training format.”

“All training records and profiles of each apprentice are archived after the completion of the training.”

There are 22 trade disciplines at Trade level and 7 fields of training at the Technician level offered under the Scheme. The

courses run for a duration of between 3 to 4 years.

A Certificate of Apprenticeship is issued upon successful completion of training. Once the Apprentice has achieved all the competencies outlined in the Training Guide.

### Female apprentices

Dr Tagicakiverata said the Scheme has continued to improve in its roles and responsibilities through the support from Industries to address the skills needed and to produce competent and certified work force for the organisations.

He said over the years they have opened up placements for the participation of more women in the programme.

“There are now eight females who are currently part of the Scheme and are in training in different fields of study.”

“We strongly encourage more females to join trade-related job opportunities and join the Scheme.”

### Earn as you learn

The Apprenticeship Scheme is ‘earn as you learn concept.’

“This is where an individual gets the chance to learn their trade skills, get a tertiary qualification and earn at the same time,” Dr Tagicakiverata commented.

“It’s about giving young people the confidence to be independent and empowered whilst providing them with financial stability.”

## How to join the Apprenticeship Scheme

- Candidates may apply directly with the employer
- A list of employers authorised to engage in apprenticeship training is available on request from the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC).

### Contract of Apprenticeship

- Apprentices fall under the Apprenticeship Order under The Fiji National Training Order: Cap. 93 Section 21 as now it is amended to the Fiji National University ACT 2009.

### The contract is between the:

Employer, Apprentice and Fiji National University (FNU)

- If the apprentice is under the age of 18 years, a parent or guardian will be required to sign as guarantor for the apprentice.
- The contract is made under the Apprenticeship Order to enable the apprentice and the employer to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities during the term of apprenticeship. This contract, after being fully completed and signed by all parties, is submitted to NTPC for registration.

## NTPC Apprenticeship Awards

The Apprenticeship Award ceremony is an important event held by the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC).

The Apprenticeship Graduation began on a small scale from 1968 due to smaller number of apprentices, however, as the number increased, the graduation became a grand affair.

The event also honors those apprentices who have excelled in both, academic studies and on-the-job performance.

A committee is formed consisting of employers, academics, and members of NTPC to scrutinize and select best apprentices. The selections of award winners are based on the following criteria:

- Academic performance for all stages of theoretical training

- Employer’s assessment of on-the-job training of the apprentice
- NTPC’s Apprenticeship Officers’ assessment of reports of every on-the job inspection throughout the apprenticeship term

### Special awards given to outstanding Apprentices;

- Merit award in Individual Trade
- Best Apprentice in Individual Trade
- Runner-up to the Overall Best Apprentice of the Year
- Overall Best Apprentice of the Year

This year, the Awards will be held in November.





## Apprenticeship programme produces skilled workers – FCEF

*Nesbitt Hazelman.*

The Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF) has been a key stakeholder of the National Apprenticeship Scheme which is managed under the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC).

The FNUNIKUA team spoke with FCEF Chief Executive Officer Nesbitt Hazelman on their thoughts regarding the Apprenticeship Scheme, the benefits for members and students and suggestions on the way forward for the programme to ensure it provides reciprocal benefits as well as contributes to national development.

### 1. What are the FCEF’s thoughts on the NTPC’s National Apprenticeship Scheme?

Our initial thoughts is that it’s alright. It has been churning out graduates in a number of areas but much more can be done. We need to make the Apprenticeship Scheme a viable career option for students. We need to re-brand it so we can attract more students as an option rather than pursuing a tertiary university degree. There’s a large sector of Fiji’s economy that requires trades people, not only in Fiji look at the region. Because of the porous nature of our borders we are able to export our trades people and remittances is the second largest foreign earner for Fiji, we can expand on that. So whilst I said that its good, that’s its churning out students in certain areas and certain companies are making use of it, it has to be wide spread like it used to before in the 60’s and 70’s when lot of our young school leavers went through the Apprenticeship Scheme.

### 2. What type of advantages does this scheme offer to your members or employers in general?

The advantages it has is that we are able to take on apprentices and bring them through the organisation and train them on the operations of the organisation whilst at the same time they are learning the trade, the academia part of it. So it provides our members with a pool of potential trained skilled workers for the future to be part of not only their workforce but also their succession planning as the older workers move up and move out, the new workers come in and take over. So we need to keep that pipeline full all the time to allow the organisations to continue to be sustainable.

### 3. Does added incentives from Government encourage employers to engage in the scheme?

Absolutely, government has a hand in this. Government will

not only enjoy the taxes derived off these people who are becoming employed in the future but also create viable decent employment. I firmly believe that the Tertiary Education Loans Scheme (TELS) should expand to students who want to take on Apprenticeships.

### 4. The Apprenticeship Scheme in overseas countries are fairly robust and attracts lots of students. Can the scheme in Fiji become as popular, how can this be achieved?

We have to modernise it. We have to go to the schools to advocate and market it as a viable career option. We have to revive the programmes, we need to use state-of-the-art equipment that encourage students. Gone are the days where you work, although you still work with spanners and all that, but now there is all the electronic, electrical tools that makes your work easier. Lasers, computers referring to computers, computer diagnostics all these things come with it. So we need to bring in technology into the area. That’s where you will attract the young person. They are not interested in getting oil all over their overalls and wearing safety boots and not doing anything. They want to be challenged.

### 5. Would you want to see more programmes added to the Apprenticeship Scheme listing? If yes, what would some of these programmes be and why?

One comes to mind is Printing. We have Fijian Holdings just bought government printing and we have a number of printing organisation now, we still bring a lot of technicians from overseas to serve in these areas as expatriates. These can be easily filled by local technicians. So printing is an area that comes to mind. There’s areas in fashion that we should be tapping into. Fashion is a big industry now in the Pacific. We should be tapping into apprenticeship in sewing or fixing sewing machines, those sort of things. Brick laying is another area. The wet trades. The building boom in Fiji is happening. Lots of buildings is happening, we can’t find people who can do wet trades, block laying, plastering. You just go around and see buildings that they plaster and you can see its not done properly. And as far as I’m concerned you don’t need a Year 12 or 13 pass to be apprenticeship, as far as I’m concerned Year 10 you

should be able to go into apprenticeship like we did in the old days and learn on the job. Few years on the job then go out into the academia to do the academic part of the course.

### 6. What is your message to students who would be thinking of joining the Apprenticeship Scheme?

I would encourage them. Personally if I had another choice to consider my life, my career I would have gone into an Apprenticeship. You know why? Because when you finish your work in the workshop you leave it right there, you go home you relax. You work in the office, you go to the university we get degrees, we come back we still take our work home. You can’t take your engine home and fix it. The engine stays in the workshop. I say it’s a viable option. It shouldn’t be treated as a second class career choice, that academia is first and if you want to go in the trades it second, it’s not the case. A case in point you go to Australia the painters, mechanics, plumbers are very wealthy people. I mean they are driving around in BMW’s and all these kind of cars and its people like you and I that wear suits and we catch the train. That’s the fact of the matter. People need to have their plumbing fixed, even in the weekends their lights and electricity needs to be fixed when it breaks down all times of the day. They charge good money for that so I would encourage young people to consider taking up a trade as an option as opposed to going into other fields of academia.

### 7. Would you like to see more female joining the Apprenticeship Scheme?

Yes, definitely. We have had a fair number of women take up Apprenticeship, however we need to really boost the numbers. Fiji has always encourage equal participation of gender in work places and I believe this scheme provides young women an excellent platform to train and become masters in different trades. If you look at countries overseas, apprenticeship is a big trainer of the workforce and women are encouraged to take up programmes available. The beauty about this scheme is that you learn every aspect of the job and this makes it easier for people to pick up the trade even if they are new. I know some women may hesitate to take up trades because they are unfamiliar or may feel intimidated because most of the trades are male dominated. However the word is changing and we have many women at the forefront of this changes, breaking barriers and taking on jobs that were traditionally gender biased.





Rosalia Sikoa is the youngest apprentice in her team.

# Apprenticeship scheme, a chance to learn by performing – Sikoa

Rosalia Sikoa is not your average teenager. The 19-year-old Nacamaki villager from Koro Island in the Lomaiviti Group is a working student, an active sports woman and an avid reader.

Being the eldest of two siblings, Sikoa has had a strict Christian upbringing and was always encouraged to strive to give her best effort in everything she does.

“My father is a physiotherapist with the military and my mother stays at home. They have always encouraged me to follow the path that gives me peace and makes me happy.”

It is because of these teachings, Sikoa decided to venture into the path less taken by women her age. She decided to pursue a blue collar training programme - Certificate IV in Plant Maintenance through the College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST).

After completing the first three stages of the programme, Sikoa joined Goodman Fielder as an intern to complete her compulsory attachment requirement before graduation.

“The company had advertised for Apprentices to join the organisation which caught my attention and I enquired about it. My supervisor Mr Ruben Chand explained to me the nature of Apprenticeship program which slanted my interest to explore this career path.”

“I applied and was lucky to be selected under the Apprenticeship program at Goodman Fielder. I then decided to continue in this path and shelf my dream of becoming an Aircraft Engineer for now. Signing the contract for four years as an apprentice has been the best decision of my career as there are many interesting and beneficial aspects of being an apprentice,” said the bubbly Sikoa.

Growing out of her comfort zone

Sikoa is the youngest in her team, which is dominated by males but she isn’t intimidated by the odds. She is one of two females in her team. According to Sikoa the team bond is very strong and she is able to learn a lot from her colleagues. She said the willpower to succeed and great work environment makes work much easier and fun.

“I have always had male friends while growing up but this experience is a bit different. It is a rewarding experience for me to be working with such talented people.”

“Apart from work assistance, their personal-life advise also assist me in overcoming daily personal challenges. Being able to share this kind of relationship with my work-colleagues makes the work environment even more fun and enjoyable,” explained Sikoa.

Sikoa said strong support from family and friends provides great encouragement and sense of purpose.

“My parents were surprised and they were like how can a small girl like me work with such big machines and tools. They were quite

amazed with my career choice but I convinced them that this profession makes me happy and I know I will enjoy doing this for as long as I can.”

Benefits and Interesting aspects of being and Apprentice

Sikoa said the first advantage of the scheme is that it offers a learner hands-on experience in the chosen fields.

“This can be a huge relief for students who do not enjoy the classroom learning environment. I believe the apprenticeship scheme is a great option if you are looking to dive straight into the workforce and attend university at the same time.”

Sikoa said the scheme is also beneficial in terms of university fees and tools where the students do not have to pay for these themselves.

“I feel so fortunate to have been selected under this scheme as I do not pay my fees and I also haven’t spent a single cent on my tools. Both have been catered for by Goodman Fielder. At the same time, the company pays me for the number of hours I work.”

She said the learning type of the scheme makes it more interesting than the normal university teachings.

“From my personal experiences, as an apprentice, I am given the chance to learn by ‘performing’ which gives me a better understanding of the practical aspects of my role.”

“With the practical aspects, I am constantly learning new skills on the job and have the opportunity to apply my learning every day. Being constantly exposed to work environment helps me pick up the required knowledge for the job as quickly as possible,” she said.

“Goodman Fielder is a mixed trade company and I get to learn things outside my profession. For example, my job is just to focus on the engine or the boilers but when I came here they gave carpentry job, where the tradesmen actually taught me how to use a hammer, which I had never used before and they even taught me welding and plumbing work which is totally out of my trade. This to me is very interesting as I get to learn other peoples’ trades as well.”

Sikoa described how she managed to fix a pipe which was broken by her dog and said “I actually take these learnings back home and apply it there as well.”

Future

Sikoa’s dad will retire soon and she revealed that the apprenticeship scheme has provided her the opportunity to take his place as the breadwinner of the family.

“I want to assist my sister in completing her education and at the same time be able to take care of my parents.”

She plans to further her studies after graduating from a Certificate IV in Plant Maintenance.

## Trades in Apprenticeship Training Scheme

### TRADE LEVEL

- Aircraft Maintenance
- Automotive Electrical
- Automotive Mechanic
- Boilermaking
- Carpentry
- Cook
- Electrical Fitter Mechanic
- Electronics
- Fitting & Machining

- Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanic
- Heavy Mobile Plant Mechanic
- Industrial Sewing Machine Mechanic
- Joinery & Cabinet Making
- Manufacturing Engineering
- Panel Beating
- Plant Maintenance Engineering
- Plumbing
- Printing
- Refrigeration & Air-conditioning
- Saw Doctor

- Shipwright
- Welding & Fabricating

### TECHNICIAN LEVEL

- Automotive Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Plant Engineering
- Telecommunication Engineering
- Marine Engineering
- Navigation & Seamanship





# Apprentice Turaga enjoys exposure at FMF

Vasiti Qolikoro at a workshop at FMF Foods Limited.

Buttoning up a navy blue coloured overall, slipping on safety shoes and grabbing her back pack filled with essentials, company identification card, safety goggles and a pair of heavy hand gloves, Vasiti Qolikoro Turaga steps out of her house in Nakasi to catch the early morning bus to work.

The 25-year-old from Burewai in Ra is an apprentice at Flour Mills of Fiji (FMF) Foods Limited.

Turaga is pursuing a Trade Diploma in Electrical Engineering at Fiji National University’s (FNU), College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST) and is part of the National Apprenticeship Scheme.

Being the only female in her team and proving that she is capable of doing the same work as her colleagues is a challenge Turaga takes on daily without hesitation.

“I chose to enter this field because I found it to be an interesting profession to be in,” said Turaga with a bright smile.

“As a young girl, I always knew I wanted to study in this field and even though I constantly heard that this was male-dominated field of work, it did not stop me.”

“Electricity is always evolving and that was another factor that motivated me to choose to be a qualified electrical engineer, I am

in a field that evolves and that means I get to learn something new every day.”

“I knew FNU would be a good place to enrol because through the Scheme, I am able to study and work at the same time.”

Turaga said while attending classes at Derrick Campus in Samabula, she noticed an advertisement from FMF Foods Limited seeking interest from students to become an apprentice.

“I didn’t give it a second thought. I immediately applied and I’m grateful I have the chance to work here on a four-year contract.”

Turaga joined FMF in September, 2017 and is based at the company’s plant at Walu Bay.

“The fact that every day I get to do something different means I am always learning and adding to my knowledge bank,” Turaga shared.

“Normally, I go around the factory with my supervisor and we check if there is maintenance work to be done.”

“If there are any paging’s made for breakdowns, I accompany my superior and an electrician or fitter and attend to the problem.”

Quietly but confidently, Turaga also shared about her experiences working in a male-dominated environment.

“I am the only female in my team but that does not hinder

my work in any way. I do the same thing the boys do and I like working with my team,” she said with a laugh.

“Proving daily that I am capable of working in this field is a challenge I take on without hesitation because it also allows me to push myself to the best of my capabilities. I’m also grateful that I have a good support system in my family, friends and those here at work.”

Turaga said with good time management skills she’s able to balance her work, school, social and personal life.

“I like the National Apprenticeship Scheme because you earn and learn at the same time,” she stated.

“When we are in school, we are doing full-time studies unless I have classes that start around 12pm, then I would be required to report to work first.”

“I think having your priorities set and being able to focus and dedicating yourself to whatever you are doing will contribute to your success.”

Turaga hopes to gain the skills, knowledge and experience and climb up the ranks to a supervisory role in the not too distant future.

## Organisations under National Apprenticeship Scheme

The following organisations have partnered with NTPC under the National Apprenticeship Scheme. There are currently 277 students registered under this scheme in the following divisions:

Organisations	Central	West	North	Total
Asco Motors	10	5	-	15
Aquaheat	7	4	-	11
Bluescope Pacific Steel (Fiji) Ltd	3	-	-	3
British American Tobacco	5	-	-	5
Carpenters Fiji Limited	18	5	3	26
CAS Scale (Fiji) Ltd	3	2	1	6
Communication Technologies	2	-	-	2
Douglas Pharmaceuticals Fiji Ltd	-	12	-	12
Elia Engineering Ltd	-	5	-	5
Energy Fiji Limited (FEA)	18	19	12	49
Dominion Wire & Cable	-	1	-	1
Fiji Gas Limited	1	2	-	3
Fiji Sugar Corporation Ltd-Ba	-	4	-	4
Fiji Sugar Corporation Ltd-Lautoka	-	3	-	3
Fiji Sugar Corporation - Labasa	-	-	2	2
FMF - Biscuit Company of Fiji Ltd	11	-	-	11
Goodman Fielder International Ltd	6	-	-	6
Government Ship-ping Services	18	-	-	18

J. Kevi Group Fiji Limited	-	2	-	2
Lincoln Refrigeration Limited	5	-	1	6
Matec Motors & Spares	1	-	-	1
Natural Waters of Viti Ltd	-	17	-	17
Niranjans Autoport Limited	8	8	7	23
Nutech Sales & Service Limited	1	-	-	1
On Time Engineering	2	-	-	2
Pacific Cement Limited	2	-	-	2
Pacific Fishing Co Ltd	6	-	-	6
Pacific Transport Limited	1	-	-	1
S.C. Foods	-	2	-	2
Seamech Ltd	1	-	-	1
Shreedhar Motors Limited	5	7	1	13
Masala Twist	-	1	-	1
Sigatoka Electric	-	2	-	2
Subrails Furniture	-	2	-	2
Tropica Island Resort	-	3	-	3
Topik Furniture& Joinery Limited	1	2	-	3
United Containers Fiji Limited	2	1	-	3
Valebasoga Tropik-boards Ltd	-	-	2	2
Vision Motors	1	-	-	1
Waiqele Sawmill Ltd	-	-	1	1
Total Apprentices	138	109	30	277

## FMF praises NTPC’s Apprenticeship Scheme

Having a good work ethic and the ability to apply core skills into practical use are two main characteristics that make a good apprentice.

This is the mantra that Flour Mills of Fiji (FMF) Foods Limited Managing Director, Ram Bajekal believes will enable an apprentice to be a productive worker of any organisation.

Bajekal said having an innovative mind and the urge to implement new and creative ideas were traits that would provide those seeking employment with an added advantage.

“One of the skills we would look for would be really someone who brings in fresh skills into the company, and of course, the core skills that they are trained for,” said Bajekal.

“So for instance, we expect a person trained in a field such as welding or to be a fitter or electrician to have basic knowledge about that particular field and work function. We expect them to be very proficient in that.”

“But most importantly, we really require them to come in with a good work ethic and a good attitude towards work and the working environment.”

FMF Foods Limited, established over 40 years ago, is an organisation that provides workplace apprenticeship training for Fiji National University’s (FNU), National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) apprentices through the National Apprenticeship Scheme.

“We have quite a few apprentices from FNU’s NTPC working in our organisation and I must say that they are doing a fair bit and I also hope that they are enjoying themselves,” Bajekal said.

“When I check with them, they certainly seem to be enjoying the work and that’s good because that way they learn and at the same time they contribute (to the organisation) as well.”

“The apprenticeship training gives them a sense of accomplishment and it trains them for their respective industries.”

The senior business executive added that



Ram Bajekal

whilst students would gain first-hand learning experience in their trade field, industries will also benefit from this apprenticeship scheme.

“My suggestion is the earlier these students get into the apprenticeship programmes, the better.”

“When they have done this and then graduate and come back to work in the industry, they already have a flavor of what they are going to be doing.”

“So they are much better prepared and hit the road running right from day one.”

“The learning curve is much sharper, their contributions are much better and therefore their acceptance into the organisation would be far higher and far better than if they were to come there as absolute green hounds.”



## Quick Views



In high school, I decided that I would work in the sugar industry. But before I could achieve my goal of working at the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC), I had to choose which tertiary institution to attend. I chose the Fiji National University (FNU) and I am grateful of the skills, knowledge and qualification FNU taught me that allowed me to graduate in 1999. For those in the National Apprenticeship Scheme run by FNU's National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) and those thinking of joining – do it! This is a career path that will take you places.



**Manasa Takala | FNU alumni**  
**Team Leader – Lovu and Lautoka, Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC)**



I chose to learn the refrigeration and air-conditioning trade because I wanted to do something different. I studied at the then Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) and I served five years of apprenticeship with FIT. It has been almost 20 years and I enjoy being in this trade. My advice to youths and those thinking of joining FNU and the National Apprenticeship Scheme would be to grab the opportunity and make use of it.



**Anusheel Chandra | Former FNU Apprentice**  
**General Manger South Pacific – Aquaheat**



I believe that there is currently a massive migration in skilled labourers from Fiji and in every industry in Fiji, it is very hard to skillful employees. This is why Fiji National University (FNU) is going the right way with its National Apprenticeship Scheme, which we also went through during our tertiary learning days. I applaud all current apprentices working in their trade field and encourage others to join the National Apprenticeship Scheme because you will always have the opportunity to upskill yourself from where you started off to where you want to be.



**Jimi Taniela | FNU Alumni**  
**Operations Manager – FMF Food Fiji Limited**



## Kumar climbs the ranks to lead team at Asco Motors

Starting off as a young Trade Apprentice in Auto Electrical, Sanjeet Kumar (pictured) has risen to the ranks of National Fixed Assets Manager, managing five branches across the country.

The 46-year-old, who is employed by Asco Motors, is a well-known figure in auto electrical engineering industry having worked for large local companies like Carpenters Motors and Niranjans Auto Spare Parts.

Kumar started his career as an apprentice in the 1990s.

Having a jovial and down to earth personality, Kumar believes success does not always come from the traditional route of going to college or university but comes from many different education routes including apprentice.

“While many people may think that being an

apprenticeship may not lead to greater things in life there are individuals who are examples that hard work and dedication leads to success in life,” he said confidently.

“Apprenticeship is in fact a ladder of opportunity, with a chance to harness and nurture your newly acquired knowledge and skills and also showcasing your employers on what you have been taught which compliments the automotive industry,” added Kumar.

Not knowing what his future will hold some twenty-five years ago, Kumar began work at Niranjans Auto Spare Parts in 1994.

“Back then, our parents were unaware on what career path we would choose or what a particular university had to offer. This was due to lack of awareness and socio-economic factors. So I joined Niranjans and also started pursuing my studies through the apprenticeship scheme. Later I acquired my Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resources Management,”

“Being a Trade Apprentice taught me many of the skills which I needed to become successful in this field.”

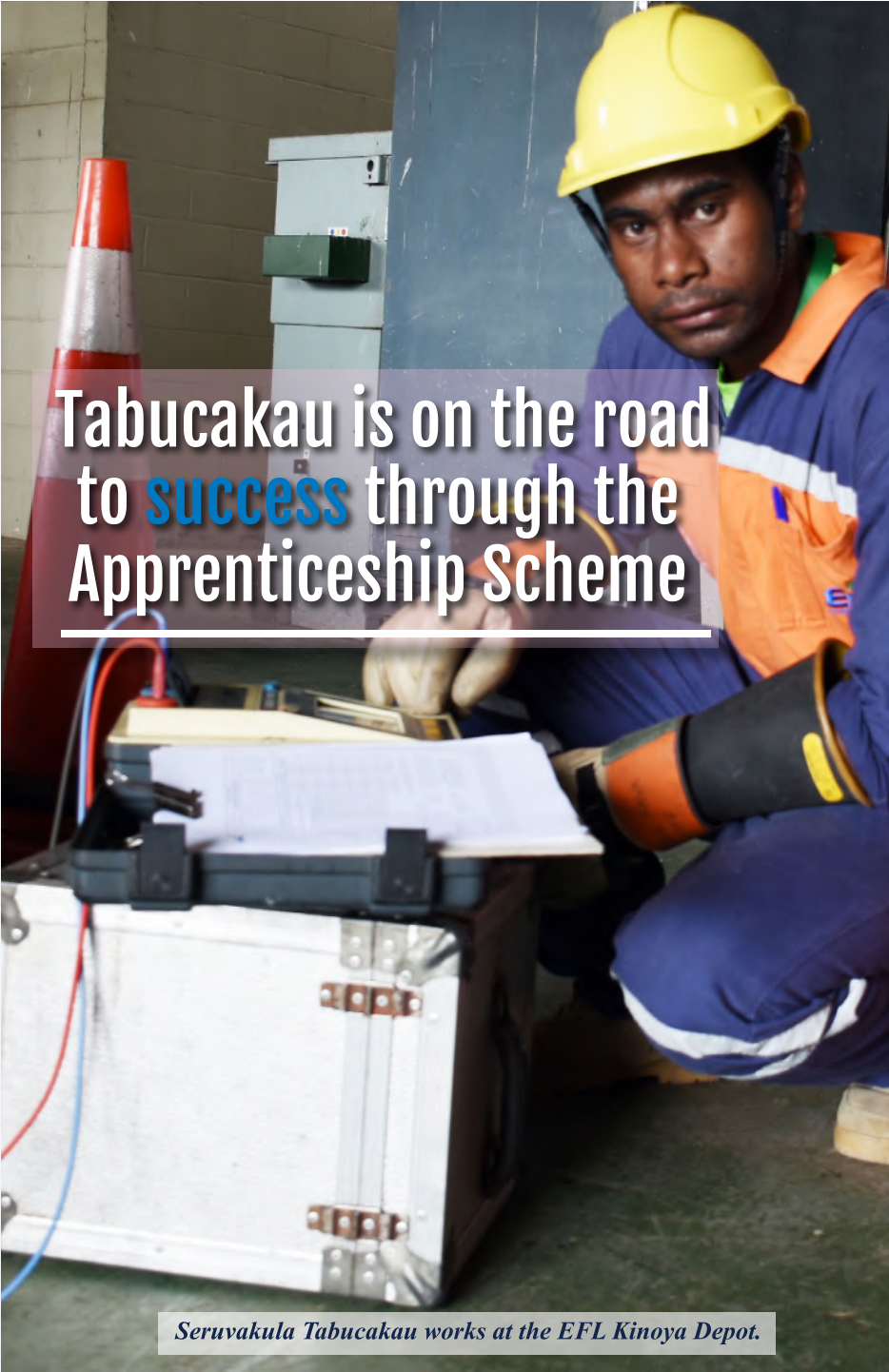
Two decades later, Kumar leads by example and provides mentoring and guidance to all managers and staff reporting to him.

“The Apprenticeship Scheme is what made me who I am today. Who knew an apprentice would hold a national managerial portfolio at a prestigious company one day,” said Kumar.

Kumar vividly remembers how his interest grew in this field and is thankful to what and where his life has led him to.

“I was born in Lautoka but shifted to Suva when I was four years old. Those days my father had a car which we always used to repair. It was more like a push-start. We had to wake up early at 5am to start the car. The struggle was real and my hard days taught me that if I need to make a future for myself then I really need to prove myself,” he said.

He is encouraging secondary school students to consider Apprenticeship as a chosen career path.



*Seruvakula Tabucakau works at the EFL Kinoya Depot.*

Seruvakula Tabucakau is a firm believer in learning from challenges faced in life and applying these lessons to become successful. Reflecting on his life, the 24-year-old said he encountered many struggles but with determination and faith he has been able to meet his family's obligations.

Originally from Nasautoka village in Wainibuka, Tailevu, Tabucakau confesses that he had to forego his dreams of pursuing tertiary education due to financial constraints.

“I enrolled at FNU after completing secondary school but being the eldest of the three siblings, I unfortunately had to withdraw from my studies to look after my family's needs. My parents are subsistence farmers and it has been a challenge to earn a living,” said Tabucakau.

Through assistance from relatives, Tabucakau managed to secure casual employment at Venus Electrical in Ba and this is where his passion for electrical works developed.

“In 2016, I joined the Telecom Fiji Limited (TFL) team that was laying fibre optic cables from Korovou to Rakiraki. This to me was a great opportunity to learn more about the advancement in technology.”

Although Tabucakau had a full-time employment, the yearning to attend university always lingered in his mind.

“I was missing the student life but I had no option since I am the only one earning in the family and my younger sisters were still schooling. I was always haunted by the thought if ever I will be able to experience the student-life again,” said emotional Tabucakau.

As the saying goes – ‘the best gift in life is a second chance.’ Tabucakau came across an opportunity to become an apprentice.

“Electricity Fiji Limited (EFL) had advertised for apprentice positions and I applied for it. I was excited to be given a chance and I truly feel blessed to be included in this apprenticeship scheme.”

Apprentice Tabucakau joined EFL in November last year and is presently based at the Transformer Workshop Kinoya Depot. He is currently enrolled at the Fiji National University's (FNU) Certificate IV in Electrical Engineering programme.

“I enjoy working here. We are taught a lot of things from the experienced staff. Our team is currently working with transformers. We test it before it is loaded and taken to the job site.”

“The apprentices also assist other teams as and when our assistance is required. It is a good learning experience for me as the company rotates us every three months to other departments such as construction, transmission and so forth.”

Tabucakau enjoys visiting the worksites daily to fix cables, relocate posts as well as fitting transformers on the posts.

The Apprenticeship Scheme has not only provided Tabucakau a chance to meet his family's financial obligations but also a chance to pursue tertiary qualification.

“Being able to go back to the University after four years is indeed a dream come true. Sometimes I have to rethink all the things that I learnt back in high school so I have to put in double the effort.”

The soft-spoken Tailevu man said balancing study and work was manageable as EFL provided employees an enabling environment to upgrade their qualifications.

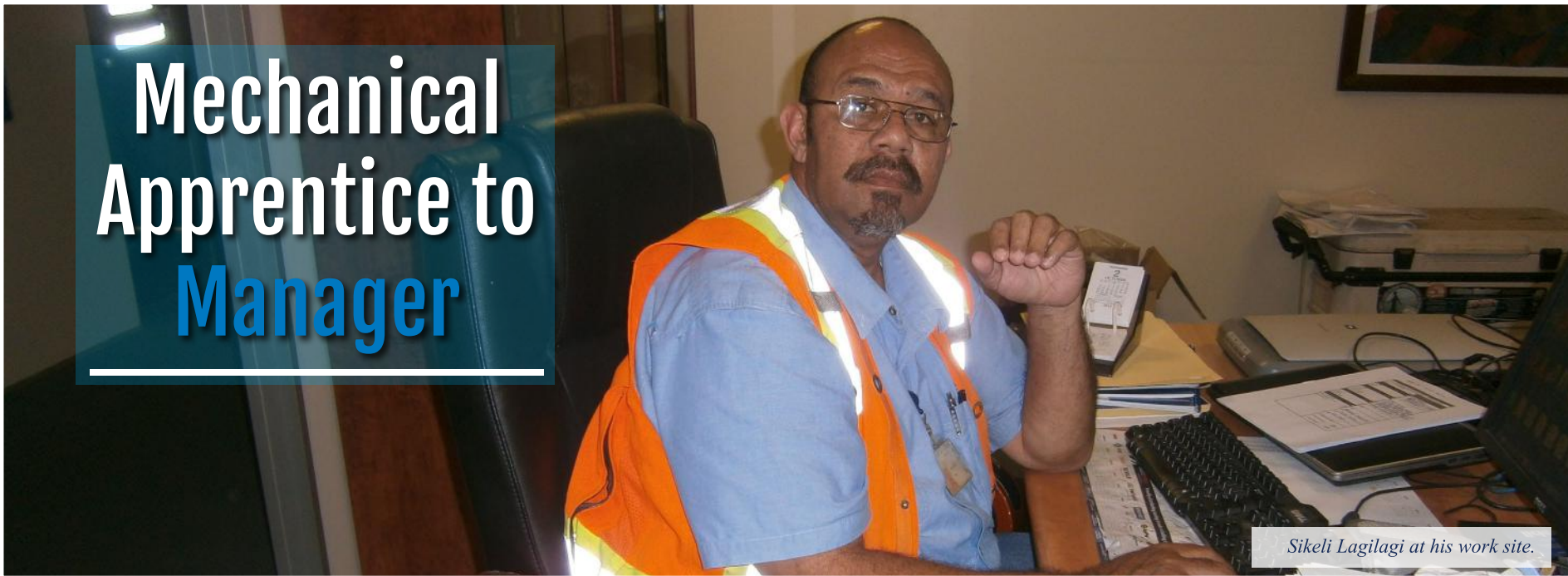
Apprentice Tabucakau said it's important to remain focused on goals in life adding opportunities will open up at the right time.

“To the youths, I would like to encourage you to explore the field of apprenticeship – it is a programme where you get to go back to school and learn on the job at the same time,” Tabucakau added.



*Sanjeet Kumar*





Sikeli Lagilagi at his work site.

Not everyone can say they have worked on repairing and maintaining underground heavy earth-moving equipment in Fiji’s gold mine. For Sikeli Lagilagi it was his first job and one which set the tone for his career path.

After completing Year 12, Lagilagi applied to be an Apprentice in Heavy Mobile Plant Mechanic at the Vatukoula Gold Mine, formerly known as the Emperor Gold Mine in Tavua, upon the advice of his uncle. This allowed him to attain a qualification while receiving the much needed hands-on experience.

#### Apprenticeship Days

In 1985, Lagilagi began his apprenticeship journey which was mandated by the then Fiji National Training Council (FNTC). The programme alternated between a trimester in the classroom at the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) and a trimester doing hands-on work in the mine. This was repeated until the programme was completed.

Lagilagi says that attending classes gave him the theoretical knowledge he needed to carry out the work in the industry. He also looked forward to going back to school every other trimester as this was the time to meet his friends again.

“My best memories are those of the classroom days. I always anticipated going back. This is when I could meet apprentices from my field as well as other fields from all over Fiji,” he said.

He attended FIT in Ba for Stage One and Stage Two of the programme and completed Stages Three and Four at the Derrick Campus in Samabula.

Lagilagi graduated in 1989 and was given the Best Apprentice Award.

#### Further Education and Career Development

Lagilagi continued working at the Vatukoula Gold Mine as a Tradesman until 1992 when he was promoted to Workshop Leading Hand, a position he served for two years.

He then served as the Assistant Training Officer – Apprentice for one year before being promoted to Emergency Services Superintendent in 1996. He served on this position for over ten years.

In 2007, after over two decades at the Vatukoula Gold Mines, Lagilagi joined the Land Transport Authority as the Regional Manager West, managing the authority’s operations in the Western division consisting of six branches and over 100 staff. During his time in this position, he successfully completed Master of Business Administration (MBA) at The University of the South Pacific (2008)

Three years later, in 2010, he joined Fiji Water as the Manager of Safety, Health and Environment, Security and Transport, a post he currently holds. He is responsible for the overall Safety, Health and Environment programs at the Fiji Water factory, the fleet and the container yard. He is also responsible for Training, Security and Transport.

There are many people who Lagilagi credits his success to.

“There are many people who cross our paths and become our guiding angels. Mr Bill Griffith who was my mentor at the Gold Mine, Mr Mohammed Salim who was the Garage Foremen at the Workshop, Oscar Anthony and of course none of this would be possible without the support of my parents,” he said.

#### The Apprentice Family

Lagilagi currently lives in Tavua with his wife and three sons. His eldest son is also an apprentice in Electrical Mechanic in Fiji Water.

He takes a keen interest in rugby and follows all of Fiji’s games. He also loves to fish. This also allows him to spend time with his sons.

Currently, Lagilagi also serves on the Apprenticeship Selection Committee at the Fiji National University for Apprenticeship Awards.

His advice to apprentices and current and future students FNU is to focus on their studies and be passionate about what they do.



## FNU’s Nasinu Teachers College (NTC)

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**REUNION**

30th June, 2019 - 2nd July, 2019  
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- Cocktail and Dinner Party • Bus and Walking Tour
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FNU NIKUA welcomes submissions by staff and students for publication in the newsletter. Please send your suggestions, comments or articles for consideration to [mprc@fnu.ac.fj](mailto:mprc@fnu.ac.fj)



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