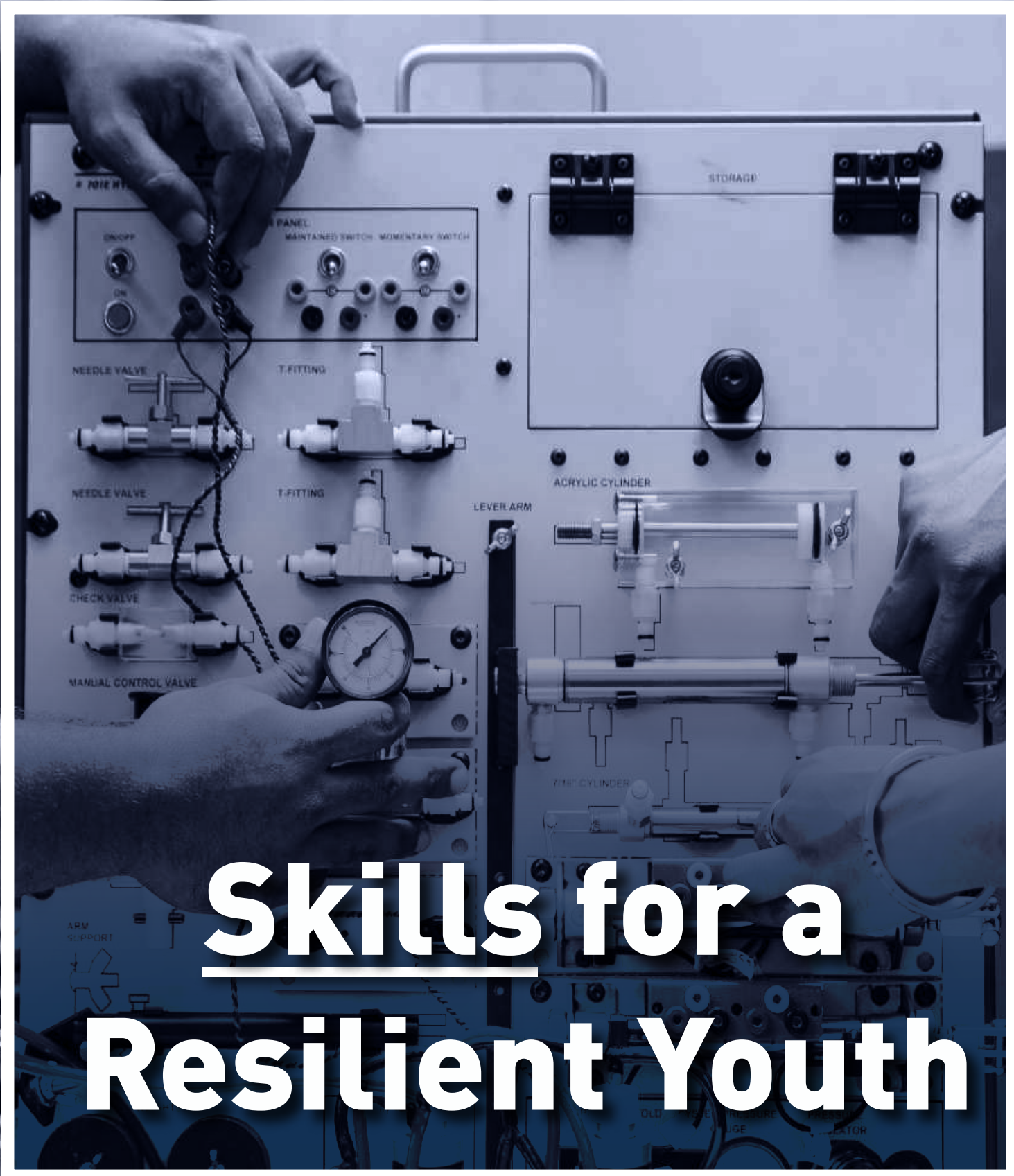




FNU UNIKUA



ISSUE NO. 07

JULY 2020

Skills for a Resilient Youth

PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS

NADAN FOLLOWS HIS CARPENTRY DREAM

Promoting the development of transferrable skills



From an educational standpoint, writing an article on ‘skills for a resilient youth’ presents a major challenge. This is because the world of work is changing so rapidly, spurred on by advances in technology, that educators have little idea of the type of jobs, and hence

skills, that will be needed in the immediate and longer-term future. These days, especially in higher education circles, it is not uncommon for academics to state that some of the specializations that students are studying may not exist by the time they graduate.

I can recall when I graduated from university in the UK, that my first job was with the British Gas Corporation and the loyal employees of this major enterprise would proudly proclaim that anyone joining British Gas, as it was known, would have a job for life. I remember as a young person in my very early 20s, that thought did not appeal to me but I can say that the statement of the loyal employees was born out in reality when numerous employees in an annual function would be celebrated for having spent their whole lives in the company. The situation I am describing here was not unusual at that time i.e., the 1970’s, when most people would have one, possibly two jobs, their whole working life.

By contrast, young people these days have often had two, three or four changes of career or employment by the time they are thirty years of age and are likely to continue having multiple turns and directions in their career paths. Added to this, is the fact stated earlier that there may be many careers that will emerge in the next few years that current education systems in Fiji and globally, have not anticipated. One example that springs to mind is a YouTube channel that my grandson watches avidly that consists of a young father playing video games with his two sons. This channel has so many subscribers that the father is reputed to be a millionaire. This is a career for him (and his sons) yet such a career would not have been heard of or even anticipated 15 to 20 years ago.

Given all this, what can I offer in terms of an insight into ‘skills for a resilient youth’? Well first, I would say that the emphasis in education, especially higher education, needs to shift from specialized professional and vocational education to the development of what may be called lifelong or transferable skills. These are the type of skills that are not professionally or vocationally dependent. For example, these are not skills that one finds in advanced marketing, accounting or computing.

These are skills in, for example, decision making, creativity, innovation, problem-solving, leadership and communication. These are skills that are transferable in the sense that they are equally as relevant to someone taking up a post in accounting as they are to one taking up a post in engineering. They are also the type of skills that are needed to create jobs from scratch and to bring about careers that currently don’t exist. The question then arises as to how higher education institutions can foster these transferable skills.

One answer is to expose students to liberal studies. Before joining FNU, I was employed in a liberal arts university in Hong Kong that was noted by employers for its ability to graduate students displaying the skill set I have described as transferable skills. A liberal arts university invariably pursues a four-year undergraduate degree curriculum that combines discipline-based study with general education or as stated earlier, liberal studies. This means, for example, that a student studying to be an accountant will also have to take and pass courses in, for instance, psychology, history, philosophy, music and cultural studies.

Exposure to these general education courses has a profound effect on students. It enables them to think beyond their specific disciplines and take a broad perspective on life and issues. Furthermore, the liberal arts curriculum forces students out of their discipline-based comfort zones into classes comprising students of various disciplines all undertaking studies that are in complete contrast with their specializations. The result is graduates who can confidently operate in and adapt to uncertain environments and have broad-based knowledge to be able to think creatively and innovatively about the issues and problems they are facing.

I am convinced that Fijian society would greatly benefit from the type of transferable skills that a liberal arts education can engender and will be looking for opportunities to begin to move in that direction in FNU.

**Professor James Pounder,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching**

Vakatawa enjoys sea career

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a global catastrophic impact. From the downturn in the world economy to massive job losses, world travel ground to a halt and the health infrastructure burdened by unprecedented levels of fatalities.

In the face of disaster, countries came together to assist each other. Trade, an essential component to the global economy, continued mainly through shipping.



Linda Fong Vakatawa

The significant role shipping transport has played in maintaining the pulse of the global trade, has amazed young seafarer Linda Fong Vakatawa, and she's proud of pursuing a career, which she described as 'rewarding'.

"The seafarers are playing a vibrant role in maintaining the flow of vital goods, such as foods, medicines and medical supplies. So I'm truly honoured to be part of this career," said Vakatawa.

Vakatawa is a Diploma in Marine Engineering student at Fiji National University's (FNU) Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA).

This also led to many seafarers being away from home for months and are unsure when they will be able to return due to travel restrictions and duty calls.

According to Vakatawa, the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the fore the sacrifices made by those in the industry as strict quarantine and call of duty saw many spend extended time at sea.

The opportunity to travel and a wide range of career paths available to graduates boosted her interest to take up a career in the maritime industry.

"Seafarers have always been an integral part of international and local trade, but they do not normally get the attention and acknowledgement that they deserve for keeping the world connected," said Vakatawa.

"This pandemic has put light onto the work that the seafarers do. Now that most parts of the world are in lockdown, people appreciate those who are in the field, making sure the world has access to essential items."

Vakatawa, who is currently an attaché with Captain Cook Cruises says she is proud of her programme choice and acknowledges her grandfather for inspiring her to pursue this career path.

"Watching my grandfather working on generators inspired me to aspire a career in the engineering field.

The beauty of studying this programme is that it provides job opportunities, both onshore and offshore."

The 24-year-old said it was a difficult transmission from high school to Uni as she was from an 'all-girls' secondary school and the Diploma in Marine Engineering programme was dominated by males.

"There were 90 percent boys in the class and everything seemed new for me. However, I made sure this served as my strength and the reason for me to push myself out of my comfort zone and compete with them to get the best results in my schoolwork."

Vakatawa said sometimes she had to deal with underestimation in her work by her colleagues but she managed to prove them otherwise by working diligently.

Her typical workday includes starting/stopping emergency generator, fill air compressor for starting of aux engines, fuel sounding, topping up of emergency generator fuel tank, filling lube oil sump, start/stop main engines and aux engines, pumping of bilges, grey and black water tanks, battery checks and so forth.

Vakatawa's daily schedule in a nutshell:

06:00hrs - Wake Up

07:00hrs - Breakfast

07:45hrs - Briefing with the engineering team

8.00hrs - Prep emergency generator for start-up and start.

08:00hrs to 12:00hrs - Maintenance work on deck

12:00hrs to 13:00hrs - Lunch break

13:30hrs - Continue with work

17:00hrs - Tools down

18:00hrs - Dinner

18:30hrs to 22:00hrs - Generator watch

22:00hrs - Shut down of the emergency generator

Reddy follows her passion



Shayukta Sharvana Reddy

(CBHTS) at Namaka Campus in Nadi.

"I've always loved cooking and baking. Through this programme, I hope to learn more and start a career, perhaps in the tourism industry," said Reddy.

According to Reddy, the guidance provided by the lecturers helps students learn quickly as well as experiment new and innovative ideas.

"Through the programme, I'm presented with the fundamental skills used in bakeries and preparing bakery products. We also are taught the baking theory and applied including weights and measures, safety and sanitation," she explained.

Reddy's elder brother who graduated with Certificate IV in Cookery, has been a positive influence. The soft-spoken Tavua teenager said, her sibling, also provides guidance, especially when they prepare for practical exams.

"My brother always shared his learning experience, and this strengthened my desire to join FNU. As a younger sibling, I rely on guidance from my brother. He encouraged me to follow my passion and create my unique experiences without being in his shadow,"

shared the former Tavua college student.

Reddy believes the wide range of programmes offered by FNU provides students with a real opportunity to enrol in the programmes that leads them to their dream career path.

"FNU provides many practical opportunities for students. I am enjoying my studies at FNU because there is a support system that ensures each student learns what is being taught."

"The programme is helping me to turn my hobby into a fully-fledged career. I am continually learning new things challenging myself and discovering new baking methods all the time," she said.

Coming from a farming background, Reddy said her father always guided and empowered her to take ownership of her future.

"My father always recognised my abilities, skills and talents and guided me to reach my full potential. He always encouraged me to focus on my passion for baking," she adds.

Reddy said FNU is preparing her for the first step towards a professional career.

The aroma of freshly baked dough and cakes always makes young Shayukta Sharvana Reddy's taste buds go into a frenzy and the desire to learn more about baking and pastry making, influenced her to join Fiji National University (FNU).

The 18-year-old enrolled in the Certificate III in Baking & Patisserie programme offered by FNU's College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies

Breaking stereotypes



Janhvi Jaishni Kant during her practical classes.

Fast cars, burning rubber and learning to service automobiles is Janhvi Jaishni Kant's passion. Dressed in oil-stained overalls, Kant said she 'feels at home' while inspecting different components of a vehicle brought in for servicing.

certain way and understand the processes used to create something," she said.

Twenty-two-year-old Kant said her mother always wanted her to work in corporate organisations, but seeing

Kant's eyes quickly dart from one component to another with her hands skillfully pointing a bright flashlight to illuminate the car parts for closer examination. At the same time, she shares the function of each of the components. Satisfied with what she has seen, she whips out a rag from the back of her pocket to wipe her hands before moving for further inspection.

"I joined FNU in 2016 to study Trade Diploma in Applied Computing, but that wasn't for me. I worked for a bit and then re-joined FNU in 2019 to study Certificate IV in Automotive Engineering (Light Machinery) at Ba Campus," said Kant.

"I took-up automotive engineering studies as I had a great interest in vehicle design. I like to find out why things are done in a

her passion for automotive engineering; she encouraged her daughter to follow her dreams.

"My biggest strength and motivator is my mother. She always pushed me to study at FNU because of the community feel and the great facilities. I had attended FNU Open Day and found out what the course would cover and the facilities that were available to students. It gave me an insight into what the study environment was like at FNU," she explained.

Getting back to studies was a struggle for Kant, but she managed to overcome this through guidance from her lecturers and instructors.

"The University is providing me with lots of support. I can discuss problems with lecturers smoothly and efficiently. They allow me to discuss any questions I have and encourage me to keep learning. I have become more independent and self-motivated since starting my course," she stressed.

The former Xavier College student said the programme has a big focus on industry-ready skills and the skills are preparing her for assessments and equipping her to work after graduation.

"The lecturers have pushed me out of my comfort zone, preparing me for my profession. Now I feel I have the skills to carry my duties as a mechanic. I can't imagine where I would be if it weren't for FNU," she said.

While Kant is aware of the gender imparity, she's striding towards shattering the glass ceiling.

"My opinion is that anyone can do this programme, whether you are male or female, it doesn't make you any different, and it certainly hasn't stopped me wanting to pursue a career in automotive engineering," she said.

Mohammed joins his family trade of engineering

Having three elder siblings plying their craft in the field of engineering, made it an easy decision for Mohammed Fazim to follow in their footsteps.

The 23-year-old who is nearing completion of a Certificate IV in Electronics Engineering programme from FNU's College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST), has enrolled in the Electrical Wireman's course offered by the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC).

Upon the completion of three short courses, he is now enrolled in the NTPC's Electronics and Electrical Engineering Certificate of Attainment programme. Fazim aims to complete this programme, undertake a one and a half year of industry experience before being assessed for a Class III Tradesperson qualification through a trade test.

"As a kid, I was always interested in electrical and electronic stuff. I would open up my electronic toys and put them back together," Fazim said.

"I am quite happy that I chose to pursue a career in Electrical and Electronics as I always wanted to work with my hands and be in an industry where I get to sweat it out."

Fazim attributed his passion for engineering to the influence of his siblings and parents who are retired school teachers. His elder brothers were aircraft engineers, architectural engineers and an IT engineer respectively.

"They know that I love the electronic and electrical field and always encouraged me to pursue my dreams."

Fazim is currently employed at Exotic Fiji Limited, as a technician. He is grateful to his employer for allowing him to attend classes during working hours at NTPC in Narere.

He said being trained by experienced instructors at NTPC and attaining the relevant qualifications is a step in the right direction in fulfilling his dream of becoming a licensed electrician. He hopes to start his own business in the future.



Mohammed Fazim



Akanisi Tikinimasei

Electrical engineering is Tikinimasei's forte

Spending time at her father's workplace intrigued young Akanisi Tikinimasei's mind, and she became more inquisitive about how old electronic gadgets could be repaired, and how the engines roared back to life.

This curiosity strengthened further as Tikinimasei grew older. After convincing her father she enrolled in the Certificate IV in Electrical Engineering programme offered at Fiji National University's (FNU) Ba Campus.

The Nadarivatu lass said she was on cloud nine when her father agreed to support and guide her in her choice of career.

"I had initially enrolled in a teaching programme at FNU, however, I knew my calling was in electrical and after discussing this with my dad I enrolled in this programme," said Tikinimasei.

The youngster is a firm believer that pursuing one's passion will ensure the individual not only enjoys their career but is also productive and innovative. The 23-year-old said she chose to pursue a blue-collar career as she always wanted to do things 'hands-on'.

She's the lone female student out of a class of 27 students.

"At first, I found it difficult to cope with being the only female, but I challenged myself to work hard. This also made me realise my potential and capabilities."

According to Tikinimasei, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) teaches students to think and be innovative.

"Practical sessions are my favourite part of coming to Uni. During the practical sessions, we work on projects while being supervised by our lecturers. We also interact with each other and learn a lot more that way."

Tikinimasei, who is a former Xavier College student, shares maternal links to Muana-I-Ra, Vutia, Rewa and through this article she would like to inspire females from this province to pursue careers which they desire.

Tikinimasei encourages young women to challenge themselves to stand out from the crowd and follow their career interests with passion and vigour.

"At times we (females) think of ourselves as weak – but the fact is we can do just as much as the opposite gender as long as we have the will and the audacity to strive for excellence in achieving our goals."

"We must not let gender stereotyping limit the development of our natural talents and abilities."

"Instead, we must work towards breaking the masculine stereotyping about certain jobs through consistently daring ourselves to follow our career goals."

"I strongly believe that staying focused and keeping your efforts consistent overtime can assist you in enduring the hurdles that occur on your path to achieving your goals."

"Being honest, ethical and operating with integrity will be great factors in creating your success stories," she added.

Tikinimasei aims to graduate next year.

Kumar has staff safety at heart



Shivani Kumar

Self-belief and perseverance have been the pillars of strength for Shivani Kumar in achieving her educational dreams despite facing personal challenges, including the demise of her father.

Kumar said her academic goals and ambitions were 'up in the air' soon after she commenced studying Trade Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) in 2015 following the loss of her mentor.

"I was completely shattered. I postponed my studies and took a break to understand about my life better. I started working to assist my family financially," said Kumar.

"During this phase, my family was very supportive and encouraged me to refocus on my studies. My strength is my mother, Sarita Devi, who has always been there for me. It's not easy being a working mother, but she kept on pushing me to do better and to never stop believing in myself. She is my inspiration," said the 24-year-old Kumar.

After a two year break, Kumar rejoined FNU, determined to fulfil her dream in the memory for her father.

"I was easily able to adapt well into the university atmosphere despite the study gap as FNU provided me with a flexible learning environment which was student-friendly and the experienced lecturers also made my studies enjoyable," she added.

The hardworking FNU alumna is now an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) assistant at the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF).

WAF is the national provider for water and wastewater services, and its operations are spread all over Fiji, including the maritime islands.

"The knowledge and skills gained through my study have enabled me to work in this multi-facet organisation with

people of various cultural and professions in enhancing their understanding of OHS," highlighted Kumar.

"OHS deals with all aspects of physical, mental and social health and safety in the workplace. I love working with people and ensuring that everyone can work in a safe environment every day. When workers are safe the workplace productivity increases as well."

Kumar said working at WAF is fun and rewarding as she's able to learn new things from experienced staff and at the same time share her knowledge with them regarding workplace safety.

According to Kumar, the thought of ensuring employees return home safely to their loved ones inspired her to pursue Trade Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) at FNU.

"I would encourage more people to enrol in this programme as there are plenty of career opportunities available. It is an exemplary choice for someone looking to stay in a particular industry but wanting to expand their skills and employability further," she added.

Kumar recollected the invaluable advice she received when she was studying, which she uses to inspire prospective students.

"Life is not always easy therefore you need patience and persistence to achieve your goals. Often, we tend to give up easily because we still look at how far we have to go in life instead of how far we have come. So work hard to achieve your goals," she added.

"My future goal is to develop more skills and enhance more knowledge so I can climb my way up the ranks and become one of the managers in any organisation," said Kumar.



Christina Singh and Shahil Narayan are undertaking NTPC's Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning courses to supplement their established white-collar careers.

Youths turn to TVET courses in this 'new normal'

pursue part-time studies through the Fiji National University's (FNU) National Training and Productive Centre (NTPC).

Shahil Narayan, a Chief Accountant and Christina Singh, a Senior Conveyancing Officer, are studying Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning (RAC) at NTPC in Narere. They are enrolled in one of many evening classes which are specifically designed to cater for students who have commitments during the day.

The two enrolled in the RAC course before the COVID-19 lockdown and feel vindicated of their desire in acquiring a new skill set. They are encouraging fellow youths to be resilient in the face of the unprecedented changes adding acquiring of technical skills will provide them with an added advantage when seeking employment or even open doors to self-entrepreneurship.

"The world has rapidly changed over the past four to six months, and the goalposts have shifted," Narayan said.

"I feel that the previously accepted way of just pursuing one career path is not safe anymore given the many redundancies faced across all previously safe careers around the world," he added.

Singh, on the other hand, said the impact of COVID-19 was far-reaching which resulted in unemployment, economic and social challenges. She said it was fortunate that FNU switched to the online mode which enabled students to continue with their learning while NTPC offered free a free online Business & Computing Fundamentals course.

"Many jobs are in countries with lockdowns are not

deemed to be essential, however, there is a need for frontline health workers such as doctors, nurses and of course tradies," Singh said.

Sharing her 'husband's experience who RAC technician, Singh said that he was always busy and on-call during the lockdown period.

"While businesses and schools shut down, the nation still required RAC technicians and other blue-collar professionals to fix their mobile refrigeration units that carry goods around the country or those who carry out maintenance work in our hospital," Singh said.

Singh has set her sights on gaining experience in the RAC field from a business perspective. Despite having eight years of work in the legal field, Singh believes her future lies in the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Industry. She's keen to start a Refrigeration and Air Conditioning business in future.

"Since our country is promoting small business, this is an excellent field for those who wish to become an entrepreneur. After gaining a bit of real-world experience you can comfortably take in steps to become your own boss," she said.

The World Youth Skills Day which was marked on 15 July, with the 'Skills for a Resilient Youth in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond' was quite fitting said Narayan.

Fijian youths are creative, have high enthusiasm and enterprising according to Narayan. He said youths are now open-minded and can make informed decisions regarding their career choices.

For further information about NTPC's programmes, call 3311 004, or send a message on info.ntpc@fnu.ac.fj or via facebook @ntpcfiji

Acquiring new skills, knowledge, and the ability to quickly adapt and grow in unexpected circumstances is one of the key lessons being learnt as the world grapples with the devastating impacts of COVID-19.

Many Fijians have realised the importance of trade qualifications and have taken it up upon themselves to

Moli strives for success

Young Unaisi Moli has changed her outlook towards life and prioritised her goals following the sudden demise of her mentor and father. The once easy-going Moli is now determined to further her studies and carve a successful career.

The twenty-year-old Nawaka villager enrolled in the Certificate II in Cookery at Fiji National University's (FNU) Technical College of Fiji (TCF), Dr Shaukat Ali Sahib Campus, Nadi.

Moli spent a year at home tending to family needs and thought that she would not be able to further her studies. However, when staff from FNU TCF visited her village, she was surprised to learn that there was a pathway for her to resume studies and attain the necessary skills needed to accomplish her aspiration of becoming a chef.

An emotional Moli said it was her first day as a Year 13 student when she lost her father, former flying Fijian, Manasa Qoro. But she is thankful to have had an opportunity to pursue studies which are preparing her for employment prospects despite not completing her secondary education.

"Continuing my studies has exposed me to a lot more things. I am introduced to new topics,



Unaisi Moli

and this will help me in building a career in the culinary world that I truly enjoy."

"After meeting the staff, I realised that a certificate could help me land a better job and put me further ahead in developing a long term career. By enrolling in the programme, my self-confidence, attitude, and self-esteem have improved. The programme is allowing me to reach my full potential as a productive member of society," she said.

Moli's advise to youths is to continue their education.

"Remember, the purpose of your education is to help you prepare for a good job afterwards. If you stay focused on this point, you will find the right path to follow," she adds.

"I am hungry to build my culinary skills and strive to improve the quality of my work. My instructors have instilled in me that every task, no matter how small, should be done with passion and an eye on perfection. In cooking, everything should be done with a commitment to excellence," she explained.

After finishing studies, Moli plans to gain work experience and in future set-up a restaurant business.

Domonatani learns new skills at NTPC



Amani Domonatani

Optimism runs deep in the veins of Amani Domonatani who is one of many unfortunate Fijians that have been adversely affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the former tourism industry worker is re-skilling himself at the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) to ensure he can provide for his family.

Domonatani was employed as a landscaper and handyman at a Hotel along the Coral Coast before the pandemic struck. Despite the setback, he set his sights on undertaking

training in electronics and electrical engineering after being encouraged by his former supervisors.

“Before the lockdown, I was discussing with my wife, who is also in the hospitality industry, that I need to get formal skills recognition as an electrician as it will improve our quality of life because people with formally certified skills get more wages,” he said.

As Domonatani commenced his Electronics and Electrical Engineering training modules at NTPC, the lockdown occurred. This didn’t discourage him and kept himself busy learning more about the courses.

After the brief break, Domonatani is glad to be back on campus and continuing his learning at NTPC in Narere.

Domonatani has called on fellow youths and those who have been impacted by the pandemic to refocus and pursue new ideas and career opportunities.

“I feel for those who have lost jobs in the industry. Many I know have returned to their villages or have taken up farming and are now thriving by using their traditional skills,” he said.

“Those youths in urban centres, I appeal to you, if you want to get formal skills or training and have the funds and resources to do so, please do not wait. The time is now to study and take action. If you don’t pursue something with full focus, you will not be able to attain it,” he said

Domonatani is determined to complete his Electronics and Electrical Engineering course before proceeding on industrial attachment and employment.

Domonatani says he will focus on completing his Electronics and Electrical Engineering courses and immediately seek industry attachment on its conclusion, as he needs a year and a half of industry experience before he can be assessed for a Class III Tradesperson qualification via trade test.

Prakash pursues commerce and management studies

Learning basic accounting principles and the importance of maintaining strict control on finances, led young Rajneesh Prakash to quickly develop an affection for commerce studies while attending high school.

Prakash grew up in Raranibulu, a rural community in Labasa. After completing high school, she moved to Suva to pursue higher education. She enrolled in the Trade Diploma in Business Accounting at the Fiji National University (FNU) in 2007.

“Accounting was my favourite subject in school, and I decided to pursue higher learning in this field,” she said.

“I chose to study at FNU because of fee affordability. I’m grateful to my sibling who provided financial assistance towards my studies,” she added.

Prakash currently works as a clerical officer at the Ministry of Agriculture headquarters in Raiwaqa, Suva.

“The best part about studying accounting is that as long as there are businesses in the world, the need for accountants will always be there,” she said.

“My studies enabled me to learn how to prepare and examine financial records, the skill which I utilise in my everyday work.”

“Everything I was taught whether it was organising financial records, preparing tax returns, debit and credit entries, or even balancing the ledger accounts, has been efficient and has greatly assisted me in my career,” she added.

Prakash said the motivation from her sister Reena Prasad, kept her focused on her self-development.

Reflecting on her student life, Prakash said, “Coming from a farming background in Labasa to the Suva city, urban life was itself a challenge. I applied for a multi-ethnic scholarship the same year and was successful, however, I still needed funds for everyday living.”

“I remember taking up part-time jobs so I could earn some extra cash for my bus fare and other expenses,” she continued.

Prakash graduated from FNU in 2009; however, the desire to keep learning did not stop there. She decided to upgrade her qualification and enrolled in the Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting and Management programme.

“Right now, I am completing my Bachelor’s programme at FNU. I understand one should never stop learning. For me, this programme is challenging yet exciting,” she mentioned.

“Earlier this week, I attended my first class for this semester. I met some new people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. This improves people skills. I always look forward to our evening class which most of the time ends up having dinner and discussions with colleagues.”

“The lecturers and the course coordinators are also very supportive and are always available for guidance, where needed. I look forward to this semester and I can’t wait to complete my degree.”

Sharing her experience as a full-time working mother, Prakash said: “Life is all about peaks and valleys.”

“It has never been easy to work, look after your family, raise children and study at the same time. However, with concentration and hard work, nothing is impossible.”

Her advice to current and future students is to stay focused on studies.



Rajneesh Prakash

Nadan follows his carpentry dream

Growing up, Rahul Nadan, was always curious about the loud sounds emitting out of construction sites, the workers carrying tools and heavy equipment and sparks from welding rods. Nadan's inquisitiveness continued as he grew older, and it wasn't surprising that he pursued technical and vocational studies at the Fiji National University (FNU).

"I always had a keen interest in buildings. Even as a child, whenever I entered or saw a building, I would admire its craftsmanship and wonder how it was possible to make such pieces of art. For me, buildings are practical art – you don't only admire them, but can use them too."

Youngest of three siblings, Nadan was born and raised in Labasa. He attended Shiri Guru Nanak Khalsa Primary School and Shiri Guru Nanak Khalsa Secondary School.

Knowing exactly where his interest lay from a young age, Nadan knew what he wanted to do after completing high school.

Education and Career

After completing his Year 12 studies, Nadan enrolled in the Trade Certificate IV in Carpentry and Joinery programme at FNU's College of Engineering, Science and Technology (CEST), Labasa Campus.

"The affordable fee structure and its proximity to my home were the main reasons why I enrolled at FNU. This was economical for my family as we grew up on a farm," he shared.

"The practical component, which is compulsory for FNU programmes and experienced staff enables students to learn better. Even now, some days I sit and recall the good memories I had with my friends there, especially last-minute study at the library."

Nadan completed the Trade Certificate IV programme in 2011 and started working for Hanif Industries Ltd (Joinery and Construction Company) as an Assistant Joiner. After a couple of months, he was promoted to the position of Joiner.

"My role was general joinery work and furniture making."

After a year, he joined Sharnik Construction as the Construction Supervisor.

"I was more interested in buildings and bigger construction work; therefore, I grabbed this opportunity when the job was offered to me."

His work at Sharnik Construction included day-to-day supervision of specific construction projects, preparing reports, designs and drawings, ordering materials, managing projects and ensuring that work was carried out according to approved drawing specification.

During the seven years Nadan spent at the company, he completed another qualification from FNU by 2014 – Trade Diploma in Building programme.

Sharing his FNU experience, Nadan said, "I have had a wonderful experience at FNU both as a full and part-time



student. The lecturers provided tremendous support, and I never felt that I was being left behind even as a part-time student. I received support and guidance which allowed me to complete my studies successfully."

In 2019, Nadan received an opportunity to share his expertise with others. He applied to teach at Technical College of Fiji (TCF). He was successful and is currently a Classroom Assistant at the Nukuloa Technical College which is now under FNU.

His job is to teach Carpentry theory, carry out Carpentry practical, and, provide classroom supervision to students.

"I like my current job as I get to teach and motivate builders to be the best tradesmen. Being able to share the knowledge I have is a truly satisfying experience."

"It is a privilege to be in the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) sector. I believe TVET is essential as it provides knowledge and skills for employment using formal, non-formal and informal learning."

Nadan strongly believes that learning is lifelong. He enrolled in another programme – Higher Education Certificate Teaching in Technical and Vocational Education and Training at FNU. He is currently pursuing this and hopes to complete it soon.

"I believe we should keep studying and gain new skills. For me, this programme will complement my current work experience."

Nadan dedicates his success to his parents, friends and FNU.

"My parents raised me to work hard. They supported and guided me. I was also lucky to be blessed with amazing friends who always stood by me. Of course, where I am today would not be possible without the prestigious institution (FNU) that imparted the wealth of knowledge I have today."

Words of Wisdom

Nadan loves to share knowledge and empower others. His advice to all students is to learn as much as possible and share their knowledge with others.

"Never stop learning. Your studies have no limit so never let anything stop you from learning, explore more and work hard on achieving your goals. Make use of the resources available around you and don't forget to share your knowledge to help and inspire others."

His top three tips for graduates starting in their careers is to be attentive, adapt to the nature of your workplace and to maintain good communication.