



## FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

2025 FNU Conference on Resetting TVET & Higher Education

# 2025 FNU Conference on Resetting TVET & Higher Education

**Summary Report | 16th – 17th January 2025**

**Compiled by**

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**FIJI NATIONAL  
UNIVERSITY**

**2025 FNU Conference on Resetting TVET  
&  
Higher Education**



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## 1.0 Executive Summary

All national universities worldwide work closely with government to deliver its mission. Relationship between the Government and the National University is 'quid- pro quo'. The 2025 FNU Conference on Resetting TVET & Higher Education, held on January 16-17, 2025, at the Sofitel Resort & Spa in Nadi, is strategically designed to reset and align closely the Fiji National University's (FNU's) delivery with the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Vualiku Program objectives. The University will edit and transform its current and future reform objectives and the government will change its strategies and support for the University. National Universities like the FNU are expected to drive economic growth as shown by South Korea, Singapore and China given that the Government invests more in the National University -this leads to a desirable and high-quality institution.

The conference delved into the transformation of skills development and future workforce readiness by synergising Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) with Higher Education initiatives, thereby fostering national economic growth. It convened government policymakers, industry leaders, academic representatives, and key stakeholders to collaboratively tackle the prevailing challenges within FNU's education delivery to meet workforce needs better. TVET is called to increasingly deal with huge outmigration of skills and at FNU the TVET sector of the University (all colleges, and NTPC) have been delivering and are focusing on doing a lot better including meeting increasing demands from Nauru and other Pacific Is nations. Higher Education is also pivotal especially the call for R&D to support all sectors of government in ensuring Evidence led policy making.

The Conference confirms the central role education plays in national development and given intense rates of out-migration, reskilling and upskilling and more deliveries of TVET and HE courses have been called for albeit in a more inclusive, accessible and technologically enhanced ways. The role of the Fiji National University to meet the NDP goals and the Vualiku Tourism Development Program for Vanua Levu goals of the government are identified as pivotal and so is the appropriate resourcing of TVET and HE to match international and local standards and needs of the market. Collaborations and new ways of engagement has also been called for and includes AI and IT enhancements, education models that promote entrepreneurship, as well as an enhanced community wellbeing and development foci. Collaborations in research and identification of gaps between education delivery and workforce needs is also identified as an area to address.

Perhaps what should now happen is the need to do policy proposals around government's identified goals (for the NDP and the Vualiku Program) – Some of these could be an addendum into the FNU's SP for 2025-2026 but more especially as we draft the FNU SP for 2027-2037. These policy proposals the university can do but policy is best if it addresses these seven elements:

**\*Simplicity:** The impact can easily be understood by the public and media;

**\*Clarity:** The purpose/objectives of the policy are clear;

**\*Impact:** The policy leads to a clear benefit for society/the economy/the target group;

**\*Politics:** It is politically feasible and (ideally!) politically beneficial and popular;

**\*Delivery:** It is realistic and deliverable ;

**\*Credibility:** The policy is built on robust evidence, drawing on research, data and practice;

**\*Inspiring:** Captures hearts and minds . [from Billy Davies 2024 (Dec.9th): The role of universities in delivering government's new mission.

<https://gw4.ac.uk/news/the-role-of-universities-in-delivering-governments-new-mission/>.







## 2.0 Day 1: FNU Conference on Resetting TVET & Higher Education

### 2.1 Keynote Address: Deputy Prime Minister: Manoa Kamikamica

#### 2.1.1 Summary of Speech

**a / Education and National Development:** The Minister focused on the critical function of education in shaping Fiji's future, with a specific focus on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education frameworks. It highlights the urgent need to revitalize vocational, training programs, which have historically suffered from inadequate funding and neglect under previous administrations. Furthermore, the Minister outlines **the Fiji National University's (FNU) central contribution to the government's National Development Plan (NDP) for 2025–2029, along with its alignment with Vision 2050 initiatives.**

**b / Government Initiatives for Economic Growth:** The government is prioritizing the development of a skilled workforce to mitigate labor shortages in essential sectors, including construction, agriculture, information and communication technology (ICT), and manufacturing. There is an emphasis on stimulating economic growth through key industries such as construction, educational tourism, renewable energy, and agricultural advancement. The 2025 budget reflects a substantial investment in education and skills development, underscoring the critical role that education plays in fostering national prosperity and economic resilience.

**c / Challenges and Opportunities:** Fiji's economy currently exhibits a significant dependency on foreign labor, primarily due to the emigration of skilled professionals. This underscores an urgent need for the implementation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs aimed at bridging the skills gap. In response, the government is actively pursuing economic diversification by fostering the development of new industries, such as prawn farming, and enhancing research and development initiatives in concert with educational institutions like the Fiji National University (FNU). These efforts are crucial for building a self-sustaining workforce and promoting innovation within the local economy.

**d / TVET and Higher Education System Development:** To enhance Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), it is crucial to align educational frameworks with international standards and the specific needs of the local labor market. A thorough evaluation of existing educational policies and curricula is necessary to ensure their relevance to current industry demands. Emphasis should be placed on developing resilient and adaptable educational systems that leverage technology and prioritize lifelong learning. This approach will enable these systems to effectively respond to emerging global trends and facilitate workforce adaptability in a rapidly changing environment.

**e / Partnerships and Collaboration:** There is an urgent need to enhance partnerships among government entities, educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and development partners. It is imperative to establish an integrated ecosystem that aligns educational outcomes with labor market demands and fosters sustainable economic growth. This collaboration should focus on synergizing curricula with industry requirements, ensuring that skill development is directly linked to employment opportunities, thereby promoting a cohesive framework for economic advancement.

**f / Vualiku Tourism Development:** FNU's engagement with the Vualiku programme focuses on enhancing the socioeconomic landscape of Fiji's northern division, prioritizing sustainable development frameworks, and fostering community-based growth initiatives.

#### 2.1.2. Key Takeaways:

- i. **Strengthen TVET Programs with Appropriate Levels of Resources:** Design and implement curricula that are closely aligned with industry specifications to address critical skill gaps and meet the economic demands of key sectors such as construction, agriculture, and information and communications technology (ICT). Develop state-of-the-art infrastructure and allocate resources towards the latest technologies to deliver premium training programs.

*\*[Necessary to have appropriate support from Government immediately - will continue to request specific funding to address this gap. Will also continue to pursue & work with partners on AI/ICT Centre for FNU]*

- ii. **Foster Entrepreneurial Mindsets:** Promote the development of entrepreneurial skills in students, fostering a mindset geared towards becoming innovators and job creators, rather than merely entering the job market as seekers. This approach should emphasize entrepreneurship-focused education that equips learners with the necessary tools, knowledge, and mindset to identify opportunities, create value and drive economic growth through their ventures.

*\*[A way forward perhaps may see the FNU build/develop Business Incubation Centres for graduates and others - This will have government/philanthropy/ funding support]*



iii. **Collaborate on Education Tourism:** Investigate and develop strategic initiatives to attract international students to Fiji for educational tourism, contributing to economic growth and diversification.  
 \*[In 2025, we are beginning this in earnest with a planned trip with Australian collaborators – 'Study Pacific' to India]

iv. **Develop Strategic Partnerships:** Foster strategic partnerships with global research entities such as Lincoln University and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation to advance research and development initiatives. Enhance collaborations with industry stakeholders to align academic programs with the skill sets required in the labor market, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for current and future demands.

[Between 2023- 2025 February, we have signed 58 MOUs/MOAs to address this element]. This includes the FNU-Monash University PACT (2023-2027).

v. **Invest in Research and Development:**

Establish advanced Research and Development Centres/institutes that facilitate innovation and stimulate economic expansion through cutting-edge research, collaboration with industry stakeholders, and the commercialization of new technologies.

These Centres/ institutes should focus on interdisciplinary approaches to tackle complex challenges and leverage emerging trends to enhance competitiveness and productivity in key sectors.

[At FNU we are beginning to ensure this is done in 2025 for all Colleges as headed by PC-R&I]

vi. **Ensure Inclusive and Resilient Education Systems:**

Implement strategies to ensure that curricula remain responsive and adaptable to both emerging global dynamics and localized trends.

Promote initiatives that support lifelong learning, leveraging technology to improve educational accessibility and quality for all citizens of Fiji.

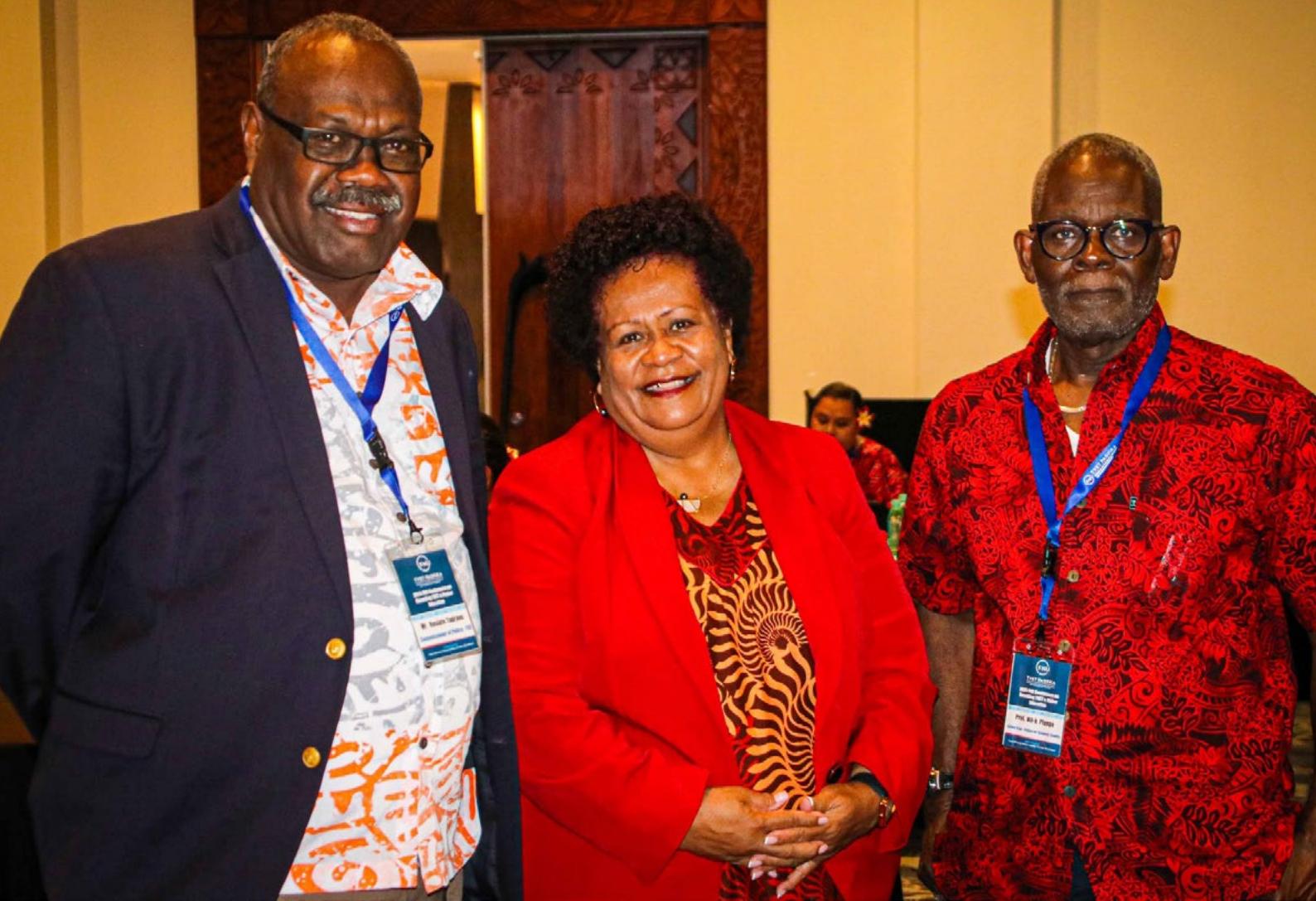
[The launching of the FNU Foundation in April, 2025 should help here]

vii. **Contribute to Community Development:**

Advocate for initiatives such as the Vualiku tourism development program, which aims to enhance economic opportunities in marginalized regions while fostering sustainable growth practices. This program employs targeted strategies to address socio-economic disparities and promote resilient community development through responsible tourism.

[FNU will identify a number of projects to address this in 2025-one per college at least]







### 3.0 Session 1: National Development Plan (NDP) Document & TVET and HE Integration

**Speaker: Professor Nii-K Plange**

#### 3.1 Summary: Speaker: Professor Nii-K Plange

- i. **Strategic Contributions to National Development:** The Fiji National University (FNU) is instrumental in advancing the objectives outlined in the government's National Development Plan (NDP) 2025–2029 and Vision 2050. Its initiatives are crucial for the reformation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education, ensuring alignment with Fiji's projected socio-economic requirements.
- ii. **Enhancement of TVET Capacities:** FNU prioritizes the enhancement of TVET, which is vital for addressing the skills deficit in critical sectors such as construction, agriculture, manufacturing, information and communication technology (ICT), and aviation. This focus is particularly pertinent given the ongoing shortage of skilled labor compounded by workforce migration trends.
- iii. **Alignment with Economic Development Frameworks:** The strategic initiatives undertaken by FNU are designed to align with broader economic imperatives, including the diversification of the economy, the promotion of sustainable development practices, and the encouragement of innovation via training programs designed to meet industry standards and needs.
- iv. **Collaborative Partnerships for Economic Growth:** FNU is committed to strengthening collaborative partnerships with local and international educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and governmental entities. This collaboration is essential to ensure curriculum relevance, promote research and development, and create pathways for employment in emerging sectors.
- v. **Commitment to Community and Regional Advancements:** FNU's involvement in initiatives such as the Vualiku tourism development project in Fiji's northern division reflects its dedication to fostering community and regional development. By leveraging educational resources and expertise, FNU aims to uplift marginalized communities and drive sustainable growth in these areas.

#### 3.1.1 Key Takeaways:

- i. **Curriculum Development Aligned with Industry Needs:** Revise and synchronize educational curricula to meet the specific skill requirements of the labor market, with a focus on critical sectors such as construction, agriculture, information and communication technology (ICT), and manufacturing.
- ii. **Expansion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Programs:** Broaden the scope of TVET offerings to address the skill gaps in essential industries, thereby minimizing dependence on foreign labor and ensuring that a greater number of Fijians are equipped for local job opportunities.
- iii. **Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations:** Forge alliances with international educational institutions and industry stakeholders to enhance research and development initiatives, elevate training standards, and create expanded employment avenues for graduates.
- iv. **Integration of Technological Advancements and Innovation:** Allocate resources towards the acquisition of modern technology and the development of infrastructure that fosters innovative learning environments, ensuring that the Fiji National University (FNU) delivers a world-class education and training experience.
- v. **Community and Regional Development Engagement:** Proactively participate in community and regional development projects, such as the Vualiku initiative, which seeks to strengthen local economies and offer education-driven solutions tailored for rural populations.
- vi. **Emphasis on Lifelong Learning Paradigms:** Advocate for lifelong learning frameworks that promote continuous education and establish flexible, adaptable pathways, equipping learners with the skills necessary to excel in an ever-evolving global context.

#### 3.2. Panelist 1 : Niranjan Chettiar

**Dual Sector Universities as Catalysts for National Development:** The Fiji National

University (FNU), as a dual-sector institution, is strategically positioned to support national growth objectives outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP). This is achieved through a focus on workforce development, technological advancement, empowerment initiatives, sustainability practices, and promoting social equity.

**Addressing Workforce Challenges and Skill Deficiencies:** The persistent skilled labor shortages, exacerbated by emigration trends toward nations such as Australia and New Zealand, necessitate immediate intervention.



A targeted strategy is required to bridge the skills gap through the implementation of community-based training initiatives and fostering partnerships with local industries. Furthermore, harnessing the expertise of individuals with prior industry experience, such as Form 5 graduates, alongside engaging post-retirement professionals, could significantly alleviate current skill deficiencies.

**Technological Integration in Training Programs:** FNU must prioritize substantial investment in cutting-edge equipment and technology to ensure that students are exposed to the practical tools and systems they will encounter in the workplace. This approach is critical in addressing the existing “productivity gap.” The educational framework should shift from merely preparing students to be “job ready” to cultivating a workforce that can achieve high productivity levels with a brief transition period of work experience.

#### **Sustainability and Entrepreneurship:**

FNU must incorporate sustainability principles into its curricula, equipping students with a comprehensive understanding of climate change and sustainable development as integral components of their education.

Furthermore, the institution should foster entrepreneurial initiatives by establishing incubators and accelerators that empower students to transition from job seekers to business leaders.

#### **Translation of Research into National Solutions:**

It is imperative for FNU and similar universities to align research projects—particularly in the fields of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and agriculture—with national challenges, ensuring that outcomes yield practical, implementable solutions for the country.

Universities must prioritize the conversion of research findings into actionable, nationally relevant projects to maximize their real-world impact.

#### **Policy Recommendations:**

There is a pressing need to advocate for the creation of a dedicated section for Higher Education and TVET, distinct from the Ministry of Education. Such a ministry would facilitate the development and implementation of targeted policies and solutions tailored specifically to higher education and TVET institutions, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of the sector.

#### **3.2.1 Key Takeaways: Niranjan Chettiar**

##### *i. Bridge Workforce Gaps:*

- Development of Advanced Training Pathways: Establish structured training pathways for Form 5 graduates with relevant industry experience, enabling them to achieve advanced certification levels.
- Launch initiatives that leverage the expertise of post-retirement professionals, facilitating their contributions to the workforce through training programs or transition into second careers.

##### *ii. Enhancement of Technological Training*

- Allocate resources towards acquiring state-of-the-art tools and equipment, ensuring students gain exposure to the latest technologies pertinent to their fields.
- Introducing targeted programs aimed at enhancing the productivity of graduates within their initial six months of employment, fostering a smoother transition to the workforce.

##### *iii. Promotion of Sustainability and Entrepreneurship:*

- Integrate sustainability principles into all academic curricula to align educational outcomes with national objectives for sustainable development and climate change mitigation.
- Develop business incubators and accelerators within the Fiji National University (FNU) framework to drive entrepreneurship, with a specific focus on supporting community-based industries.

##### *iv. Translating Research into Practical Application:*

- Ensure that research endeavors align with national development priorities, with a focus on generating outcomes that are scalable and address real-world challenges.
- Foster partnerships among universities, industries, and governmental bodies to effectively implement successful research initiatives.

##### *v. Advocacy for a Dedicated Ministry of Higher Education and TVET:*

- Propose the establishment of a specialized Ministry of Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to enhance policy coordination and streamline efforts in higher education and vocational training sectors.



### 3.3 Panelist 2: Ravitesh Singh

**The Integral Role of Healthcare in TVET:** highlighted the critical yet frequently underestimated role of healthcare within the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) framework. Recognizing that not all individuals can access advanced medical education, the discussion underscored the need for alternative pathways for those dedicated to healthcare careers.

**TVET and Workforce Preparedness:** A proposal was introduced for a new TVET initiative titled “Steve Katrin Clinical Care Support.” This program is designed to equip individuals who may not meet the rigorous academic criteria for direct entry into traditional healthcare degrees with the necessary skills to serve in healthcare roles. The program will culminate in a Certificate III qualification and culminate in a hands-on hospital practicum, ensuring that graduates are adequately prepared for immediate employment. This initiative directly addresses the escalating demand for qualified healthcare personnel.

**Innovative Career Trajectories:** The speaker advocated for the establishment of career trajectories for academically disadvantaged students exhibiting potential. Through participation in a TVET program, these individuals can acquire essential practical competencies and later pursue higher education as mature students, facilitating a steady influx of qualified healthcare professionals. This approach is intended to mitigate potential talent shortages in healthcare fields notorious for high emigration rates, such as nursing and medicine, particularly to countries like Australia and New Zealand.

**Global Context and Significance:** This TVET healthcare model presents not only a solution for Fiji's workforce challenges but also serves as a potential blueprint for other Pacific nations. The overarching objective is to uphold superior healthcare standards while simultaneously addressing workforce deficiencies, ensuring that the core values of compassion and empathy inherent in healthcare practices remain intact.

#### 3.3.1 Key Takeaways:

- I. **Develop a Certificate III Program:** Implement a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) program targeting individuals who do not achieve the 90% academic threshold but possess a strong interest in the healthcare sector. The curriculum will combine theoretical foundations with substantial hands-on experience through structured hospital practicums, ensuring participants gain practical skills essential for healthcare delivery.
- II. **Create Pathways for Mature Entrants:** Develop clear educational pathways for graduates of the TVET program to facilitate entry into advanced healthcare education, such as the Fiji School of Nursing and the Fiji School of Medicine. This initiative aims to support mature individuals in pursuing higher education later in their careers, leveraging their practical experience as an asset.
- III. **Address Workforce Shortages:** Implement strategies to mitigate the brain drain currently impacting the healthcare sector by promoting localized training programs for healthcare professionals. This approach aims to retain talent within Fiji while equipping practitioners to meet both national and global healthcare operational standards.
- IV. **Incorporate Practical Experience into Training:** Ensure that the TVET program emphasizes significant practical experience through hospital practicums. This focus will enhance graduates' workforce readiness and minimize the duration required for on-the-job training, thus bridging the gap between education and practical application.
- V. **Inspire Broader Regional Adoption:** The successful implementation of this program in Fiji can serve as a blueprint for other Pacific nations, demonstrating how a well-structured TVET approach can effectively tackle healthcare workforce challenges while upholding high patient care and safety standards.

### 3.4. Panelist 3: Edward Bernard

**National Development Plan (NDP) Aspirations for 2050:** Fiji has set an ambitious target to increase per capita income by 3.5% annually, positioning itself as a high-income country by 2050. The role of the Fiji National University (FNU) is crucial in this strategy, requiring alignment of its educational and vocational training programs with national economic objectives.

To realize this vision, there's a target to elevate GDP per capita by 60% over the next 25 years. This involves broadening the economic base, enhancing high-value service offerings, modernizing agricultural practices, and prioritizing the service sector.

**Contribution of TVET and Higher Education:** The NDP delineates nine strategic initiatives about Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and higher education, emphasizing the critical alignment of educational outcomes with industry demands.



Strengthening legislative frameworks alongside the finalization of the national TVET policy is paramount for attracting private-sector investments in the TVET ecosystem.

**Challenges in TVET and Higher Education:** A discernible gap exists within the NDP concerning well-defined key performance indicators (KPIs) relevant to TVET and higher education, complicating the assessment of their contributions to overarching national objectives.

While the National Development Plan requires the need for collaboration between educational institutions and industry stakeholders, it lacks a pronounced emphasis on establishing effective feedback mechanisms between TVET providers and the private sector, especially within key sectors such as construction.

**The Role of the Private Sector in TVET:** The private sector is invited to forge partnerships with TVET institutions to ensure that training programs reflect industry needs. However, there is a pressing necessity to fortify the link between vocational education and private industry.

Additionally, the private sector is urged to accelerate its investment in training and skills development initiatives to align with the evolving requirements of promising economic sectors.

**Policy Frameworks:** The successful finalization of essential policy frameworks, including the TVET policy, National Employment Policy, and National Human Resource Development Plan, will be critical to ensuring that educational and training programs are effectively aligned with national development agendas.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

*i. Finalize Policy Frameworks:*

Expedite the finalization of the TVET policy, National Employment Policy, and National Human Resource Development Plan to provide clear direction for skills training and education.

*ii. Develop KPIs for TVET and Higher Education:*

Establish key performance indicators for TVET and higher education within the NDP to measure their contributions to the national goals for 2050.

*iii. Strengthening Collaboration with the Private Sector:*

Enhance collaboration between FNU, the private sector, and industry at both national and local levels. Ensure that TVET programs are aligned with the actual needs of the labor market.

Strengthen partnerships between FNU and industries, ensuring that TVET institutions are responsive to sector-specific skills requirements.

*iv. Increase Private Sector Investment in Skills Development:*

Encourage the private sector to provide more comprehensive training programs tailored to industry needs, ensuring a skilled workforce.

Advocate for greater allocation of the NTPC levy to support private-sector training initiatives.

*v. Align Training with National Development Goals:*

Ensure that the educational and training programs at FNU are in alignment with the NDP's broader vision for Fiji's development, preparing students to contribute to sectors such as high-value services, modern agriculture, and the service sector.

#### **3.5 Panelist 4 : Irimaia Rokowasa**

*i. Support for TVET and Higher Education:* The Land Transport Authority (LTA) supports the need for resetting TVET and higher education to address workforce shortages in the land transport sector. FNU and LTA share a focus on people empowerment under Pillar 2 of the National Development Plan (NDP), but they target different focus areas (FNU focuses on socioeconomic wellbeing, while LTA focuses on infrastructure and climate change).

*ii. Skills Gap in the Land Transport Sector:*

There is a shortage of skilled professionals in key areas like driving, engineering, mechanics, land transport planning, and sustainable transport systems.

The skills gap leads to operational inefficiencies, higher costs, and increased inflation, which directly affect consumers.

*iii. Need for Specialized TVET Programs:*

TVET programs need to offer specialized training in road construction, vehicle maintenance, traffic management, and sustainable transport systems.

Programs should be aligned with industry needs, such as road safety, vehicle inspections, and maintenance.

*iv. Sustainability and Climate Change Adaptation:*

TVET should adapt to include training in sustainable transport technologies, including electric vehicles (EVs), renewable energy sources, and low-emission vehicles. There is a need to train first responders



v. to handle emergencies related to electric vehicles and lithium batteries.

**Public Infrastructure and Emerging Technologies:** As Fiji moves towards more sustainable transportation, including electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles, there is a need for skills related to vehicle disposal and recycling, especially for EVs. The land transport sector also needs to be prepared for future technologies such as autonomous vehicles, AI-powered traffic management, and smart infrastructure.

vi. **Collaboration and Job Creation:**

Ongoing collaboration between TVET institutions and the land transport sector is essential to address gaps between theory and practice through apprenticeships, internships, and specialized programs. A skilled workforce in the land transport sector will drive job creation, productivity, and economic growth.

vii. **LTA's Digitization Efforts:**

LTA is progressing in its digitization journey, completing phases of business process re-engineering to improve customer service and road safety.

**Key Takeaways:**

i. **Develop Specialized TVET Programs:**

ii. Create tailored training programs in road construction, vehicle maintenance, traffic management, and sustainable transport technologies, including electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles.

iii. **Address Skill Shortages:**

Focus on developing a skilled workforce in critical areas like engineering, mechanics, and land transport planning to improve efficiency and reduce operational costs.

iv. **Promote Sustainable Transport:**

v. Integrate green technologies and sustainable transport systems into TVET curricula, including training for handling EVs, lithium batteries, and vehicle recycling.

vi. **Preparing for Emerging Technologies:**

Ensure the workforce is ready for advancements in autonomous vehicles, AI traffic systems, and smart infrastructure.

vii. **Strengthening Collaboration with LTA:**

Continuing to foster collaboration between FNU, the land transport sector, and industry stakeholders to align training with current and future sector needs, reducing the gap between theory and practical skills.

viii. **Support Digital Transformation:**

Support LTA's ongoing efforts in digitizing its services and business processes to improve efficiency and customer service.

ix. **Job Creation and Economic Growth:**

Ensure that TVET programs contribute to the creation of a qualified workforce that can support job creation and boost Fiji's broader economic growth.







## 4.0 Session 2: TVET Now - The Current Status and Opportunities

**Speaker: Pro Vice-Chancellor TVET Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata**

**4.1 Respondent: APTC Director - Gareth McGrath**

### i. Aspirations and Goals:

- The main goal is to create a high standard of living, good health, and prosperity for all Fijians, supported by a skilled, educated, and productive workforce.
- The aspiration includes a transformative education system that fosters resilience, discipline, respect, and high work ethics alongside skills.
- Stakeholders emphasize the need for education systems to instill discipline, respect, and professionalism, as these are often lacking despite technical qualifications.

### ii. Current Situation of TVET in Fiji:

- TVET faces challenges such as skills gaps, poor student performance (including high school failures and school dropouts), and a mismatch between qualifications and industry needs.
- Industry stakeholders report concerns about the lack of skills, poor attitudes, and low levels of discipline in the workforce.
- Issues such as brain drain, skill migration, and outdated technologies in institutions are also highlighted as significant barriers.

### iii. Opportunities for 2025:

- Remittances from Fijians working overseas offer an opportunity for economic growth, even though brain drain is a concern.
- The TVET sector is recognized globally as essential for meeting sustainable development goals and driving economic progress.
- TVET is crucial for addressing unemployment, school dropouts, and the gap in employability among young people.

### iv. Challenges in TVET:

- There are significant perceptions and labels attached to TVET, leading to negative views about it as a career path. This is compounded by inconsistent funding for TVET programs and the challenges in determining where TVET should fit within the education system (e.g., year 9 vs. post-high school).
- TVET suffers from a negative stereotype, being perceived as lower status or labor-intensive work. Many students prioritize white-collar careers over trade.
- Issues with sustainability, such as the failure of a technical college that cost \$45 million, and concerns over low wages for TVET graduates, are ongoing problems.
- Lack of awareness and societal perception issues make TVET less attractive to students.
- Institutional labeling, which places TVET in a lower category than higher education, contributes to these perceptions.

### v. TVET Pathways and Initiatives:

- A new initiative introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2025 offers alternative TVET pathways for students who do not do well in academically, starting from year 8 and leading to certificates and potential links with Fiji National University (FNU).
- FNU has developed an integrated pathway system, ensuring that individuals, regardless of their background (e.g., dropouts, those with disabilities, or those in correctional facilities), can access opportunities for skill development and certification, including trade testing for unqualified but skilled individuals.
- FNU also offers several pathways for school leaders, including direct enrollment, franchised programs, and cross-crediting with other institutions. New options like stackable credentials (short courses) are also being promoted.

### vi. Programs Supporting TVET:

- FNU's National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) offers inservice training, professional development, and refresher courses in various sectors, with a focus on skills for industry needs. Additionally, there are targeted programs for marginalized groups, such as street kids, rural dwellers, and unemployed youths, funded by partnerships with organizations like the World Bank.
- FNU also supports TVET entrepreneurship through competitions like the T-Bear Hustle, encouraging young people to use their TVET skills to start businesses and attract customers via social media.



## vii. Opportunities for TVET Growth and Collaboration:

- FNU is actively collaborating with the Ministry of Education and various industry partners to expand TVET offerings, including initiatives like the TVET First Initiative, which introduces students to TVET careers early.
- There are also several partnerships in place to enhance TVET offerings, such as those with the Fiji Navy for maritime studies, the College of Southern Nevada for filmmaking, and rural-focused in agricultural courses.

### 4.2 Panelist comments' Director - Gareth McGrath

Acknowledges the work done by Dr. Isimeli, the Vice-Chancellor, and Mr. Mavoa in advancing TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) in Fiji, emphasizing their tireless efforts over many years to shift perceptions about TVET.

- Collaboration and Partnerships:** The success of TVET lies in partnerships and collaborations, both locally and internationally. Working together across ministries, industries, and educational institutions is crucial to creating pathways for students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to access training and employment.
- Industry Engagement:** Highlighted is the importance of having industry champions who actively invest in TVET by providing opportunities for students to practice and prove their skills in real-world settings. Collaboration with industries can also ensure better employment outcomes for graduates.
- International Benchmarks:** Leverage partnerships with countries like Australia and New Zealand and collaborate with registered training organizations there to benchmark and improve TVET programs in Fiji.
- Maximizing Resources:** By collaborating with other institutions like Pacific Polytech and CATD, there is an opportunity to reduce duplication, maximize resources, and ensure that students receive the best possible outcomes and opportunities.

#### v. Key Takeaways:

The effectiveness of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Fiji is contingent upon strategic partnerships with industry stakeholders, international organizations, and local educational entities.

To enhance the provision of practical skills that align with labor market demands, it is essential to invest in TVET initiatives and actively engage industry leaders who can champion these efforts.

Collaboration efforts should focus on optimizing resource utilization, minimizing redundancy in programming, and establishing transparent pathways that facilitate student transitions into the workforce.







## 5.0 Session 3: Panel Discussion: The Role of TVET in Shaping Fiji's Future

**Moderator: PVC TVET Dr Isimeli Tagicakiverata**

### 5.1 Introductory Remarks: Dr. Isimeli Tagicakiverata

The upcoming panel discussion will delve into the critical role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in shaping the future workforce of Fiji.

**Current Employment Landscape:** As outlined in the 2022 ILO report, Fiji's labor market consists of over 340,000 individuals, with employment distribution as follows: 17.6% in agriculture, 14% in industry, and a substantial 68% in the services sector.

**Migration for Employment:** Between January 2018 and 2023, in excess of 80,000 Fijians sought enhanced job prospects overseas. Notably, during the 2023-2024 period, 7,130 Fijians participated in the Australia Pacific Labor Scheme (PALM), while 1,050 workers were mobilized to New Zealand through the Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) work program.

**Skills Gap:** This trend of emigration has contributed to a pronounced skills gap across various sectors within Fiji.

**Importance of TVET:** To mitigate this skills deficit and support sustainable industry growth, particularly in critical areas such as tourism, construction, manufacturing, retail, automotive, agriculture, and textiles, the role of TVET is considered paramount. Investment in TVET will be essential to equip the local workforce with the necessary competencies to thrive in these key industries.

### 5.2 Panelist 1: Lucia Zeeard

Ms. Zeeard discusses the critical role of skilled labor within Fiji's tourism sector, which plays a substantial role in the national economy, accounting for nearly 40% of GDP. While she recognizes the demand for job-ready individuals, she contends that true readiness is derived from hands-on experience in the field. She underscores the necessity of cultivating resilience, teachability, and learnability among the youth.

Drawing from her extensive experience in interviewing over 980 candidates, she identifies adaptability and effective communication as essential competencies, transcend specific industries. Furthermore, she shares a case study of a local entrepreneur aspiring to establish an ecotourism venture, which exemplifies the intersection of hope, community engagement, and the power of education.

Ms. Zeeard advocates for higher education institutions like FNU to persist in their commitment to equipping students with the skills necessary to navigate real-world challenges while simultaneously nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset.

#### Key Takeaways:

- i. **Skilled Labor is Essential:** The tourism sector is facing a significant demand for a more skilled workforce. However, achieving job readiness extends beyond formal education; it requires practical experience and a demonstrated capacity for on-the-job learning. These elements are essential for effectively addressing the complexities and dynamic nature of the industry.
- ii. **Resilience and Learnability:** The speaker emphasizes the critical role of fostering resilience, adaptability, and a continuous learning mindset in the youth. These attributes are essential for achieving success across various domains and industries, enabling individuals to navigate challenges and seize opportunities effectively.
- iii. **Real-World Skills:** Prioritizing effective communication skills and the capacity for rapid comprehension and assimilation of new concepts are essential criteria in the hiring process, irrespective of the specific trade or technical field.
- iv. **Inspiring Local Entrepreneurs:** The speaker presents a case study of a local entrepreneur who is motivated to establish an ecotourism venture. This narrative underscores the significance of educational frameworks and specialized programs designed to bolster local enterprises and promote sustainable tourism practices.
- v. **Encouragement to Continue Efforts:** The speaker commends institutions such as FNU for their ongoing efforts in fostering education and facilitating opportunities for youth and emerging entrepreneurs, thereby empowering them to succeed and play a pivotal role in shaping Fiji's future socio-economic landscape.



### 5.3 Panelist 2 : Anna Morris

Fiji Airways appreciates the opportunity to participate in this event and contribute insights on strategic initiatives for shaping the future of Fiji's aviation sector. Building upon prior discussions, the speaker underscores the necessity for enhanced collaborations to navigate the rapid advancements in technology and innovation, particularly within technical domains such as aviation.

She advocates for partnerships with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and international regulatory bodies to synchronize Fiji's educational programs with the evolving demands of the industry. The speaker also addresses the reality of migration trends, stressing the imperative to cultivate a compelling local environment that encourages skilled professionals to remain in Fiji through the provision of meaningful employment opportunities.

Additionally, she emphasizes the critical role of Fijian culture in preserving a distinctive identity that resonates on a global scale. While acknowledging the growing international demand for skilled Fijian labor, she argues that prioritizing improvements in local education and skills development is essential to fostering their global competitiveness.

#### Key Takeaways:

- i. **Expand Partnerships for Future-Relevant Skills:** Engage with global stakeholders, including Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and safety regulatory bodies, to ensure that educational initiatives are strategically aligned with emerging industry requirements and technological advancements.
- ii. **Expect Migration but Inspire Retention:** Migration is a complex phenomenon that often cannot be avoided; however, cultivating substantial socioeconomic opportunities within Fiji could encourage individuals to remain in the country and actively participate in its developmental trajectory.
- iii. By focusing on job creation, enhancing educational prospects, and fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems, Fiji can harness local talent and drive sustainable growth.
- iv. **Develop the Human Element:** Emphasize the importance of fostering personal development and facilitating impactful contributions for participants in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs. It's essential to cultivate an environment where individuals feel acknowledged, appreciated, and engaged with their local community, thereby enhancing their overall learning experience and promoting social cohesion.
- v. **Celebrate and Retain Fijian Culture:** Fiji's distinct cultural identity serves as a crucial asset that ought to be preserved and strategically utilized in the realms of education and skill development. By harnessing this unique cultural framework, Fiji can enhance its appeal as a collaborative partner for both local stakeholders and global entities. This approach not only enriches the educational landscape but also fosters a mutually beneficial environment for knowledge exchange and capacity building.
- vi. **Global Demand for Fijian Talent:** As Fiji enhances its education and training frameworks, the skill set of its workforce will increasingly align with global market demands. This evolution will generate both opportunities for economic integration and challenges related to competition and resource allocation.

### 5.4 Panelist 3: Marigold Moody

Marigold articulates her appreciation for the platform to discuss the critical intersection of industry and vocational education. She underscores that vocational training is inherently a symbiotic relationship, wherein the industry depends on educational institutions to cultivate a steady influx of skilled labor. This partnership necessitates a dynamic exchange of information to ensure that curricula are tailored to the evolving needs of the industry, thereby producing graduates who are job-ready.

She provides concrete illustrations from Fiji Water and their shipping operations, noting that while there are existing job vacancies, the volume does not warrant the establishment of independent training programs. This reality compels the industry to engage in collaborative efforts with other enterprises to fulfill the aggregate demand for skilled personnel. To facilitate

this, she mentions the formation of an industry council aimed at fostering greater inter-business cooperation and enhancing the sharing of valuable insights regarding the competencies required across various sectors, including manufacturing and marine industries.

Furthermore, Fiji Water undertook a skills gap analysis by scrutinizing job postings, which allowed them to refine training initiatives to better align with the precise skill sets that the industry demands.



## Key Takeaways:

**i. Industry-Education Partnership:** Successful vocational training hinges on robust collaboration between industry stakeholders and educational institutions. It is essential that both entities engage in ongoing dialogue to align training programs with the specific skills and competencies demanded by the labor market. This dynamic partnership facilitates the development of curricula that not only address current industry needs but also anticipate future trends, ultimately optimizing workforce readiness and enhancing employability outcomes.

- I. Job-Ready Graduates:** Successful vocational training hinges on robust collaboration between industry stakeholders and educational institutions. It is essential that both entities engage in ongoing dialogue to align training programs with the specific skills and competencies demanded by the labor market. This dynamic partnership facilitates the development of curricula that not only address current industry needs but also anticipate future trends, ultimately optimizing workforce readiness and enhancing employability outcomes.
- II. Collaboration Across Sectors:** Considering the constrained employment opportunities within specific sectors, it is imperative for organizations to engage in strategic collaborations with one another. This will enable the development of a cohesive strategy for training and skill enhancement that addresses workforce readiness and adaptability in a rapidly evolving market.
- III. Mapping Skills Gaps:** A strategic approach to enhancing the congruence between educational outcomes and industry requirements involves conducting a thorough analysis of job advertisements. By identifying the specific skills demanded by employers, educational programs can be meticulously designed or modified to address these skill gaps, thereby ensuring a more effective alignment of curricula with labor market needs.
- IV. Exciting Opportunities Ahead:** The speaker conveys enthusiasm regarding the current partnership with FNU, highlighting the promising prospects for further advancements in the alignment of vocational training programs with industry requirements.







## 6.0 Session 4: Where can we take TVET? International Perspective

**Speakers:** MIT - Dr. Anthony Ng, DFAT (TVET Expert) - Anthony Bailey, and TAFE QLD - Dr. Brian Heim.

### 6.1 Speaker 1: Dr Anthony Ng, DFAT (TVET Expert)

The significance of vocational education and training (TVET) in schools and its role in preparing students for the workforce. TVET provides students with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to explore career options, enhance employment prospects, and pursue further education. Two key models for delivering TVET in schools: one where university institutions like FNU design and deliver programs at secondary schools, and another where they offer programs at university campuses but for secondary students. Both options emphasize the importance of collaboration between education institutions and industry to ensure that the training aligns with job market demands.

A strong foundational education, access to industry networks, and relevant training from qualified instructors is essential to make TVET successful.

Additionally, partnerships between the public and private sectors are essential in addressing skills gaps, especially in specific regions like Fiji.

These initiatives can help FNU maintain its position as a key educational provider and create a pipeline for future students to pursue higher education or advanced skills training.

#### Key Takeaways:

- I. **Vocational Education's Importance:** TVET in schools helps students clarify career aspirations, gain relevant skills, and improve their employment prospects, all while providing pathways for further education.
- II. **Two Delivery Models:** TVET can be delivered either at universities or at secondary school campuses, with the former offering access to advanced facilities and the latter providing more localized training.
- III. **Collaboration Between Education and Industry:** Success in TVET depends on strong partnerships between education institutions, industry, and the private sector. These partnerships ensure that training aligns with actual job market needs and provides real employment opportunities.
- IV. **Focus on Foundational Skills:** Strong foundational skills in industry related areas are essential to the success of vocational programs, and students need to have solid basic education before moving into more specialized training.
- V. **Regional Projects and Future Opportunities:** Programs like the project focus on region-specific skills development, and such initiatives create a pipeline for students to continue their education and training at higher levels.
- VI. **Training Quality and Relevance:** Effective TVET programs require qualified trainers with industry experience to ensure that students are equipped with up-to-date, relevant skills.
- VII. **Ongoing Support for Vocational Training in Schools:** Continued discussion and collaboration to support and enhance vocational training in schools, with a focus on long-term partnerships between institutions and industries.

### 6.2 Speaker 2: - Dr. Brian Heim

Discusses the challenges and opportunities facing the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, both in Australia and internationally. He emphasizes the importance of industry partnerships, curriculum development, and the ongoing process of improving training practices to ensure that students are well-equipped for the workforce.

**Historical and Contemporary Context:** TAFE Queensland is proud of its 140- year history in TVET. Dr. Hame acknowledges that while TAFE Queensland has a long history, the traditional knowledge and practice of TVET have been around for much longer, with Indigenous communities in Australia having practiced it for over 60,000 years. Despite the long history, Dr. Hame stresses the need to evolve and find new ways to address the challenges in TVET.

**The Challenges and Similarities:** Dr. Hame recognizes that the challenges faced in Australia are like those faced by TVET institutions in Fiji. Both countries deal with issues related to industry engagement, the readiness of students for work, and the need for continuous improvement in training.

**The Importance of Industry Engagement:** The key to success in TVET is strong, ongoing engagement with industry. Dr. Hame highlights the importance of both formal and informal feedback from industry to ensure that training aligns with actual workforce needs. TAFE Queensland has established annual industry sector panels to gather this feedback, helping ensure that training programs meet the evolving demands of employers.

Work-integrated learning and vocational placements are crucial for providing students with real-world experience, allowing them to demonstrate their ability to learn and adapt in a professional environment.



**Teaching Staff and Curriculum Quality:** TAFE Queensland places a strong emphasis on the quality of teaching staff, ensuring that they are not only skilled educators but also maintain currency in their vocational fields. This is achieved through industry placements for trainers, allowing them to reconnect with industry trends and challenges.

Dr. Hame stresses the importance of creating simulated learning environments that closely mimic real-world conditions, enabling students to make mistakes in a safe environment before transitioning to actual jobs.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

i. **Partnerships and Student Pathways:** Partnerships with industry, government, and students themselves are essential to achieving successful outcomes in TVET. The goal is to provide clear pathways for students to progress from entry-level qualifications to higher-level qualifications or directly into employment. Dr. Hame echoes the point made earlier about the need for students to be “workforce-ready,” not necessarily job-ready. This means having the ability to learn on the job and adapt to new skills as they enter the workforce.

ii. **Emerging Skills and Industries:** The speaker highlights emerging industries such as electric vehicles (EVs) and cybersecurity, which present new challenges for TVET programs. There is a shortage of qualified teachers and practitioners in these fields, and Dr. Hame emphasizes the need for creative solutions, such as guest speakers and mentorship from experienced professionals, to provide students with exposure to these growing sectors.

iii. **Entrepreneurship and Industry Mentorship:** Dr. Hame discusses the importance of fostering entrepreneurship within TVET by offering certification in entrepreneurship to non-traditional students, such as those seeking to start their own businesses. Industry mentors play a crucial role in guiding these individuals through the challenges of starting and running businesses, providing experiential learning that cannot be captured in traditional training curricula.

iv. **Continuous Improvement:** Finally, Dr. Hame stresses that continuous review and improvement of TVET programs are essential to maintaining their relevance and effectiveness. Institutions must never be complacent and should always strive to improve training outcomes and align with industry needs.







## 7.0 Session 5: Aligning FNU's Higher Education towards achieving the NDP objectives

**Speaker: PVCLT Professor Jimaima Lako** **Respondent: Shelly Lewis (TAFE QLD)**

### 7.1 Speaker: PVCLT Professor Jimaima Lako

**TVET and Higher Education Demarcation:** TVET programs are categorized from levels 1-6, while higher education programs span levels 10, but the distinction is sometimes unclear, particularly in the case of FNU where levels 5-6 are part of bachelor's programs.

**University Role in Economic Development:** Universities play a crucial role in driving economic development through education, research, and innovation, contributing to a knowledge-based economy. Higher education is essential for socio-political stability and human development.

**Program Review and Alignment to NDP:** A review of 330 academic programs was conducted to ensure alignment with national development priorities (NDP) and government needs. This exercise is aimed at improving program relevance, economic viability, and reducing duplication.

#### Criteria for Program Review:

- I. **Economic Viability:** Programs were assessed for their financial sustainability, including student enrollment numbers and staff salaries.
- II. **Duplication:** Programs were checked for duplication within FNU and across other universities to avoid unnecessary competition and support capacity building.
- III. **Relevance to Government Priorities:** Programs were evaluated for their alignment with national development goals and stakeholder needs.

**Data Analysis and Financial Performance:** A detailed analysis of program financials (profit/loss) over the last three years was presented, highlighting disparities between colleges, such as the College of Agriculture improving from losses to profit, while others like SEDVET showed consistent losses.

**Break-even Points:** The minimum student numbers required for each program to be financially viable were calculated. Programs below the breakeven point, especially those with very low student numbers, were identified as needing reassessment or improvement.

**Action Plans for Program Improvement:** Colleges are encouraged to rethink and innovate their offerings, develop new strategies, and ensure their programs align with national priorities to attract government support and improve student numbers.

**Student Progression & Retention:** The progression rate from year one to year three is between 60-70%, which is considered low. This impacts graduation rates and retention, which vary across colleges. For example, some colleges, like CMNHS, are improving retention, while others, like CBHTS, are seeing a decline. The speaker emphasizes the need to understand these trends and improve retention strategies.

**Satisfaction and Employability:** Student satisfaction rates are high (70- 90%), but there is a disconnect between satisfaction and retention. The speaker questions the correlation and suggests further research.

Employability rates are also being tracked, with CMNHS showing lower employability despite good retention.

**Duplication of Programs:** A review of program duplication both internally and externally (across universities) revealed significant overlap. Out of 330 programs, 60-80% are duplicated internally, which indicates a lack of collaboration and resource sharing. Externally, 24% of programs are common across the three universities. The speaker suggests that duplication must be minimized, and programs need to be differentiated to avoid competition and increase appeal.

**Alignment with Government Development Priorities:** A detailed review was conducted to ensure programs align with government ministries and national development priorities. Each college was found to have ties with multiple ministries. The speaker emphasizes the importance of integrating curricula with government needs and the need for programs to reflect the evolving skills and attitudes required in the workforce.

**Stakeholder Engagement and Ground Truthing:** The review involved gathering data from 23 government ministries through focus groups and surveys. Key findings include gaps in graduates' skills, such as writing, soft skills, and scientific knowledge. Emerging skills and attitudes needed in the workforce were also identified. The speaker commits to integrating this feedback into the curriculum.



**Proposed Solutions:** Colleges will work directly with their respective ministries, aligning curricula to real-life problems that reflect the needs of these ministries. The focus will shift from traditional assessments to more practical, problem-solving approaches that encourage critical thinking.

Collaboration across colleges will be encouraged to pool resources and strengthen expertise.

#### Key Takeaways: Professor Jimaima Lako

- I. **Demarcation of TVET and Higher Education:** Clear distinctions are needed between TVET (levels 1-6) and higher education (levels 7- 10), although some overlap exists at FNU.
- II. **Economic Viability:** Academic programs must be financially sustainable, with sufficient student enrollment to cover staff salaries and operational costs. Break-even points are essential for determining program sustainability.
- III. **Duplication of Programs:** Significant internal and external duplication of programs has been identified. Reducing duplication and fostering inter-departmental collaboration is necessary to optimize resources and enhance program relevance.
- IV. **Relevance to Government Priorities:** It is crucial to align academic programs with government priorities and the needs of various ministries. Colleges should work more closely with government stakeholders to ensure programs are relevant to national development goals. Programs need to align with national development goals (NDP) and government priorities to remain relevant and attract support.
- V. **Strategic Program Development:** Programs with low enrollment or financial performance must innovate and align more closely with the needs of the economy and government priorities to survive and thrive.
- VI. **Action Required for Improvement:** Colleges must take proactive steps to adjust their offerings, ensure financial health, and meet national priorities for economic development.
- VII. **Low Retention and Progression:** Efforts must be made to improve student retention and progression, as current rates are low and impact graduation and employability.
- VIII. **Satisfaction vs Retention:** Despite high student satisfaction, retention rates remain a concern. Further research is needed to understand why satisfaction does not always correlate with retention.
- IX. **Skills Gaps and Emerging Needs:** There are gaps in graduates' soft skills, scientific knowledge, and attitudes. Programs must adapt to address emerging skills and knowledge that align with the future workforce demands.
- X. **Curriculum Innovation:** The curriculum will be revised to incorporate real-world problems, ensuring that students' assignments and projects address ministry challenges. This will enhance critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.
- XI. **Collaboration Across Colleges:** Colleges must collaborate more effectively, sharing expertise and resources to address common challenges and government priorities.
- XII. **Alignment with National Development Goals:** Programs are being adjusted to ensure they are relevant to Fiji's national development goals, addressing the skills and knowledge needed by the government and industries.
- XIII. **Increased Collaboration:** FNU is collaborating more closely with government ministries and stakeholders to ensure curricula align with emerging skills and job market needs.
- XIV. **Mandatory Internships:** Internships will be made as a requirement for all students, with a focus on providing real-world industry experience.
- XV. **Graduate Attributes and FNU Values:** FNU is integrating key graduate attributes and values into its programs to produce well-rounded and ethically responsible graduates.
- XVI. **Staff Expertise and Development:** Teaching staff will be reassigned based on their areas of expertise, and continuous professional development will be provided to improve teaching methods and student outcomes.

#### 7.2 Responder: Shelly Lewis

The speaker expresses gratitude for being invited and acknowledges Fiji National University (FNU) 's significant steps to align with the NationalDevelopment Plan (NDP). The speaker praises FNU for creating their own key performance indicators (KPIs) to guide the mapping process, despite the absence of specific KPIs for higher education and TVET in the NDP.

The speaker also highlights the critical role education plays in Fiji's goal of becoming an advanced economy and stresses the importance of assessing the viability of educational programs. TVET is acknowledged as an expensive endeavor, but the speaker cites a KPMG study that shows for every \$1 spent on TVET training in the Pacific, \$2 is generated in the local economy, making it a worthwhile investment.

The integration of technical skills with soft skills, like communication, problem-solving, and lifelong learning, is emphasized as essential fordeveloping a skilled and productive workforce. The speaker shares insights from TAFE Queensland's approach, where softer skills, diversity and inclusion, and personal mental health



management are embedded in all programs, not just technical content.

Finally, the speaker congratulates FNU for its efforts and looks forward to seeing the outcomes of the upcoming 2025 conference and beyond.

#### Key Takeaways: Shelly Lewis

- i. **Acknowledging FNU's Efforts:** FNU is taking significant steps to align its programs with national development priorities, creating its KPIs and conducting curriculum mapping exercises.
- ii. **TVET's Importance:** TVET is an essential investment, with studies showing a positive economic return for every dollar spent on training in the Pacific.
- iii. **Integration of Soft Skills:** It's important to develop not just technical skills but also soft skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, and lifelong learning. These are essential for creating well-rounded graduates who can contribute to society.
- iv. **Embedding Skills in Programs:** At TAFE Queensland, soft skills, diversity, inclusion, and mental health are integrated into all programs, which FNU may consider adopting in its own curriculum review process.
- v. **Long-Term Development:** The focus should be on developing students who not only have technical skills but are also prepared to be active, responsible members of society, contributing to the long-term national development of Fiji.







## 8.0 Session 6: How Research at FNU can guide policymakers and industry leaders?

**Speaker: PVCRI Professor Paul Iji** **Respondent: Professor Paul Dargusch**

### 8.1 Speaker: PVCRI Professor Paul Iji

Paul Iji emphasized the importance of research at Fiji National University (FNU) and outlined plans to strengthen the research culture across all levels, including TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training).

The aim is to integrate research into all fields, including practical areas such as culinary arts, fashion design, and agriculture. Research is critical for national development, driving innovation, and technological advancement, and addressing key national issues such as food security, health management, and climate change.

FNU has made notable strides in research, with significant funding and external grants, despite challenges like limited facilities and research capacity. The speaker highlighted the university's achievements, including contributions to antimicrobial resistance, minimum wage legislation, and climate change adaptation. They also discussed FNU's partnerships with regional and international collaborators, such as Australia, New Zealand, and Monash University.

The speaker called for better coordination in research funding and the activation of the National Research Council to prevent duplication of efforts.

They emphasized the need for increased funding from both government and industry, as well as the necessity for companies to contribute to research initiatives. Furthermore, the speaker stressed the role of higher education in fostering innovation and supporting national policy development.

#### Key Takeaways: Professor Paul Iji

i. **Inclusive Research Culture:** FNU aims to integrate research across all levels of education, including TVET, to foster innovation in various fields, such as agriculture, culinary arts, and fashion design.

ii. **Research Drives National Development:** Research and development are crucial for the country's progress, particularly in areas like food security, climate change, and health management.

iii. **Research Achievements:** FNU has made significant strides in research, including developing solutions for antimicrobial resistance, climate resilience, and non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

iv. **Challenges:** The lack of experienced researchers, facilities, and decentralized funding pose obstacles to expanding research at FNU.

These issues need to be addressed for greater impact.

v. **Collaboration and Funding:** Stronger collaboration between government, industry, and academic institutions is needed. The speaker urged for more support from industries and a functional National Research Council to streamline research efforts and funding.

vi. **Government and Industry Involvement:** Industry should contribute more to research funding, and the government should prioritize postgraduate research scholarships to support the development of researchers.

vii. **Long-Term Vision:** For Fiji to progress, research must be prioritized and supported more effectively, with the potential for FNU to play a leadership role in national policy development and innovation.

### 8.2 Respondent: Professor Paul Dargusch

The speaker thanks the Fiji National University (FNU) for the opportunity to be there and addresses the important topic of translating research into impact, particularly in the context of climate change. While FNU's research capacity is strong, the speaker highlights the challenge universities face in ensuring their research leads to real-world change. This challenge is not unique to FNU but is a global issue.

The speaker focuses on FNU's unique position, being vertically integrated— from TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) programs to PhD research. This integration allows for seamless collaboration across education and research levels, enabling the university to address industry needs and create impactful outcomes.

The speaker gives an example from climate resilience, where research on climate-resilient infrastructure can influence curricula at multiple levels (from TVET to postgraduate). Practical applications, such as creating learning laboratories for students, further enhance this integration. These laboratories would allow students to get hands-on experience while simultaneously benefiting real-world infrastructure projects.



The speaker also highlights ongoing projects, including partnerships with governments in Fiji and Papua New Guinea to enhance TVET infrastructure through climate resilience initiatives. The role of FNU's PACT center is emphasized as a key driver in securing seed funding to enable these projects.

#### **Key Takeaways: Professor Paul Dargusch**

- i. **Research into Impact:** Universities worldwide struggle with translating research into real-world impact. FNU is well-positioned to bridge this gap, especially by aligning research with practical industry needs.
- ii. **Vertically Integrated Approach:** FNU's diverse education system (ranging from TVET to PhDs) offers a unique opportunity to integrate research across all levels, ensuring that students and professionals are equipped with the knowledge and skills to address real-world challenges.
- iii. **Climate Resilience Example:** Research on climate-resilient infrastructure (like energy efficiency and cyclone-proofing) can inform new curricula and foster hands-on learning through practical projects, creating a direct impact in sectors like infrastructure, agriculture, and forestry.
- iv. **Learning Laboratories:** The speaker suggests creating learning laboratories, such as battery systems for buildings, where students can get practical experience while also benefiting from ongoing infrastructure projects.
- v. **Collaborations & Funding:** FNU is actively seeking funding for climate-related projects, such as the Kiwa Initiative and Green Climate Fund, to scale up efforts in TVET and infrastructure resilience.
- vi. **PACT's Role:** The PACT center helps seed and leverage funding for climate action projects, facilitating the integration of research into real-world applications.
- vii. **Overall Impact:** FNU has a significant opportunity to lead in research driven education, where research informs curricula, builds workforce ready skills and addresses global challenges, especially in the context of climate change.







## 9.0 Session 7: Group Discussion & Presentation

### Group Workshop 1: Building Training Pathways and Collaboration for the Workforce Group Workshop 2: Skill Retention Strategies and Funding Moderator: PVCTVET Dr. Isimeli Tagicakiverata

**Question 1: How would you retain your skilled workforce? This is a question for our employers. What strategies are in place? Are they able to offer competitive remuneration? What kind of incentives are they offering for the workers?**

#### Answers :

- I. People are the central focus of any workforce strategy and valuing them involves enhancing their skills. There are significant vacancies in critical sectors like nursing, and skill development can help address this. Improving working conditions is essential for retention, as external factors also influence the workforce's marketability.
- II. Remuneration should reflect the market rate to ensure workforce satisfaction and retention. Failure to receive compensation properly may lead to increased dissatisfaction and worsening workforce issues.
- III. Reducing dependence on imports is crucial for sustainable development. Aligning curricula with workforce needs helps produce the right amount of talent. Sustainable training programs should connect educational institutions with the workforce to ensure skill production is balanced.
- IV. Collaboration in public-private partnerships is crucial for success, with shared responsibility for infrastructure, finance, and management. The workforce sector needs attention to retain talent, with a focus on fair practices, better systems, and preventing burnout. Addressing workforce issues holistically (not just through pay) can lead to a stronger, more effective workforce. Extending staff benefits to cover family members could be an effective strategy for skills retention. Competing with higher wages in Australia and New Zealand is not sustainable, especially for small businesses. Offering family-oriented benefits may be a practical way to retain employees without directly competing on salary.
- V. In addition to focusing on student skills development, it's crucial to address skills retention at the teacher level by ensuring up-to-date curricula that remain valuable even if educators leave. Furthermore, researching to calculate the dollar value of lost skills due to migration could provide a basis for receiving countries like Australia and New Zealand to contribute development assistance to the education sector in Fiji.
- VI. Career Progression and Employee Development: Continuous development and a clear career progression model are crucial for employee retention. Businesses should provide clarity, transparency, and opportunities for growth, including mentorship programs and fostering a culture of inclusion.
- VII. Attrition as an Opportunity: While employee turnover is often seen negatively, it can create valuable opportunities for both the business and the community. Factoring attrition into the business model and encouraging individuals to return and contribute can drive continuous growth and innovation.

#### Question 2: So, building training pathways and collaboration for the workforce.

**What you can ask yourself in your table is how would you build this? How would you build this training pathway and collaboration? What types of initiatives are you going to come up with? And who is responsible for this collaboration process to be successful?**

#### Answers:

- i. Strengthen and expand collaborations with existing and new partners in the agriculture, fisheries, and forestry industries.
- ii. Review and restructure current programs to better address industry needs and ensure they have a meaningful impact on the nation 45
- iii. Strengthen and expand collaborations with existing and new partners in the agriculture, fisheries, and forestry industries.
- iv. Review and restructure current programs to better address industry needs and ensure they have a meaningful impact on the nation.
- v. Collaboration is Key: Effective workforce development relies on strong partnerships between institutions, industry, and government. These collaborations help ensure that training programs align with industry needs.
- vi. Industry Needs Profiling: Identifying industry gaps through profiling is the first step in creating training pathways, which inform curriculum design and ensure graduates are industry ready. Government Support:

The government plays a vital role in funding and supporting the alignment of educational programs with industry needs vii. Hands-On Experience: Industry involvement in providing practical, real-world experiences for students is crucial for preparing them for the workforce.



viii. Clear Career Progression: Institutions and industries should define clear career pathways with incentives for further qualifications, ensuring employees are motivated and have clear goals.

ix. Skills and Needs Assessment: Conduct workforce assessments to identify skill gaps and future needs, gathering input from employees, managers, and industry experts.

x. Mentorship and Knowledge Sharing: Create mentorship programs where experienced employees guide newer staff and encourage knowledge sharing through workshops and discussion groups.

### **Session 8: Summary by Professor Nii -K Plange**

i. Critical Role of FNU in National Development: The discussions highlighted the importance of FNU as a key partner in the government's national development plan, focusing on skills provision and research to ensure the well-being of the people through economic growth.

ii. Integration of TVET and Higher Education: The conference emphasized the evolving role of TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) in Fiji, addressing curriculum development, integration of soft skills, and the need for collaboration between institutions, industries, and the government.

iii. Job Readiness and Industry Needs: Key issues discussed included the importance of a "teachable spirit" for graduates, where new employees demonstrate the willingness to learn on the job. There was also a call for the establishment of an industry skills council in Fiji.

iv. Collaborative Efforts in Skills Development: The necessity of strengthening partnerships between industries, TVET institutions, and universities was stressed to ensure the development of relevant skills and a talent pipeline.

v. Role of Research in Higher Education: Professor Paul brought attention to the significant contributions of higher education and research at FNU, underscoring the complementary role of universities in national development alongside TVET.

vi. Educational Pathways and Mentorship: Discussions also touched upon the need for building training pathways, offering mentorship programs, and considering external conditions like improving working conditions to retain talent.







## 10.0 Day 2: FNU Conference on Resetting TVET & Higher Education

### Session 9: The Vualiku Program Overview :

#### Presentation: PS Ministry of Tourism & Civil Aviation – Salaseini Daunabuna

##### 10.1 Presentation: PS Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation

The speaker discusses a transformative tourism development project in Vanua Levu, focusing on sustainable tourism and economic growth. The project, supported by a \$200 million funding envelope from the World Bank, spans 10 years and is structured in overlapping phases. The overall goal is to position Vanua Levu as a premier sustainable tourism destination, improving the region's infrastructure, tourism capacity, and environmental sustainability.

The project consists of three main components:

- i. **Sustainable Tourism Development:** Addressing barriers to tourism, including social and environmental assessments, creating an integrated tourism master plan, and supporting local small businesses, especially women-led enterprises.
- ii. **Resilient Infrastructure:** Enhancing connectivity, essential services, and cityscapes in key tourist areas like Savusavu, Labasa, and Taveuni.
- iii. **Tourism Capacity Enhancement:** Building a skilled workforce through partnerships with TVET programs and involving communities and the private sector in the project's delivery.

The initiative aims to unlock the untapped tourism potential of Vanua Levu, which has traditionally received only 4% of the country's tourism visitors. The speaker emphasizes the importance of community involvement, environmental sustainability, and infrastructure improvements to ensure the long-term success and resilience of tourism in the region.

##### Key Takeaways: PS Tourism and Aviation

- i. The project is a 10-year, multi-phase initiative aimed at developing sustainable tourism in Vanua Levu.
- ii. It is a joint effort involving various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Tourism, local governments, and private sector partners.
- iii. The focus is on infrastructure improvements, strengthening local tourism businesses, and enhancing the environmental sustainability of the tourism sector.
- iv. Community engagement and workforce development, particularly through TVET programs, are critical for the project's success.
- v. Vanua Levu's potential for tourism growth is significant, and the project is designed to unlock this potential while ensuring long-term economic and environmental resilience.
- vi. The project aims to position Vanua Levu as a model for sustainable tourism in the Pacific region.

##### 10.2 Respondent: Mr. Niranjan Chettiar

The speaker outlines ongoing improvements to the airports in Savusavu and Labasa, as part of the larger tourism development project. The focus is on upgrading infrastructure and exploring future possibilities for larger aircraft, digital systems, and better airport facilities. For Savusavu, airport renovations and runway improvements are being made, while for Labasa, a temporary terminal is in place, with plans for a new terminal and potential runway extension. The feasibility of a new airport location for Savusavu is also being considered due to current geographical limitations.

Additionally, the speaker addresses the need for workforce development, specifically in tourism and hospitality, stressing the importance of skilled labor. This includes potential opportunities for Fiji National University (FNU) to engage in training programs, apprenticeship, and internships for the tourism sector. The speaker highlights the need for FNU to help create a skilled workforce that can meet the demands of the growing tourism market.

The speaker also mentions the importance of leveraging the region's natural attractions and promoting adventure tourism. The lack of data for tourism trends in the area is noted, with a call for research-driven insights to guide future investments. Effective marketing strategies are also essential to fully tap into the tourism potential of the region.



## Key Takeaways:

- i. **Airport Upgrades:** Savusavu and Labasa airports are undergoing significant improvements, including runway enhancements and fire service upgrades. Savusavu may also require a new airport location to accommodate larger aircraft.
- ii. **Temporary Terminal:** A temporary terminal at Labasa Airport is now operational, with plans for a new terminal and improved amenities.
- iii. **Workforce Development:** There's a focus on developing a skilled workforce for the tourism industry in Vanua Levu, with opportunities for FNU to create relevant educational and training programs.
- iv. **SMEs and Adventure Tourism:** The region has potential for adventure tourism, which can be promoted through small businesses. FNU can play a role in supporting these ventures and creating model facilities.
- v. **Tourism Data and Research:** There is a need for better research and data on tourism in the region to attract investment and guide decision making, especially regarding larger aircraft like the 737.
- vi. **Marketing and Promotion:** The region's unique attractions, such as Savusavu's scenery and Labasa's temples, require better marketing strategies to maximize their tourism potential.

### 10.3 Respondent: Mr. Edward Bernard

The speaker emphasizes the significant opportunity the North holds for development, particularly in the context of the National Development Plan (NDP) and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training). The private sector sees this as a major growth opportunity, but there's a need to distinguish between development and growth. The National Development Plan aims to benefit 60,000 Fijians through job creation and business opportunities, which are closely tied to the strategies outlined for TVET, especially strengthening private-sector collaboration.

#### The speaker provides three key points:

Planning: The private sector needs to engage early in the planning process.

FCEF has been proactive in phase one of the projects, and the speaker urges FNU to do the same for upcoming phases to ensure the private sector's involvement.

Tailoring Value Propositions: It's crucial to consider the unique economic conditions in the North, including higher business costs due to freight, and the smaller market size compared to the main island. The speaker stresses the importance of adjusting business strategies and pricing accordingly.

Sustainability of Development: The speaker raises concerns about whether tourists will come after infrastructure investments, such as runway expansions. Additionally, there needs to be a focus on post-development maintenance, an area where TVET institutions like FNU can contribute.

The speaker also highlights FCEF's initiative to restructure its business development arm, Fiji Enterprise Engine, to support MSMEs in the North, particularly through training, advisory, and mentoring. Lastly, the speaker stresses the importance of understanding and participating in the procurement process, especially given the stringent World Bank standards, and suggests that local institutions should be more involved in these processes.

## Key Takeaways:

- i. **Private Sector Engagement:** The private sector needs to be involved early in the planning process, especially for upcoming phases of the project.
- ii. **Economic Conditions Consideration:** Business strategies need to be adapted to the unique economic conditions of the North, such as higher costs and smaller market volumes.
- iii. **Post-Development Sustainability:** There should be a focus on the maintenance of tourism infrastructure to ensure long-term success, and FNU can play a role in training for this.
- iv. **FCEF's Role in MSME Development:** FCEF is expanding its business development services in the North, focusing on holistic support for MSMEs.
- v. **Procurement Process:** Understanding the procurement process, particularly for World Bank-funded projects, is crucial, and local institutions should collaborate with the private sector to navigate this process more effectively.



#### 10.4 Respondent: Irimaia Rokosawa

The speaker discusses the importance of collaboration between various sectors, especially in relation to the World Eco project, tourism, and the role of FNU (Fiji National University) in developing a skilled workforce. They emphasize the potential of Fiji's tourism sector, with 40% of GDP coming from tourism, and the need for public-private partnerships to drive the sector's growth. The speaker also highlights the challenges related to land ownership, as 90% of Fiji's land is native-owned, and suggests that FNU and TVET can help landowners prepare for business opportunities. They also stress the need for better training for public service vehicle (PSV) drivers, the involvement of landowners in tourism businesses, and the importance of financial literacy and basic automotive knowledge for business sustainability.

The speaker proposes a collaborative approach between landowners, FNU, and other stakeholders to ensure long-term success.

#### Key Takeaways:

- i. **Tourism's Economic Role:** Tourism contributes significantly to Fiji's GDP (40%), and the World Eco project will help further boost this sector.
- ii. **Collaboration is Key:** For the World Eco project to succeed, there needs to be strong collaboration between the community, the private sector, and educational institutions like FNU.
- iii. **Land Ownership and Business Development:** 90% of Fiji's land is native owned, creating challenges for land distribution. FNU can play a key role in preparing landowners to engage in tourism-related businesses through education and mentorship.
- iv. **Focus on PSV Driver Training:** PSV drivers should receive continuous education in driver conduct and customer service to enhance tourist experiences.
- v. **Financial Literacy and Automotive Knowledge:** Landowners and businesses in the tourism sector should be trained in financial literacy and basic vehicle maintenance to ensure sustainability.
- vi. **Quality Assurance:** There should be regular reviews of training programs to ensure that classroom learning translates into practical, on-the-ground success.
- vii. **FNU's Role:** FNU should engage with the private sector and government to create a supportive ecosystem for landowners and tourism businesses, helping them thrive in the market.







## 11.0 Session 10: The Vualiku Programme: Transforming Northern Development through Education

**Moderator: PVCLT Professor**

**Jimaima Lako**

**Panelists: PS Lands - Paula Cirikiyasawa, DS Education - Pene Aropio and Tourism Fiji - Lucia Zeeard,**

### 11.1 Opening Remarks: Professor Jimaima Lako

The speaker welcomes attendees to Session 10, which focuses on the World Ecotourism Project aimed at transforming northern development through education. The project seeks to position Vanuatu as a leading sustainable tourism destination, focusing on overcoming barriers, building resilience, improving tourism infrastructure, and enhancing tourism capacity. The speaker highlights that FNU is an implementation partner in the project. Four panelists from various sectors—land, education, tourism, and policing—are present to share their views on how FNU-TVET can position itself for the successful delivery of the project, with a focus on community empowerment and engagement.

### 11.2 Panelists: PS Lands - Paula Cirikiyasawa

**Development Fundamentals and Economic Growth:** The speaker emphasizes the need for Fiji to achieve a consistent 5% GDP growth to sustain long-term development. Currently, the growth rate is at 3.4% and increasing it to 5% is seen as necessary to generate the economic growth needed to improve the country.

**Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** is identified as crucial to supplementing domestic consumption and improving economic conditions. The speaker highlights that the country needs an injection of \$500 million to \$700 million in productive investment, not just consumption, to stimulate real economic development.

**Development Imperative and Population Distribution:** The speaker addresses the issue of population distribution, noting that 62% of Fiji's population is concentrated in urban areas, while 75% of the land is in rural regions. This geographic imbalance presents challenges for equitable development. Land allocation and usage must be managed carefully, as it has become a development imperative, particularly for rural areas. The speaker stresses that land development is not just an affirmative action issue, but one that needs strategic consideration for sustainable growth.

**Retention of Youth and Incentivizing Stay:** Drawing inspiration from Lee Kuan Yew's approach in Singapore, the speaker suggests that fostering a sense of ownership (such as homeownership) for young people could incentivize them to stay and contribute to the country's growth. The argument is that if young people own land or homes, they will have a vested interest in the country's future, which could help prevent brain drain.

Homeownership and economic mobility are critical for stabilizing Fiji's future workforce. By providing opportunities for the younger generation to own property, the government can encourage them to remain in the country, instead of seeking opportunities abroad.

**Social Mobility and Equal Opportunities:** The speaker discusses the importance of providing equal opportunities for all citizens, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is a recognition that many individuals in the room may come from multi-generational educational backgrounds, while others may be first-generation learners.

First-generation students often face unique challenges, and the speaker advocates for clear pathways that allow these individuals to succeed and contribute to the nation's development. This could have a significant impact on poverty alleviation, as equal access to education and opportunities would lead to greater social mobility.

**Gender Investment and Middle-Class Upliftment:** The speaker touches on the importance of gender investment to ensure both men and women can contribute equally to economic development.

There is a focus on the need to uplift the middle class as a key strategy for driving broader economic growth. By improving the standard of living for the middle class, there would be a ripple effect that improves the broader economy, raising living standards for everyone.

**Cultural and Faith-Based Contributions to Development:** The speaker recognizes the role of Fiji's culture and religion as unifying factors that bind the country together. These shared values can be leveraged to promote national development.

Faith-based organizations are seen as integral to this development process, as they can help integrate moral and ethical values into community-driven initiatives that support national growth.

**Land Allocation and Collaborative Development Projects:** The speaker explains the role of the Ministry in allocating land for development projects.



This includes working with various stakeholders, such as FNU, TLTB, and the Ministry of Health, to ensure that land is appropriately designated for public projects (e.g. the Moda City and Aspen Hospital).

The Ministry also collaborates with local and international partners to identify suitable land for development, such as the 100-bed hospital for the Indian Commission and tourism-related projects in Vanuatu.

Government leases and collaborations between government agencies and private sector stakeholders are essential for facilitating large-scale development, ensuring the land is used for the public good.

#### **Key Takeaways: Panelists: PS Lands - Paula Cirikiyasawa**

- i. Focusing on sustainable growth and a clear vision for land development, particularly in rural areas, is crucial.
- ii. Encouraging youth retention through policies like homeownership can help address national challenges.
- iii. Social mobility and equal opportunities are critical to reducing poverty and fostering a more inclusive society.
- iv. Cultural and faith-based institutions should be integrated into development strategies.
- v. Effective land management is key to unlocking growth potential, and partnerships between ministries and organizations like FNU are essential for successful development projects.

#### **11.3 Panelists: Deputy Secretary of Education - Pene Aropio**

He emphasizes that the development of TVET's future is not a matter of chance but destiny and that the efforts discussed at the conference align with the nation's collective vision.

**Building Sustainable TVET Systems:** Creating systems that are responsive to industry needs, labor market shifts, and climate change resilience.

**Skills Development for Empowerment:** Emphasizing skills development to address gaps in the workforce and combat challenges such as school dropouts and social issues like drug abuse.

**Global Collaboration:** Encouraging international cooperation to improve systems by investing in green and digital skills and fostering high-quality development and mutual recognition of standards.

**Current Initiatives by the Ministry of Education (MOE):** The speaker discusses various steps the MOE is taking to enhance education in TVET, including:

The **National Policy on TVET** is set to be submitted to the Cabinet in February, with implementation expected by March. This policy will guide the future direction of TVET in Fiji.

i. The **Review of the Education Act (1978)**, which has remained largely unchanged despite numerous policy changes over the years.

ii. A **Curriculum Framework Review** that aims to address the growing need for vocational pathways, which were not included in the 2013 framework. The creation of an **Education Commission**, which will advise on curriculum development, training programs, and the overall educational service delivery.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

i. **Commitment to International Agreements:** Fiji is fully committed to building sustainable TVET systems, empowering individuals through skills development, and promoting global collaboration.

ii. **MOE's Strategic Plans:** The MOE is working on several initiatives, including a new national policy for TVET, reviewing the outdated Education Act, and updating the national curriculum to include more vocational pathways.

iii. **Critical Sectors Needing Focus:** There is a significant need for skills development in the construction, tourism, and agriculture sectors to address industry demands and economic growth.

iv. **Industry Collaboration is Crucial:** The success of the education and TVET reforms will rely heavily on the collaboration between the Ministry of Education, industries, and educational providers, especially in curriculum development and creating more training opportunities.

v. **Curriculum and SME Focus:** Curriculum improvements should emphasize entrepreneurship, and more support should be directed toward SMEs and specialized TVET programs in schools.

vi. **Long-Term Educational Support:** The speaker calls for continued sustainable funding from donors and the government to support education development, research, and curriculum improvements, ensuring a robust system that meets both current and future needs.



vii. **Unified Vision for TVET:** The future of education and the workforce in Fiji hinges on a collaborative approach between the government, industries, and educational institutions, guided by a shared vision of TVET as the cornerstone of national development.

viii. **Educational Transformation:** The speaker concludes with a motivational message emphasizing that education is the key to societal transformation, urging all stakeholders to unite for the betterment of the nation's future.

#### 11.4 Panelist: Ms. Lucia Zeeard

**Tourism Development in Vanua Levu:** The speaker highlights that Vanua Levu's tourism development must focus on creating a new, unique offering, as there is a desire to do things differently than what is available in other parts of Fiji. This will include a focus on community-based tourism (CBT), nature-based tourism (NBT), and eco-tourism.

**Workforce Readiness:** There are questions about whether the workforce in Vanua Levu is adequately prepared to meet the labor demands of the tourism sector, including large resorts. The speaker suggests that this question should be addressed now, not in the future, with proactive planning for training and upskilling in areas such as customer service, hospitality, and conflict resolution.

**Intentional Curriculum Development:** The speaker calls for curriculum and training programs that are intentional and tailored to meet the needs of the market. Curricula should not be based on theoretical ideas but should be grounded in practical, real-world requirements as seen by entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. The goal is to ensure that the local workforce is properly trained to deliver high-quality service that meets the expectations of tourists.

**Tourism and Market Access:** The speaker underscores the importance of market access for local entrepreneurs. It's essential to connect them with wider markets and provide them with tools and knowledge to succeed, rather than simply providing them with a website and expecting success.

Successful entrepreneurs in tourism must understand market segmentation and target the right customers to grow their businesses.

**Target Market for Vanua Levu:** When developing tourism in Vanua Levu, the target market will differ from other regions like Viti Levu. Tourists coming to Vanua Levu are likely looking for more meaningful, community-based experiences, which will require a higher level of service and a different type of tourist offering.

**Testing the Market:** The speaker references a recent test of the market, where a group of travel agents, media, and trade professionals were sent to Vanua Levu as part of a "regenerative" tourism initiative. This initiative proved successful, with many partners committing to send tourists, showing that there is a market willing to spend on more authentic, deep travel experiences.

**Collaboration for Success:** The speaker emphasizes the importance of collaboration between government, tourism authorities, and local businesses. Market access is critical, and working with trade partners and media is essential for success. There is an expressed intent to continue targeting high-spending tourists from different parts of the world, including Australia, New Zealand, and North America.

#### Key Takeaways:

i. **Preparation of Workforce is Critical:** The development of tourism and infrastructure in Vanua Levu requires immediate action to prepare a workforce that can meet the demands of the sector. This involves developing targeted curricula and training programs focused on skills such as customer service, hospitality, and conflict resolution.

ii. **Intentional Curriculum Development:** Education and training should be driven by practical, real-world needs rather than theoretical ideas.

Collaborations with existing entrepreneurs and professionals in the industry are essential for building effective programs.

iii. **Tourism Development Needs Unique Offerings:** Vanua Levu must create a tourism offering that is distinct from what is available in Viti Levu, focusing on community-based, nature-based, and eco-tourism to appeal to a new type of tourist seeking authentic and meaningful experiences.

iv. **Market Access is Key:** Entrepreneurs need access to markets, and solutions should focus on connecting them with the right target audience. Simply providing resources without the right guidance on how to access customers is insufficient.



v. **Different Markets for Different Regions:** Tourism offerings in Vanua Levu must cater to different target markets than those in Viti Levu, particularly tourists looking for deeper, more authentic travel experiences. This means that pricing and delivery service should be aligned with the expectations of these tourists.

vi. **Successful Market Testing:** A recent market test in Vanua Levu demonstrated that there is significant interest from international tourists, particularly from North America, willing to pay for unique travel experiences. This shows that there is potential for growth in the region's tourism sector, but it needs to be strategically developed.

vii. **Collaboration for Long-Term Success:** The speaker calls for continued collaboration between government bodies, tourism organizations, and local businesses. Working together will help create a cohesive strategy for tourism development and ensure that Fiji, particularly Vanua Levu, can meet the evolving needs of the global tourism market.

### 11.5 Panelist: Police Commissioner Appointed: Mr. Rusiate Tudravu

**Focus on National Development and Challenges:** The speaker stresses the importance of preparing for national projects, particularly in the North. They highlight the challenges of managing infrastructure development and addressing issues like crime and drug use in developing areas. There's a concern about how development projects might lead to an increase in crime, especially in the tourism-focused regions of Fiji.

**Research and Data Gaps:** A key concern is the lack of centralized, accurate data regarding drug use and related issues in Fiji. The speaker calls for more research, specifically requesting the Fiji National University (FNU) to assist with research to better understand the current situation and inform better decision-making.

**Capacity Building and Homegrown Solutions:** The speaker emphasizes the need for capacity building, particularly in the context of policing. They express the desire for homegrown curriculums tailored to Fiji's specific needs, rather than importing models that may not be suitable for the local context.

**Youth Education and Employment Issues:** The speaker raises concerns about the current education system and whether it is adequately preparing youth for the job market or inadvertently training them for criminal activities.

They stress the importance of shifting mindsets and promoting TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) programs to provide practical skills that align with the job market, rather than just focusing on white-collar jobs.

**Support for TVET and Practical Education:** The speaker champions TVET as a critical solution for youth unemployment and suggests that this educational path can offer better job opportunities. They advocate for improving TVET programs to help students be more employable and bridge the gap between theoretical education and practical fieldwork.

### Key Takeaways: Mr. Rusiate Tudravu

i. **Research is Crucial:** The speaker requests more research on issues like drug use and crime, to better inform decisions and create effective solutions.

ii. **Importance of Homegrown Solutions:** There is a strong emphasis on developing local, tailored curriculums and strategies, especially for law enforcement and education, rather than relying on imported models.

iii. **Youth Education Needs Reform:** The education system needs to better prepare students for real-world challenges, with a focus on TVET programs to provide practical skills and employment opportunities.

iv. **Crime and Development Are Linked:** As development projects, particularly in tourism, are implemented, there's an expectation that they will also bring an increase in crime, making it essential to prepare both the infrastructure and the workforce accordingly.

v. **TVET is Key to Employment Solutions:** Shifting the focus towards TVET will help address unemployment issues and provide the practical skills needed for the job market, rather than solely focusing on academic education.





## 12.0 Session 11: TVET for the Vualiku Tourism Program

### 12.1 Speaker: Director TVET and Ministry of Education

**TVET and the Importance of Transformation:** The speaker discusses the importance of transforming the northern division in Fiji through the promotion and development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

The concept of “resetting” TVET is introduced, with a focus on reviewing current systems and practices to make them more relevant and effective. The speaker reflects on how, like Genesis in the Bible, there is a need to return to the beginning and rethink how to address existing gaps in the TVET system.

**Skills Mismatch and the Need for an Incubator:** A significant issue discussed is the skills mismatch, leading to the exodus of people seeking better opportunities. The speaker proposes the creation of an “incubator” to provide students with work readiness training after completing vocational courses, connecting them with industries and helping bridge the skills gap.

The idea is to create a facility where students receive hands-on, industry relevant training, making them better prepared for the workforce and helping reduce the skills gap.

**Collaboration and Partnerships:** Emphasizing the importance of collaboration, the speaker notes the need for partnerships between the government, FNU, and other stakeholders to develop a skilled workforce for emerging industries in Fiji’s northern region.

The speaker highlights the goal of reducing urban migration by creating job opportunities and infrastructure in the north.

**National TVET Policy:** The speaker provides an update on the development of the national TVET policy, which aims to improve the quality and accessibility of vocational education.

The policy is guided by several key pillars, such as improving responsiveness to labor market needs, expanding access to TVET, adapting qualifications to a green economy, strengthening governance, and improving system efficiency.

**Youth Employment and Micro-Credentials:** Addressing the gap in employment for youth, the speaker proposes implementing basic employment skills training after Year 13 to ensure all students leave with some form of practical qualification.

They also emphasize the importance of micro-credentials, allowing students to gain skill certifications while awaiting further education or job opportunities.

**Curriculum Review:** The ongoing curriculum review aims to ensure that TVET education remains relevant to current market demands, incorporating digital skills, AI, VR, and other emerging technologies.

The government is reviewing technical subjects to ensure they align with industry needs and the evolving economy.

**Community and Industry Engagement:** The speaker calls for increased outreach and collaboration between FNU and the community, particularly with underrepresented groups, and stresses the importance of providing career opportunities through TVET.

Partnerships with industries are seen as essential to ensuring that graduates have the skills and experience needed in the job market.

#### Key Takeaways:

- i. **TVET is Key to Addressing Skills Gaps:** The creation of incubators and a focus on work readiness will help reduce the skills gap in Fiji and make students more employable.
- ii. **Collaboration is Crucial:** Collaboration between FNU, government bodies, industries, and the community is essential to the success of TVET initiatives and national development.
- iii. **National TVET Policy:** A national TVET policy is in the final stages of development, aiming to improve the quality, responsiveness, and equity of vocational education in Fiji.
- iv. **Youth Employment Needs Focus:** Practical, skills-based training must be provided for students, even after secondary school, to equip them with necessary employment skills. Micro-credentials offer a potential pathway for students to gain qualifications while waiting for further opportunities.
- v. **Curriculum Modernization:** The curriculum is being reviewed to include relevant skills like digital literacy and other emerging technologies to meet industry needs and future job market demands.



vi. **Focus on Sustainable Development:** The TVET policy will align with national development goals, particularly focusing on agriculture, sustainable tourism, and renewable energy sectors to support economic growth in Fiji.

### **12.2 Respondent: Dr Taraivini Raiula (Head of Campus – Labasa)**

The speaker outlines two main actions for the World Eco Project and TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) efforts. First, the FNU Labasa campus can take inspiration from CETVET's work in Ba province and collaborate with the Ministry of Affairs to profile villages and identify school leavers and dropouts as a target group for TVET training. Second, a task force will be formed to implement these initiatives.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

1. **Capacity Building and Repositioning:** Strengthen TVET efforts and collaboration with provincial bodies.
2. **Target Group Identification:** School leavers and dropouts are the focus of TVET programs.
3. **Task Force Formation:** A team will be established to set up and drive the initiative forward.

### **12.3 Respondent: Dr. Kaliova Ravuiwasa (DEAN – CAFF)**

The speaker thanks colleagues, government representatives, and stakeholders for their participation, emphasizing the importance of the ongoing reset in the context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Reflecting on the discussions over the past two days, the speaker highlights the significant resources available in the region,

particularly in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. They stress the need to change the perception of these sectors as a last resort option and to advocate for these fields as valuable career paths, starting with school children and communities.

The speaker also discusses efforts to increase visibility, advocacy, and program offerings, especially in the country's northern regions, with the introduction of new programs like diploma courses in agriculture and fisheries. Additionally, there is a call for collaboration in curriculum reviews to introduce agricultural education earlier in the education system. The speaker concludes by thanking the attendees and expressing commitment to restructuring and enhancing TVET initiatives.

#### **Key Takeaways: Dr. Kaliova Ravuiwasa (DEAN – CAFF)**

1. Changing Perceptions of Agriculture and Fisheries: The need to shift the view of agriculture, fisheries, and forestry from being “last option” careers to valuable, viable professions.
2. Visibility and Advocacy: Efforts to increase awareness and visibility in the northern regions, with an emphasis on involving local communities in the learning process.
3. New Programs: The introduction of new programs, including diploma courses in agriculture and fisheries, to meet the needs of the region.
4. Curriculum Review: A suggestion to be involved in reviewing curriculum, particularly in incorporating agriculture education earlier in the school system, to facilitate smoother transitions into tertiary education.
5. Collaboration and Restructuring: TVET programs need to be reviewed and restructured on an ongoing basis to better align with community needs and the region's resource wealth.







### 13.0 Session 12: Panel Discussion - PACT/FNU/ Climate Change:

**Role of FNU Moderator: PVCRI Professor Paul Iji**

**Panelists: Professor Paul Dargusch - Director PACT Ruel Yamuna -**

**PNG Envoy for Climate & USC Dr Candra Samekto – IFAD Country**

**Director & Pacific Representative Dr Sivendra Michael – PS Ministry of Climate Change and Environment**

#### 13.1 Panelist: Dr. Sivendra Michael

Dr. Sivendra talks about the key policy frameworks like the national climate change policy, particularly objectives 5.4 and 7.3, which focus on investing in human and technological capacity for climate resilience and promoting a climate-ready workforce. The speaker stresses the importance of collaboration and the role of educational institutions like FNU and USP in developing climate-resilient curriculums and training pathways.

The speaker highlights the need for innovative learning platforms that leverage mobile access, with most of Fiji's population using mobile phones.

The government is willing to partner with institutions to make relevant courses more accessible to the public. They also discuss the importance of aligning curriculums with local needs and avoiding over-reliance on foreign, non-contextual frameworks. The speaker advocates for professional development, especially in the public sector, through TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) and micro-credentials, to address the skills gaps.

The speaker also emphasizes the need for integrated research that considers climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution as interconnected issues. They call for the promotion of traditional knowledge and its integration into research and curriculum development, to complement scientific knowledge.

A significant part of the discussion revolves around creating a sustainable workforce and reducing dependency on external expertise. The speaker underscores the importance of domestic capacity building and highlights the current challenges in knowledge transfer and policy implementation. They also mention ongoing efforts to secure climate finance for higher education and research, specifically referencing a partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment.

The speaker shares a case study of Nadave, where training is being offered through the grant scheme to build resilience. This initiative targets rural communities, providing them with access to climate resilience courses via TAFE. Another case study involving Habitat for Humanity is discussed, questioning how to formalize skills acquired through training and offer pathways for youth to enter the workforce.

Lastly, the speaker emphasizes the need to invest in people to create a qualified workforce that can support national climate goals and development.

They advocate for collaboration among ministries, educational institutions, and NGOs to co-create programs that meet local needs at affordable costs.

#### Key Takeaways:

i. **Policy Alignment with Climate Goals:** The national climate change policy focuses on building a climate-resilient workforce, with an emphasis on cross-sector collaboration to address climate change, education, and workforce development.

ii. **Role of Education Institutions:** Educational institutions like FNU and USP are critical in designing and delivering climate-resilience programs. There is a push to align curriculums with local needs and integrate innovative learning methods, such as mobile learning platforms.

iii. **Professional Development in TVET:** TVET plays a crucial role in building a skilled workforce. The speaker stresses the importance of micro-credentials, continuous professional development, and the need to invest in public sector education to bridge the skills gap.

iv. **Integration of Traditional Knowledge:** There is a need to integrate traditional knowledge alongside scientific research in climate change proposals, curriculum development, and policymaking to ensure that local knowledge is valued and formalized.

v. **Collaboration and Capacity Building:** Successful climate resilience and workforce development depend on collaboration between government, educational institutions, and NGOs. The speaker highlights ongoing initiatives to build domestic capacity and reduce dependence on external expertise.



vi. **Research and Funding:** The speaker stresses the need for increased climate finance to support higher education and research, including establishing a national research and development fund to build local capacity.

vii. **Practical Pathways for Youth Employment:** Case studies, such as the Nadave resilience training and Habitat for Humanity projects, highlight the importance of providing formal qualifications and pathways for youth to enter the workforce, particularly in rural and maritime communities.

viii. **Collaborative Proposal Development:** A call for further collaboration with institutions like FNU to co-develop research and education programs that are context-specific and sustainable, with a focus on addressing the country's climate resilience needs.

### 13.2 Panelist: Professor Paul Dargush

The speaker introduced PACT (Pacific Action on Climate Transitions), a joint initiative between Fiji National University (FNU) and Monash University, aimed at enhancing resilience to climate change in the Pacific region.

PACT's objectives include helping individuals, businesses, governments, and organizations adapt to global changes, particularly climate change.

PACT is supported by FJD 2 million from the national budget, matched by funding from Monash University, enabling PhD scholarships and research initiatives.

**Direct Research & Development (R&D):** PACT focuses on practical, development-based R&D, engaging with multilateral funds (e.g., Green Climate Fund) to support Pacific countries in accessing climate finance and improving local capacity.

**Seeding and Leveraging Initiatives:** PACT provides seed funding for projects, collaborating with entities like FNU and IFAD to amplify the impact of initial investments and attract larger funding for climate-related projects.

**Competency Development:** PACT emphasizes building both capacity (ability) and competency (demonstrated expertise) through PhD programs, masterclasses, and collaborative research projects. Key areas of focus include climate policy, climate finance, and technical skills for resilience.

PACT's forward plans include a consultative process with FNU's executive group, engagement with ministries, and private sector involvement. The goal is to launch major initiatives, including a conference in October 2025 with the South Pacific Community, and continued development of PACT's programs and partnerships.

### Key Takeaways: Professor Paul Dargush

i. PACT aims to build resilience to climate change in the Pacific through collaborative R&D, funding leverage, and competency development.

ii. The initiative spans multiple sectors, including agriculture, energy, infrastructure, and health.

iii. PACT will play a significant role in building long-term capacity through educational programs and active PhD research.

iv. Plans include a major conference and closer collaboration with local and regional stakeholders.

### 13.3 Panelist: Dr. Candra Samekto – IFAD Country Director & Pacific Representative

The speaker is from IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), a hybrid institution that operates both as a part of the United Nations (UN) and as a financing institution. IFAD provides financial assistance to governments through loans and grants for projects, but it does not implement them directly. Instead, it collaborates with governments and local partners to channel resources effectively.

### Key Takeaways: Dr. Candra Samekto

i. **IFAD's Role:** IFAD works in rural development, focusing on livelihood options such as agriculture, marine activities, and small-scale industries like handicrafts. It does not implement projects directly but supports governments and partners in execution.

ii. **Projects in Fiji:** A new project, the "Blue Economy and Green Village Development" in Fiji, combines IFAD's investment with GEF (Global Environment Facility) resources. This project is developed in partnership with the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment and focuses on sustainable economic development, tourism, and food security for local communities.

iii. **Tourism and Local Communities:** Tourism is expected to grow in the region, but it must benefit local communities. The discussion emphasizes how tourism development should not harm the environment or



community livelihoods. Solutions include working with smallholder farmers to provide food for tourists while ensuring sustainable practices.

iv. **Livelihood Development:** IFAD focuses on diverse livelihood options, like floriculture (e.g., orchid farming) for women in rural areas. Such initiatives provide alternative sources of income and support local economies, particularly in rural communities.

v. **Research and Evidence-based Approaches:** Research is critical to IFAD's investment strategy. They collaborate with institutions such as ACR (Agriculture and Climate Research) to ensure projects are scientifically proven and based on evidence. For example, in the sugarcane industry, research will help restore degraded lands and improve productivity.

vi. **Integrated Island Management:** Environmental management is a key concern, particularly with the potential for tourism to degrade natural resources (e.g., plastic pollution). IFAD works on integrated island management approaches to protect the environment while promoting community livelihoods.

vii. **Collaboration with Universities and Experts:** IFAD is working with universities like FNU (Fiji National University) and Monash University to integrate local knowledge and expertise into projects. They aim to strengthen national capacity through collaboration with research institutions.

viii. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** IFAD's investments aim to improve income levels, enhance resilience, and ensure environmental sustainability for rural communities, with a focus on smallholder farmers and local enterprises. **Government Involvement:** The success of IFAD's projects rely on close collaboration with the government. The endorsement of government officials, such as PS Sivendra, is essential for initiating new projects and ensuring they align with national priorities.

#### 13.4 Panelist: Ruel Yamuna - PNG Envoy for Climate

The speaker outlines Papua New Guinea's efforts to combat climate change through policy, education, and partnerships with regional institutions. He stresses the need for research, capacity building, and training to achieve carbon neutrality and support the green transition.

Education systems must adapt to meet industry needs, and indigenous knowledge should be integrated into scientific approaches to enhance climate action. The speaker also advocates for continued support and funding through mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund to empower small island nations in addressing climate challenges.

#### Key Takeaways:

##### i. Papua New Guinea's Climate Commitment:

The speaker highlights PNG's political commitment to climate action, referencing the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015. Article 9 of the agreement discusses developing countries' ability to meet their climate goals with support, including finance, capacity building, technology transfer, and research.

PNG's targets are to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. This will require significant upskilling and training, supported by research and technology.

##### ii. Policy and Legal Framework:

PNG has established the "Natural Climate Compatible Development Management Policy" and the "Climate Change Management Act" as legal foundations to guide the country's climate actions.

##### iii. Education and Research for Climate Action:

Research and education play critical roles in addressing climate change.

Universities in PNG, such as the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of Natural Resources, and the University of Technology, are establishing dedicated schools and programs focused on renewable energy and resources.

These efforts align with the broader regional transition towards a clean, green economy, where education and research complement the push for carbon neutrality.

##### iv. Green Jobs and the Need for Skilled Workforce:

The transition to a low-carbon economy requires a paradigm shift and the creation of green jobs. However, there is a bottleneck in capacity, as universities have limited space to accommodate the increasing demand for education in these fields.



Expanding vocational education and research opportunities, along with innovative models such as living laboratories, is essential to ensure that future generations are equipped for this transition.

**v. Green Climate Fund (GCF):**

The speaker shares his experience serving on the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Board, which supports small island developing countries and least developed countries in addressing climate change. He emphasizes the importance of research and data to justify funding for adaptation and mitigation projects.

While the GCF requires scientific data to support climate actions, the speaker advocates for simplifying the process and making the fund more receptive to the needs of Pacific Island nations.

**vi. Indigenous Knowledge and Science:**

The speaker underscores the value of indigenous knowledge in addressing climate change. While traditional knowledge exists, it needs to be integrated with scientific methods for better solutions. The GCF has increasingly recognized the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge in climate proposals.

**vii. Challenges in Education and Industry Alignment:**

Education systems need to better align with industry needs, especially in training young people for green jobs. The speaker reflects on personal experiences, including his brother's disappointment in not receiving an offer for higher education despite excellent grades. He stresses the importance of providing adequate pathways for youth to avoid disillusionment and support their future success.

**viii. Upcoming Green Climate Fund Board Meeting:**

The GCF Board meeting will be held in Port Moresby, PNG, later this year.

The speaker sees this as an opportunity to advocate for more focus on education and workforce development, stressing the need for training and upskilling to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.

**ix. Support for the Next Generation:**

The speaker concludes by reflecting on the critical role education and capacity building will play in ensuring the next generation's sustainable and successful future. He emphasizes the importance of opening pathways for young people to succeed, particularly in emerging sectors like green energy.







## 14.0 Session 13: NDP, Vualiku, and TVET Offerings at FNU Some Directions into the Future

**Keynote Speaker: Presentation on partnership with FNU, Fiji Water**

**(TWC) Kenny Spratt**

**Respondents - Dean CAFF, Dean CETVET, Director PCMS, DNTPC IT, DNTPC PI**

### 14.1 Keynote Speaker: Kenny Spratt

**The Wonderful Company's Mission:** The Wonderful Company is dedicated to offering high-quality, healthy brands to consumers, and promoting better lifestyle choices. Their diverse product range includes fruits, nuts, water, wines, and juices. They are the world's leading grower of tree nuts, the largest citrus grower in the U.S., and the largest delivery service globally.

**Social Responsibility and Community Impact:** The company's owners, Linden, and Stewart Resnick, established the **Fiji Water Foundation** to give back to underprivileged communities globally. The foundation focuses on providing access to clean water, healthcare, and education. Their goal is to combine business success with impactful social responsibility and sustainable practices.

The Wonderful Company's mission is clear: "To lead people and the planet better than we found them." This is reflected in their work improving education, healthcare, economic mobility, and environmental sustainability, particularly in underserved communities.

**Focus on Workforce Development in California's Central Valley:** The company has made a significant investment in the Central Valley of California, a region with limited economic opportunities. Since 2011, they have been committed to building pathways for growth, especially for underserved communities.

**Wonderful Education Programs:** In 2013, the company launched an **Agricultural Career Preparation Program** in partnership with local universities. The program allows students to graduate high school with 60 college credits and an associate's degree. To date, more than 1,300 first-generation students have received associate degrees, and over 120 have contributed to the company and community.

They're also expanding into other industries to address workforce needs and offer opportunities for more students.

**Alternative Career Pathways:** Recognizing that not all students are suited for or interested in traditional college pathways, The Wonderful Company has introduced **alternative workforce development programs** like **technical training** at the **Wonderful Career Center**.

The **Wonderful Career Center**, opened in 2022, is dedicated to providing community members with hands-on technical training to prepare them for careers in industries that need skilled workers. These programs aim to fill the skill gaps faced by local businesses and offer career opportunities outside traditional educational tracks.

**Career Center Programs and Details:** The Career Center offers state-of-the-art classrooms and labs. It is located within the Wonderful Industrial Park in Shafter, California, which houses major companies like Amazon, Walmart, Target, and FedEx.

#### Key Training Programs:

- i. **Technical Opportunity Program:** A two-week, custom program designed to address specific skill needs of business units.
- ii. **Powered Industrial Truck Program:** A forklift training program that includes classroom instruction, virtual reality simulation, and hands-on practice, followed by certification.
- iii. **Apprenticeship Program:** A paid, on-the-job training program that combines classroom learning with practical work in mechanical systems, electronics, environmental safety, and other technical skills.

\* These programs are designed to meet the needs of local businesses and ensure that graduates are well-prepared to enter the workforce immediately.

**Community and Industry Collaboration:** The success of these programs relies heavily on collaboration between the company, educational institutions, and industry partners. By aligning education with industry needs, the company ensures that graduates are equipped with the skills required for the modern workforce.

The company has invested over \$100 million in education and workforce development over the past 15 years. They avoid the common pitfalls in workforce development by streamlining their programs and ensuring that they evolve with changes in technology and industry trends.



**Program Accessibility and Support:** The programs at the Wonderful Career Center are available to the broader community, and there are no costs for businesses or students. This demonstrates the company's commitment to supporting the local economy and workforce.

In addition to technical skills, the programs include **soft skills development**, such as professionalism, punctuality, and interview techniques, which are crucial for success in the workplace.

After completing the programs, students receive assistance with job placements. The company works closely with business leaders to ensure that graduates have employment opportunities.

**Sustainability of Workforce Development Efforts:** The company recognizes the importance of continuous engagement and flexibility in workforce development. They work closely with industry leaders and educators to ensure that training programs remain relevant and meet the current demands of the workforce.

**The Career Technical Education Committee** brings together business leaders, educators, and community representatives to ensure that training programs are aligned with industry needs and workforce trends.

**Building Trust and Collaboration for Future Workforce Needs:** The speech emphasizes the need for greater collaboration between industry and educational institutions to address workforce challenges. Trust between these sectors needs to be rebuilt, and the industry's needs must be reflected in the curriculum.

The Wonderful Company is committed to identifying opportunities for growth in workforce development not only in California but also in other regions, including Fiji, where they plan to partner with FNU to help develop a stronger workforce.

#### **Key Takeaways: Kenny Spratt**

- i. **The Wonderful Company's social responsibility** focuses on education, healthcare, and sustainability, especially in underserved communities like California's Central Valley.
- ii. **Workforce development initiatives** include education programs, technical training, and partnerships with local universities to equip students with the skills needed for modern careers.
- iii. **Alternative career pathways** are offered through the Wonderful Career Center, addressing skill gaps and providing technical training for high school graduates and community members.
- iv. The company's **focus on industry collaboration** ensures that training programs align with current workforce needs, creating job-ready graduates.
- v. **Soft skills training** is integrated into technical training programs to ensure students are not only skilled but also professional and job ready.
- vi. The company has invested significantly in education and workforce development, creating a long-term impact on the communities they serve. Continuous improvement and collaboration are emphasized to sustain workforce development efforts and meet the evolving demands of the global economy.

#### **14.2 Panelist : Dean CETVET**

The speaker thanks Mr. Spratt for his insightful presentation and reflects on the topic, drawing parallels to ongoing efforts in Fiji. Specifically, Ba Provincial Council to address a serious issue – over 21,000 students in Fiji who have dropped out of school. The speaker emphasizes the urgency of addressing this challenge.

**Connecting to Workforce Development:** The issue of 21,000 students at home is alarming and presents an opportunity to partner with Fiji Water and the university to find a solution for the province of Ba. The speaker stresses the importance of vocational education and training (TVET) in turning raw materials into useful products and improving the workforce. The concept of a mobile "TVET Bus or TVET Train" is proposed, which would travel from village to village, providing training for students and then dropping them off at locations where they can contribute to the economy.

**Encouraging Enrollment in TVET Programs:** Over the past three days, the speaker's team has visited villages in the province to encourage students to enroll in TVET programs. The speaker believes that TVET programs can be a key solution to addressing skill gaps and ensuring that students are equipped to become productive members of society.

**Resource-Based Strategy for Fiji:** Drawing inspiration from Mr. Spratt's presentation, the speaker mentions the importance of utilizing Fiji's natural resources – specifically agriculture, fisheries, and forestry – in workforce development. These sectors should be the focus of TVET centers in different regions, in Fiji.



The speaker suggests that the university and its partners should establish centers that enhance skills in these key industries. Each center could focus on specific natural resources, with one center dedicated to fisheries in coastal areas and another focusing on forestry in regions rich in these resources.

**COVID-19 Impact and the Need for Agriculture Support:** The speaker emphasizes that COVID-19 has taught Fiji the importance of agriculture as a backbone of the economy. Despite the growing interest in agriculture, funding for agricultural scholarships is limited, with only 35 scholarships available for students pursuing agricultural programs at the university.

**The Importance of Collaboration:** Collaboration is identified as key to addressing the workforce needs of Fiji. The speaker expresses gratitude to the policymakers present at the meeting and calls for their support in making decisions that strengthen agriculture and natural resources.

Collaboration is also emphasized in terms of supporting tourism in Fiji, with a focus on the importance of local produce. The speaker notes that much of what is consumed in hotels is imported, which reduces the economic benefits to Fiji.

**Proposal for Partnership with Fiji Water and FNU:** The speaker invites Fiji Water and FNU to collaborate on enhancing local food production and promoting local expertise in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry. They suggest leveraging the knowledge of experts at Fiji National University (FNU) to advocate for the importance of eating locally grown produce.

The speaker calls for a partnership that would focus on agriculture and the enhancement of local resources, ensuring that Fiji's economy is sustainable and resilient.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- i. **Alarming dropout rate:** There are over 21,000 school-age children in Fiji who have dropped out of school, and the speaker sees this as a critical issue to address through education and training programs.
- ii. **Opportunity for collaboration:** The speaker suggests that Fiji Water, Fiji National University (FNU), and the Ba Provincial Council could collaborate to help reintegrate these students into TVET programs and workforce development initiatives.
- iii. Focus on natural resources: The speaker emphasizes the importance of utilizing Fiji's natural resources—agriculture, fisheries, and forestry—to drive workforce development. Specialized training centers could be set up in different regions of Fiji to focus on these areas.
- iv. **Need for more support in agriculture education:** Despite growing interest in agriculture, only a limited number of scholarships are available for students in agriculture-related programs. The speaker calls for increased investment and support for agricultural education.
- v. **Collaboration is key:** Collaboration among various stakeholders, including the government, universities, and industry players, is crucial for addressing Fiji's workforce and educational challenges.
- vi. **Promoting local produce:** The speaker stresses the importance of promoting local food production and consumption, particularly in the tourism industry, where most food products are imported. There is a push for more emphasis on local agricultural practices and production.
- vii. **Partnership proposal:** The speaker invites Fiji Water and FNU to collaborate on projects that promote local expertise, sustainable agricultural practices, and economic growth in Fiji. They believe this partnership could be instrumental in addressing the challenges facing the country.

#### **14.3 Panelist: Director PCMS**

**Funding Challenges in Education:** A significant issue highlighted is the lack of funding, particularly for educational programs related to tourism and maritime safety. The speaker stresses that while tourism is a key focus for future development, the funding to support training in this field, such as Boat Master License (BML) courses, is a major hurdle.

**Tourism and Risk:** Tourism, especially in maritime contexts like Vanuatu, introduces both economic opportunities and risks. The speaker emphasizes the need for specialized maritime training to mitigate these risks.

**PCMS Role in Training:** The Pacific Center for Maritime Studies provides training for individuals in the tourism industry, especially boat owners and operators, to ensure safety and professionalism. The speaker mentions that without government funding, external sponsorships are needed to continue offering these crucial courses.



**Call for Stakeholder Support:** There is a clear call for stakeholders to provide support, especially in terms of funding for running various training programs, including Boat Master License courses and safety training for local personnel.

**Future of Tourism in Vanua Levu:** The speaker touches on future tourism developments in Vanua Levu, highlighting the importance of properly trained local staff to handle the expected influx of tourists in the next decade.

#### 14.4 Panelist: Mr. Bob Kolitagane

The speaker opens by acknowledging the planned program for the evening but emphasizes their desire to keep the presentation brief. The focus is on the work of the NTPC's - NDPC (National Development Productivity Centre) in supporting industries in Fiji, both public and private, by offering in-service training, apprenticeship programs, and consultancy services. One key initiative the NDPC is involved in is certifying skilled individuals who have experience but lack formal certification, ensuring they are equipped for employment.

**Apprenticeship Program:** The NDPC plays a critical role in managing and improving the apprenticeship program, which has been a longstanding and successful initiative. The goal is to support industries by closing the skills gap, particularly in fields where workers have practical experience but no formal certifications. This is seen as a significant opportunity for local workers to gain proper qualifications and enhance their employability.

**Partnerships and Support:** The NDPC is working closely with various organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), Apprenticeship Australia, and Fiji National University (FNU), to co-design and implement training programs. This includes a focus on improving the quality of apprenticeship programs and enhancing supervisory skills.

**National Development Plans and Productivity:** The NDPC is involved in overseeing two major plans: the 2025-2029 National Development Plan and the 2021-2036 National Productivity Master Plan. These plans focus on improving economic resilience, uplifting economic well-being, good governance, and promoting lifelong learning and sustainable socioeconomic growth. The NDPC is tasked with ensuring the successful implementation of these plans through targeted strategies, including strengthening the apprenticeship scheme.

**Fiji Business Excellence Awards (FBEA):** The NDPC supports the Fiji Business Excellence Awards and provides consultancy services to organizations, including Fiji Airports, to help them improve their business practices. This support is aligned with the broader goal of enhancing national productivity and performance.

**Key Initiatives and Training Programs:** Strengthening the Apprenticeship Program: The apprenticeship program, which has been a part of Fiji's workforce development for over 60 years, has seen a revitalization. With the support of ILO and other partners, the NDPC is working to ensure that the program remains relevant, providing high-quality training for both workers and supervisors. In 2023, the government launched a new phase of the program, which aims to address the skills gap across various sectors.

**National Productivity Master Plan (2021-2036):** This 15-year plan outlines a collaborative approach to improving national productivity. The NDPC works with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Workplace Relations, as well as other institutions like the Fiji Bureau of Statistics and the Reserve Bank of Fiji, to gather data and implement strategies to boost productivity at both the national and enterprise levels.

**Rural and Remote Maritime TVET Program:** This initiative, which started in 2023, focuses on providing training in rural and remote communities, especially in the maritime sector. The program is aimed at equipping individuals with skills to become entrepreneurs or join the workforce. The training has proven successful, with 265 graduates from a November 2023 cohort, 60% of whom were single mothers.

**Collaboration with Major Corporations:** The NDPC has partnered with major corporations like the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) and Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) to incorporate the apprenticeship program into their operations. This is a significant step, as it helps address the skills gap in these organizations while contributing to the broader goal of workforce development.

**Expanding Training Programs:** The NDPC aims to increase its TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) offerings in rural and remote regions, including Macuata, Bua, and the outer islands of Fiji. This expansion is crucial for ensuring that communities in these areas have access to quality training and skills development opportunities.

**Targeting MSMEs:** The NDPC's next focus will be on micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Fiji. They plan to engage these businesses more actively and help them adopt training programs that can improve their workforce and productivity.



### Key Takeaways:

- i. The NDPC plays a vital role in supporting workforce development through training, apprenticeships, and consultancy services.
- ii. There is a strong focus on addressing the skills gap through certification programs and improving the quality of training.
- iii. The NDPC is collaborating with international organizations and local industries to implement effective workforce development strategies.
- iv. The National Development Plan and National Productivity Master Plan are central to the NDPC's work, focusing on economic resilience, good governance, and sustainable growth.
- v. The NDPC is committed to expanding training programs in rural and remote areas, with a particular focus on marginalized communities and MSMEs.







## 15.0 Session 14: Training for Future Development – What does the Vualiku Programme mean to FNU?

**Speaker: PVC L&T, Dean CMNHS, Dean CBHTS, Dean CAFF, Dean CHEL, Dean CETVET, Director PCMS, DNTPC PI, DNTPC IT.**

### 15.1 Speaker: PVC – L&T

Professor Tima opens the discourse by addressing the ongoing dialogues concerning the Vualiku programme, redirecting attention to its implications for Fiji National University (FNU). They assert that FNU must overcome complacency and embrace a more agile approach to both educational practices and project execution. This entails a thorough revision of the curriculum to equip students with the essential knowledge, skills, and competencies for effective real-world decision-making, adept problem-solving, and career readiness.

Central to the discussion is the concept of transdisciplinary learning—an educational strategy that integrates diverse academic disciplines to address complex, real-world challenges. This methodology fosters collaboration among various departments and colleges, resulting in a unified curriculum that prepares students to engage with intricate projects such as Vualiku. The overarching objective is to cultivate well-rounded graduates who demonstrate critical thinking, creativity, and inquiry, while also applying their learning across various domains.

The advantages of adopting a transdisciplinary approach include enhanced global awareness, improved critical thinking capabilities, and a more receptive attitude toward innovation. Nevertheless, this approach is fraught with challenges, notably the complexities of coordinating multidimensional teaching methodologies and the necessity of securing appropriate resources, funding, and stakeholder engagement.

The speaker recommends that all five colleges at FNU, alongside key institutions such as PSMS and NTPC, collaborate effectively by pooling their expertise and resources to advance the Vualiku programme. Each department would contribute its specialized knowledge—spanning business, engineering, agriculture, health sciences, creative arts, maritime studies, and environmental science—each critical for the holistic development and sustainability of a multifaceted initiative like Vualiku.

In conclusion, the Professor emphasizes the imperative for FNU to transcend entrenched complacency and isolated operational practices, advocating for the implementation of a transdisciplinary framework in educational paradigms and project development strategies.

#### Key Takeaways:

- i. FNU must avoid complacency and adapt to new, dynamic approaches in education and project development.
- ii. Transdisciplinary learning and teaching is essential for preparing students to solve complex real-world problems by integrating knowledge across various disciplines.
- iii. Collaboration between different colleges and departments at FNU is crucial for developing multifaceted projects like Vualiku.
- iv. Transdisciplinary approaches help foster critical thinking, innovation, and the application of knowledge in real-world contexts, but they require careful coordination and resources.
- v. The speaker advocates for cross-collaboration among FNU's departments (business, engineering, health, agriculture, creative arts, etc.) to address various aspects of a project like Vualiku.
- vi. Say no to working in silos and embrace a transdisciplinary approach in both education and project execution at FNU.

### 15.2 Speaker: DEAN CMNHS

The presentation opens with a reference to the World Health Organization's comprehensive definition of health, which encapsulates not only physical health but also mental and social well-being. The speaker highlights the pivotal role of CMNHS in the domain of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), particularly in delivering health-centric training initiatives in anticipation of increased tourism activity in northern Fiji.

The first primary objective discussed is the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce through targeted short courses. These include training in health and safety, food safety, infection control, and community health awareness programs. The curriculum is designed to accommodate diverse participants, ranging from community members to healthcare professionals, aiming to enhance both individual and public health outcomes. There is a significant emphasis on continued education for health workers, including initiatives to offer Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits, as well as workforce training for community health workers and first responders.



Additionally, CMNHS plans to extend its educational programs into the northern regions, particularly considering enhancements in infrastructure due to the construction of a new hospital, which will facilitate the local delivery of nursing and public health programs.

The second objective focuses on the conservation of environmental integrity and cultural heritage. CMNHS has implemented an environmental health program alongside disaster management training, which is already established as a postgraduate offering. There is an active interest in collaborating with local leaders to safeguard traditional medicine practices and to develop training programs for individuals to serve as cultural ambassadors, thus imparting knowledge to tourists. This strategy aligns with the promotion of eco-friendly infrastructure and the preservation of cultural heritage.

Finally, the speaker underscores CMNHS's robust research capabilities, particularly in the realm of planetary health and nature-based solutions.

Noteworthy research initiatives such as WISH+ and RISE have been cited as exemplary collaboration with other academic institutions, governmental ministries, and agencies. These projects address the intersection of climate change and health, with CMNHS expressing its readiness to support and engage in additional projects that encourage cross-sectoral collaboration.

#### **Key Takeaways:**

- i. **Holistic Health Approach:** CMNHS adheres to the WHO definition of health, emphasizing physical, mental, and social health, which informs their work in training and curriculum development.
- ii. **Upskilling and Reskilling:** CMNHS offers a range of short courses (health and safety, infection control, food safety, etc.) that can be tailored for both community members and health professionals. They also plan to offer training to health workers, including CPD and CME points.
- iii. **Local Program Delivery:** The College plans to expand its programs to the northern regions, particularly nursing and public health, facilitated by a new hospital being constructed.
- iv. **Environmental and Cultural Preservation:** CMNHS offers training in environmental health and disaster management, along with efforts to preserve traditional medicine and culture through local ambassadors who can educate tourists.
- v. **Research and Collaboration:** CMNHS is heavily involved in planetary health research, with projects like WISH+ and RISE, which provide opportunities for transdisciplinary research and collaboration with other colleges, ministries, and the government.
- vi. **Support for Eco-friendly Projects:** CMNHS is open to supporting eco-friendly infrastructure development and other collaborative initiatives that focus on healthy settings, climate change, and community health.

#### **15.3 Speaker: DEAN CBHTS**

The speaker reflects on the Vualiku **development programme** and shares three key points to guide its success, drawing from a grassroots perspective.

**Understanding the Ground Realities (Needs Assessment):** The speaker stresses the importance of learning about the people on the ground, much like a clinician diagnoses a patient by first understanding their symptoms.

The first lesson is that effective solutions must come from understanding the community's true needs. Without solid **needs assessment**, any project is likely to fail because it will be irrelevant or inappropriate to the people's actual needs.

**Patience and Long-term Vision:** The speaker acknowledge that while the goals of the Vualiku programmes such as **livelihood creation, employment, and economic growth**—are commendable, these are long-term objectives.

Politicians, however, have limited time in the office and may try to rush or short-circuit these processes for short-term gains. Thus, the second lesson is to **be patient, persevere**, and understand that failure and setbacks may occur before real progress can be made.

**Innovation and Avoiding Over-Cannibalization of Ideas:** The speaker highlights that Fiji is currently **cannibalizing its own ideas**—multiple businesses are replicating the same products, like bottled water, food sales, and drapery. Instead of competing with similar ideas, there needs to be an **incubator for new, innovative ideas** that allow young people and communities to create unique, sustainable businesses. This approach will lead to more diverse and creative solutions, particularly in the north, rather than reinforcing the status quo of repetitive small businesses.



## Key Takeaways:

- i. **Grounded Needs Assessment:** It's critical to engage directly with local communities to understand their true needs before implementing projects.
- ii. **Long-term Patience:** Successful development requires long-term commitment, and it's important to stay patient through setbacks, especially with political cycles.
- iii. **Fostering Innovation:** Encourage the development of new ideas, particularly through innovative incubators, to avoid the oversaturation of common business models and provide more diverse economic opportunities.

### 15.4 Panelist: DEAN CHEL

The speaker from the College of Humanities, Education, and Law (CHEL) outlined their contributions to the Vualiku programme with a focus on collaboration, community engagement, and research. The main points and key takeaways are:

**Collaboration with Stakeholders:** CHEL aims to work with government ministries, public sectors, and industry stakeholders to align the National Development Plan (NDP) with its strategic goals.

**Research for Problem-Solving:** The college emphasizes conducting research to address pressing issues in the community, including areas such as education, climate change, and social development. Research is seen as a key tool to provide solutions.

#### TVET and Community Engagement:

CHEL offers a variety of TVET programs, both on-campus and through community outreach. These include professional development, short courses, and programs in areas like parental support, sustainable practices, and literacy/numeracy.

Special focus on STEM projects and improving the teaching of basic subjects at grassroots levels, particularly math and literacy.

#### Higher Education Programs:

i. CHEL offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs, including the Doctor of Education and Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching. These programs will be accessible to communities in the North on a cohort basis.

ii. The aim is to provide opportunities for higher education both in traditional settings and through community outreach.

#### Key Areas for Research and Action:

i. CHEL plans to engage in research on various issues like school dropouts, squatter settlements, climate change adaptation, health, culture, women's economic empowerment, literacy/numeracy skills, and drug-related challenges.

**Advocating for UN SDGs:** The college supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly goals on good health, quality education, gender equality, and peace and justice.

## Key Takeaways:

- i. Collaboration is crucial, both within academic institutions and with external stakeholders.
- ii. CHEL is committed to providing practical solutions through research and community-based programs.
- iii. There is a strong focus on addressing educational challenges, including STEM and literacy, at the grassroots level.
- iv. Higher education and TVET programs are to be offered in remote areas, particularly in the North, to ensure wider access and inclusion.

### 15.5 Panelist: DEAN CETVET

The speaker emphasized the importance of local engagement and community ownership in the development of the Vualiku region, based on the principle of "Nothing about us without us," as stated by the Prime Minister. The key points and takeaways include:

**Community Involvement:** The Vualiku people must be actively involved in the development process to ensure that projects are relevant and beneficial to them. The focus is on local ownership and participation.



**Data Collection:** Before beginning any projects, it is essential to gather data on the community, such as the number of people involved and the reasons behind challenges like school dropouts. This data will guide the development of tailored solutions.

**University Collaboration:** The university is prepared to contribute its expertise to the Vualiku development program particularly in areas such as land surveying, urban planning, and technical skills training (e.g., carpentry, engineering, architecture). This reflects a collaborative approach, leveraging the university's resources for practical community impact.

**Building Capacity in the North:** The speaker stresses the need to focus on developing the local workforce in the Vualiku, rather than bringing in expertise from other regions. This includes training locals in various trades to support sustainable development in the area.

**Challenges in Capacity:** While there may be challenges in the immediate availability of skilled workers in the Vualiku, the university aims to build local capacity to meet future development needs. This approach ensures that the community can support and sustain the projects long-term.

**Incentivizing Participation:** The speaker mentions that unlike in some areas, where people may have financial incentives (such as leasing money), the Vualiku people will need to be motivated to engage in development initiatives. This could involve creating incentives for locals to participate in building and maintaining infrastructure.

**Infrastructure Needs:** Infrastructure such as roads, houses, and airports are necessary for the region's development. The speaker proposes that local technicians be trained to service vehicles and contribute to other trade related needs in the area, highlighting the importance of building local expertise.

**Funding Concerns:** There is some concern about the mismatch between the proposed funding (mentioned as \$200 million) and the actual allocation of resources. The speaker suggests the possibility of the university accessing a portion of the funding to support Vualiku development.

### Key Takeaways:

- i. Community-driven development is essential for sustainable progress in Vualiku.
- ii. Gathering relevant data about the community is a critical first step in planning.
- iii. The university can provide expertise and training to help build local capacity.
- iv. Developing infrastructure and incentivizing local participation are key challenges.
- v. There may be discrepancies in funding that need to be addressed for effective project execution.

## 15.6 Acting Director – Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies

### Vision for Pacific Centre for Maritime Studies

- i. Provide high-quality maritime education and training in Fiji and the Pacific.
- ii. Collaborate with stakeholders to develop programs that meet industry demands.
- iii. Secure funding to upgrade facilities and provide updated, realistic training for the maritime industry.

### Courses Offered:

- i. **Diploma in Nautical Science** (semester-based).
- ii. **Diploma in Marine Engineering** (with upgrades for Class 5, 4, and 3 masters).
- iii. **Marine Simulator Courses and Safety Courses** (monthly).
- iv. Short courses in boat master licenses and security, particularly for coastal villages.

### Pathway Programs:

- i. PCMS is introducing pathways for students who are passionate about seafaring but do not meet entry requirements for cadet training.
- ii. A particular example is a student, aged 23, who will be able to enroll in the program due to these new pathways, which aim to ensure no one is left behind.

### Community Engagement:

- i. Focus on training for boat masters in coastal villages to improve safety for both the local community and the tourism industry.
- ii. Collaboration with the police and local authorities to improve water safety, including initiatives for classic masters and engineers who know the local reefs and waters.



## Future Goals:

- i. The introduction of more advanced training programs (Diplomas in Nautical Science and Marine Engineering) will expand as facilities and equipment improve.
- ii. For now, some courses are being conducted in the west of Fiji, and the center is working on extending training to northern regions in the future.

## 15.7 Director NTPC : Mr. Bob Kolitagane

The speaker emphasizes a strategic approach to fostering inclusivity, productivity, and economic growth across Fiji, with a particular focus on the Northern region. NTPC is positioning itself to be at the forefront of these efforts, ensuring that skills development, business productivity, and national standards align with the rapidly expanding opportunities in tourism, shipping, and ICT. Through targeted training programs and collaborations, the goal is to raise living standards for all Fijians and ensure that the benefits of development reach every community.

## Key Takeaways:

### i. Inclusivity and No One Left Behind:

- a. The World Eco Project will focus on ensuring that all sectors and people, especially from remote areas like the North, benefit from the development.
- b. The goal is to improve the quality of life for every citizen by ensuring equal access to opportunities created by these developments.

### ii. Focus on Productivity and Economic Growth:

- a. Unlike the traditional focus on GDP, NTPC emphasizes improving living standards through productivity growth.
- b. The focus is on measuring and improving productivity at the national and enterprise levels, which aligns with NTPC's mission to assist ministries with consultancy and advice.

### iii. Strategic Expansion into the North:

- a. NTPC is already strategizing to expand its programs into the Northern region, a critical area for national development.
- b. Various programs, including in-service training and community-based initiatives, will be introduced to enhance workforce productivity and business culture.

### iv. Collaboration with Stakeholders:

- a. NTPC will work closely with both the private and public sectors, as well as community leaders, to drive development, particularly in sectors like tourism, shipping, and ICT.
- b. Investments from companies like Fiji Ports Corporation and those in the tourism sector (e.g. RB Patel) show a strong potential for growth in these areas.

### v. Developing a Productivity Culture:

- a. A key focus will be fostering a desired productivity culture within businesses, particularly with SMEs (small and medium enterprises).
- b. Training and consulting services will help businesses in tourism, shipping, and other sectors raise their productivity and meet international standards, such as ISO certifications.

### vi. Training and TVET Programs:

- a. Strengthening technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs, including apprenticeships and trade testing, is a priority. The aim is to align skills training with the demand of the market and ensure that the workforce is equipped for the jobs created by large-scale developments.

### vii. Matching Skill Supply with Demand:

- a. NTPC plans to match the supply of skills with the growing demand from businesses and investors, ensuring that no one is left behind.



b. Engaging with industries through conferences, seminars, and workshops will help address skills gaps and ensure that the workforce is ready for new opportunities.

**viii. *Building Partnerships and Ensuring Long-term Growth:***

a. NTPC will collaborate with industries to provide consultancy services and help align productivity with national development goals.

b. There is an emphasis on continuous improvement, particularly through certifications and quality standards, to ensure that businesses are competitive and sustainable in the long term.

**15.8 DEAN CAFF : Dr. Kaliova Ravuiwasa**

DEAN CAFF articulates a comprehensive and strategic framework for the Vualiku programme, advocating for Fiji National University (FNU) to engage in rigorous community involvement, formulate context-specific programs, and adopt a paradigm of accountability and strategic foresight. By prioritizing visionary leadership, fostering resilience, and empowering local communities, FNU seeks to drive substantive and sustainable transformations in the Northern regions. This strategic vision underscores the necessity of active listening, adaptive methodologies, and collaborative initiatives to effectively address genuine community needs and further contribute to national development objectives.

**Key Takeaways:**

**i. Visionary Leadership:**

a. The speaker underscores the critical role of visionary leadership and scholarship at FNU. Effective leaders must interpret the National Development Plan (NDP) as well as FNU's strategic objectives, incorporating insights from both local and national contexts.

b. Leadership is imperative across all tiers of the organization—not solely from the executive level. Every member of FNU has a stake in influencing the trajectory of the Vualiku program, contributing to its strategic direction and implementation.

**ii. Listening to the People of Vualiku:**

a. A critical insight is the necessity of engaging with the Vualiku community to discern their authentic needs, rather than implementing predefined initiatives. The speaker recognizes that numerous prior projects were unsuccessful due to a lack of thorough understanding of the community's requirements.

b. Future programs will be strategically developed based on identified gaps, in collaboration with local stakeholders, ensuring they effectively address the community's specific needs.

**iii. Resilience and Perseverance:**

a. Resilience and perseverance are foundational principles underpinning FNU's methodology. Emphasizing an open-minded and collaborative approach is critical for navigating the complexities and divergent strategies of various ministries and stakeholders.

b. The capacity to adapt and sustain collaborative efforts in the face of challenges is vital to the project's overall success.

**iv. The New Norm:**

The speaker articulates the concept of a “new norm” in academia, positing that the role of an academic extends beyond traditional teaching responsibilities to encompass active engagement with community initiatives and a heightened sense of accountability in research, strategic planning, and developmental endeavors. This paradigm shift necessitates a transformative mindset, recognizing that all personnel at FNU, including support staff, play an integral role in the institution's overall success and sustainability.

**v. Strategic Planning:**

a. Strategic thinking is critical in assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) specific to the communities in Vualiku. By engaging in meticulous planning and gaining a nuanced understanding of the local context, we can design and implement tailored programs that effectively meet the needs of these communities.

b. Moreover, the delivery context of these programs warrants careful consideration. It may be necessary to recalibrate the approach FNU adopts for program delivery in Vualiku compared to Suva, taking into account the distinct geographical and cultural dynamics that characterize each region. This adjustment will ensure that initiatives are not only relevant but also resonate with the local population.



#### vi. **Empowering Communities:**

The initiatives arising from this endeavor aim to enhance the capacity of local communities, with a particular emphasis on empowering women, while also tackling critical challenges such as food security, climate change, and youth development in Vualiku. The speaker envisions a future where the university's research and outreach efforts directly influence local development outcomes, prioritizing the enhancement of skills and competencies across vital sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and the potential integration of agritourism.

#### vii. **Long-term Commitment:**

The Vualiku initiative is conceptualized as a strategic long-term endeavor spanning the next decade. Its efficacy will hinge on sustained collaboration, rigorous strategic planning, and a deep commitment to a comprehensive understanding and addressing the evolving needs of Northern communities.

### **16.0 Concluding Remarks: Madam Vice Chancellor**

In the final section of the address, the Vice Chancellor conveys profound appreciation to the Chief Guest Fiji's DPM Manoa Kamikamica, and to all stakeholders who played a pivotal role in the strategic reset of the Fiji National University (FNU), with acknowledgment of the university's leadership team, council members, and external collaborators.

The Vice-Chancellor underscores FNU's steadfast commitment to aligning with governmental initiatives, the private sector, and various partners to fulfill critical national objectives, including the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Vualiku Program objectives.

The Vice-Chancellor shares insights from the Labasa campus experience, emphasizing the necessity of contextual awareness in addressing the unique socio-economic dynamics of Vanua Levu and its populace. There is a pronounced focus on a sense of responsibility and stewardship, particularly regarding the needs of remote islands and isolated communities.

To conclude, the Vice Chancellor invites the senior leadership team (SLT) to stand and receive acknowledgment for their unwavering diligence and commitment. The members of the SLT are introduced, and the audience is encouraged to applaud, recognizing their contributions. The address closes with an expression of enthusiasm for future endeavors and collaborative efforts with the entire FNU community and its partners.

**Report Ends**



## REPORT COMPILED BY



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