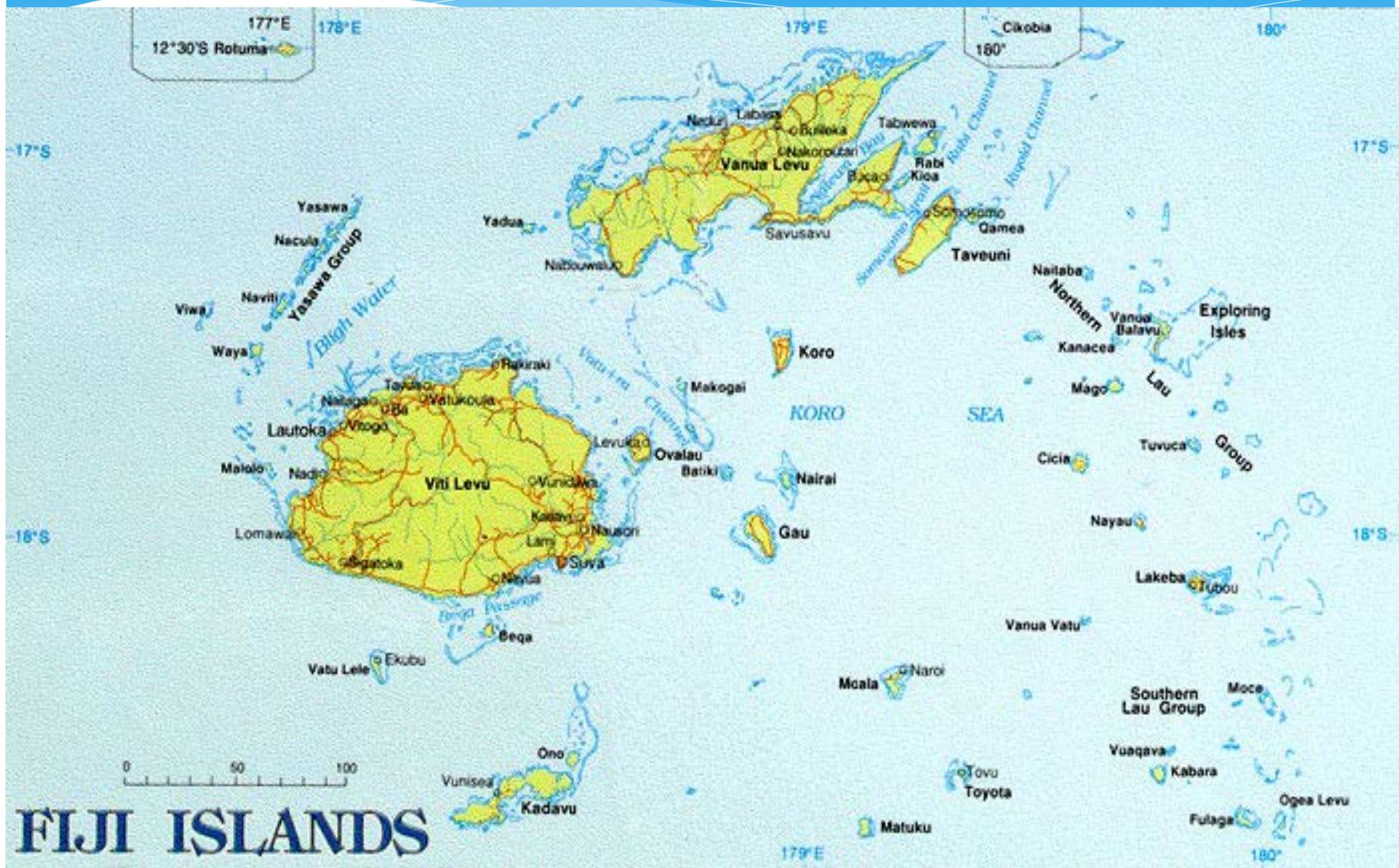


Higher Education Funding and Access Issues in Fiji Islands

By Dr. Angamuthu Kandasamy
Dean – College of Engineering, Science
and Technology
Fiji National University
Suva, Fiji



FIJI ISLANDS

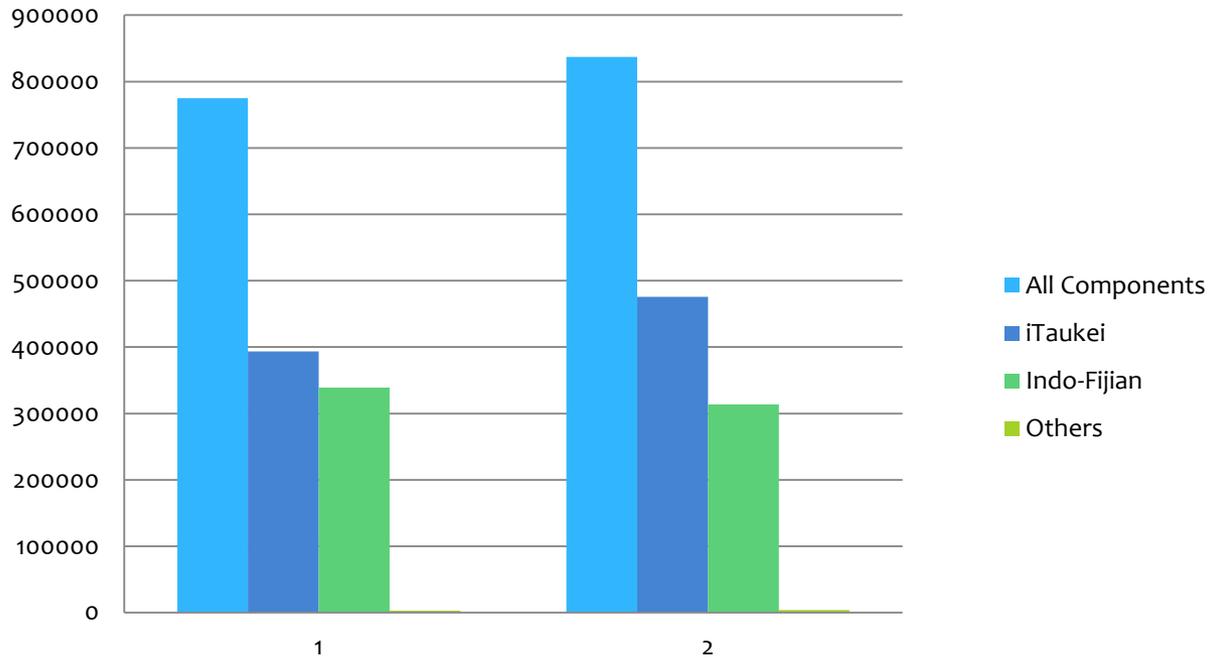
Introduction

- Fiji comprises some 330 islands in the heart of the Pacific ocean, of which about one-third are inhabited.
- There are two major islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu with over 80% of the total population; other main islands are Taveuni, Kadavu, Gau and Koro.

Population	Census	
	August 1996	September 2007 [p]
All Components	775077	837271
Chinese	4939	4704
European	3103	2953
iTaukei	393575	475739
Indo-Fijian	338818	313798
Part European	11685	10771
Rotuman	9727	10335
Other Pacific Islanders	10463	15311
Others	2767	3660
*From July 2010 Fijian is known as iTaukei		

Continued....

Population by Major Race



Continued.....

- English is the official language, however, under the new language policy, vernacular has become compulsory in all schools as part of the school curriculum.
- The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for the administration and management of education, policy guidelines and direction, and qualified teaching personnel that support all schools in the delivery of quality education for the students.
- The Ministry is also charged with responsibility for ensuring that standards in education are met, maintained and the human, physical and the financial resources allocated to education by the government are appropriately directed and expanded.
- There have been significant, even dramatic developments in tertiary education in the last five years in Fiji.

Overview of Higher Education System in Fiji Islands

- In August 2007 the Cabinet agreed to the establishment of a **Higher Education Advisory Board**, attached to the MOE, responsible for advising the MOE on the education on the direction to be undertaken in developing the higher education sector.
- In the initial phase of its work, the Board was in charge of, redrafting the Higher Education Bill. Conducting stakeholders' consultations on the Bill, **setting guidelines and criteria for the establishment and recognition** of higher education institutions in Fiji and establishing a register for higher education institutions.
- The **Higher Education Bill was promulgated in October 2008.**
- This **Promulgation provides a comprehensive framework** for the establishment, registration, regulation and facilitation of higher education institutions and higher education in Fiji.
- Since the promulgation, the Board has developed regulations and policies to enable the implementation of the legislation once it commence.

Continued.....

- The regulations include the **Higher Education Regulations 2009 and the Higher education (Qualifications) Regulations 2009.**
- In January 2010 the **Higher Education commission (HEC) has started to process the recognition and registration** of award-conferring institutions every five years to ensure that they continue to meet the criteria for which they were registered.
- It will also foster cooperation among higher education institutions and the linkages between institutions and industry.
- Working with the Commission is the **Fiji Qualifications Council (FQC) whose primary role is to administer the Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF) for the registration of the national standards and qualifications.**
- The Council is governed by the Higher Education (Qualifications) Regulations 2009.
- The Council will accredit vocational and trade qualifications and the providers offering such qualifications. It will review its qualifications every 5 years to ensure adherence to acceptable and relevant standards of teaching and assessment

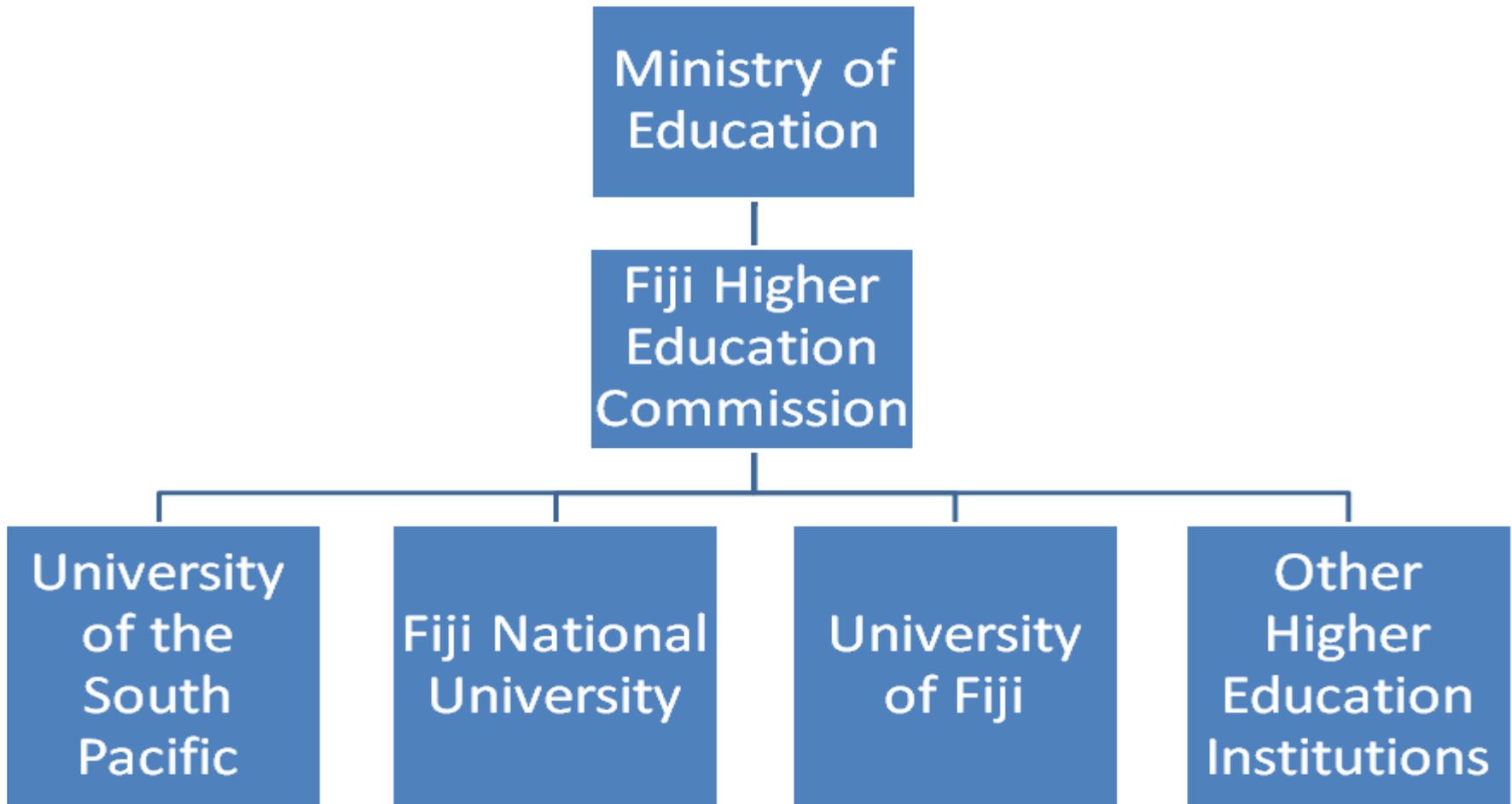
Continued....

- Currently, **68 institutes are recognized by Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC)** out of which 24 are registered under Higher Education Promulgation 2008 and 1 provisionally registered.
- Table 1 below provides the summary for the number of institutions recognized by the HEC.

Table1: Number of Institutions Recognized by the HEC.

Institution Status	Provisional Registration	Recognized	Registered	Grand Total
Private	1	37	17	55
Regional			2	2
State		8	3	11
Grand Total	1	45	22	68

Structure of Higher Education in Fiji Islands



Higher Education Providers in Fiji

1. University of the South Pacific

- The University of the South Pacific (USP) is the provider of tertiary education in Fiji and the Pacific region and international centre of excellence for teaching research consultation and training on all aspects of Pacific culture, environment and human resource development needs.
- **Established in 1968**, USP is **jointly owned by the governments of 12 member countries**: Cooks Islands, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa.
- The University has Campuses in all member countries. The main campus, Laucala, is in Fiji. The Alafua Campus in Samoa is where the School of Agriculture and food Technology is situated, and the Emalus Campus in Vanuatu is the location for the School of Law.
- The academic Schools, Institutes and Centre's at the USP are organized into three faculties and led by Deans.
- These are **Faculty of Arts and Law; the Faculty of Business and Economics; and Faculty of Science Technology and Environment**. Each faculty comprises of a number of schools which offer a wide range of academic programmes and courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Continued.....

- The University also **offers programmes through distance and flexible learning in a variety of modes throughout its 14 campuses.**
- USP has been the main provider of degree-level tertiary education in Fiji for the past 40 years.
- It provides a full range of higher education to just over 21,000 students.
- It is also a long-standing leader in the use of satellite technologies for distance learning, starting to do so in the early 1970's.
- Its ICT infrastructure is leading-edge after the completion of the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre in March 2010.
- The USP also leads the region in the development of flexible and distance learning, with over 40 percent of its students (EFTS) studying through distance mode.
- USP also promotes large-scale use of learning systems such as Moodle, and the USPNet infrastructure that delivers an integrated video-audio-telephony and internet.

2. Fiji National University

- In September 2007, the cabinet had already approved in principal the recommendation of the minister at that time to merge Fiji tertiary colleagues and institutions that were owned by the Fiji Government into a new University.
- At this time, this was to be called the Fiji University of Science and Technology to emphasize its focus on Science and Technology. However, in 2008, the Cabinet endorsed a proposal for **the establishment of the Fiji National University as a merger of all public tertiary colleges in Fiji at the beginning of 2009.**
- The institutions that **got merged** were the Fiji Institute of Technology, the Fiji School of Agriculture, the Fiji School of Medicine, Fiji School of Nursing, the Fiji College of Advanced Education and the Lautoka Teachers' College.
- The Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF) became part of FNU in 2010 as the National Training Productivity Centre (NTPC) to run the short courses in areas ranging from innovative trade and technical courses to executive management and leadership programmes.
- Since its inception in 2010 the FNU has had a strong self-determination and autonomy, which has enabled it to develop and grow from its early beginnings into highly respected and fully fledged university attracting staff and students from across the world.
- It is the **country's dual sector University**, offering both technical vocational education training (TVET), as well as **higher education programmes**. It is the largest provider of TVET education in the region and is the largest University in the region.

Continued.....

- The main reason for the amalgamation of several institutes was to
 - a. establish a national Centre of Excellence in Higher Education and Research to effectively deal with country's Human Resource needs
 - b. optimize state resource use and eliminate duplication
 - c. provide Postgraduate qualification pathways to graduates in various fields
 - d. reform and restructure towards quality improvement required a major change
 - e. identify gaps in Fiji's HR needs and to develop education and training programmes to meet those needs.
- All its **undergraduate programmes include industrial attachment as compulsory** ranging from 3 months to 1 year.
- All **TVET stream staff must undertake 3 months of industrial attachment** once within 3 years to remain current.
- All Higher Education staff must engage in research and publication.
- All **Higher Education programmes are reviewed by an external examiner once every 3 years.**
- All **TVET programmes must be reviewed by an Industry Advisory Committee** once in every three years.
- FNU have 1,800 employees inclusive of academic staff and support and offer more than 600 programmes.
- The university operates at 40 different locations in the Fiji and 2 in the region. Over 32,000 students are currently enrolled at FNU and this is anticipated to reach 35,000, by the end of the year.

Continued... ..

- FNU has five Colleges and one National Training Centre. These are
 1. College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 2. College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences
 3. College of Engineering, Science and Technology
 4. College of Humanities and Education
 5. College of Business, Hospitality and Tourism Studies
 6. National Training and Productivity Centre.
- FNU has adopted multi-term delivery structure: Block, Penster, Trimester and Semester. It offers education in two streams: TVET and Higher Education.
- The TVET stream programmes range from Certificate to Advanced Diploma and the Higher Education Stream range from Higher Education Certificate to Doctoral. FNU offers classes in Day and Evening modes.
- This is done for the better utilization of capital infrastructure and allows working students to undertake studies on a part time basis. In the past three years of operation, FNU has adopted a Credit Point System to allow Credit recognition from other institutions. The teaching pedagogy ensures both teaching and learning with each course very strongly articulating the level it will be taught at and the learning outcomes.

3. University of Fiji

- The **University of Fiji was established in 2004** by a religious, social and educational organization, the Arya Pratinidhi Sabah of Fiji (APS).
- Founders of the University registered the University of Fiji in December 2004 and first students were admitted on 14th May 2005.
- The establishment of the University of Fiji reflected a natural growth for an organization that is already operating a large number of primary and secondary schools.
- APS also felt that many students in Western side of Fiji were not able to access tertiary education from USP's Laucala campus because of their poverty and sharply increased accommodation costs in Suva.
- The APS decided to invite other stakeholders particularly from other educational sponsoring organizations and interest groups to join the Uni Fiji Council.
- This is reflected in the Charter of the University of Fiji in that the governance of the University has been given to a broadly-based Council of the University, representing a range of educational providers in Fiji.
- The University began its full teaching operations in March 2005.
- The University of Fiji currently has 1300 students, mostly at degree and pre-degree levels.
- Quality control at the university is done through its own system of quality assurance and external examiners.

Continued.....

- The University currently has **five schools**
 1. Arts and Humanities
 2. Business and Economics
 3. Science and Technology
 4. Law
 5. Umanand Prasad School of Medicine.
- It also has 4 Centre's,
 1. Centre for Indigenous Studies
 2. Centre for Regional and International Affairs
 3. Centre for Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development
 4. Centre for Gender Research.
- The University of Fiji has been receiving government grants since 2008.
- The decision of the Government to begin making a financial contribution to the University was a natural development in that the Government shares the cost of primary and secondary education with the community - one of the progressive aspects of Fiji's educational system.
- The university enjoys a high level of community support and this, together with the fact that it is a private institution, which could mean that it is more flexible and merit-based, could give additional advantages to the university as it deals with more competition in the future.

Table. 2 shows the number of students in educational institutions in Fiji.

Year	2012	2013
Primary School [No.]	721	727
Male [No.]	67,843	69,706
Female [No.]	63,779	65,864
Year	2012	2013
Secondary School [No.]	175	175
Male [No.]	33125	32,657
Female [No.]	35,300	34,974
Year	2012	2013
Technical/Vocational School		
Male [No.]	1820	1986
Female [No.]	611	645

Continued....

	Year	
	2012	2013
University of the South Pacific (EFTS by Faculty)		
Faculty of Arts and Law	2807	3181
Faculty of Business – Economics	3709	4023
Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment	2846	3082
Total	9362	10286

	Year	
	2012	2013
Fiji National University (Student by Faculty)		
College of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries	664	992
College of Business & Hospitality Services	6795	6713
College of Engineering, Science & Technology	5893	6125
College of Humanities & Education	2694	3104
College of Medical Nursing and Health Science	2083	2215
National Training & Productivity Centre	14367	15396
Total	32496	34545

Continued....

	Year	
	2012	2013
University of Fiji (EFTS by Faculty)		
School of Law	157	196
School of Business and Economics	242	212
School of Humanities & Arts	204	218
School of Science & Technology	114	114
Umanand Prasad School of Medicine	167	216
Foundation Studies	87	78
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)		
Centre of International and Regional Affairs	28	25
Others (Unclassified Studies)	NA	70
Total	999	1129

FHEC – System for Funding of Higher Education Institutions

Apart from the **3 major universities in Fiji** mentioned above, **there are 23 other higher education providers** which are registered under FHEC- grant-funding. Below is the summary of how the higher education providers receive **funding from the government through Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC)**.

- ❖ The FHEC has the responsibility to *“allocate government funds marked for higher education annually to higher education institutions according to transparent and well-publicized criteria for allocation”* (Higher Education Promulgation 24 of 2008) To fulfill this responsibility the **Commission requires funding** as follows:
- ❖ To support the activities of the Commission in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. This will be **based on a budget to be approved by the Commission and submitted annually**.
- ❖ To support the costs of delivering education and training through Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). **A budget for the operational costs of HEIs will be submitted annually** based on the following process.

Continued....

- ❖ **Funding will be granted to eligible Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on a three year rolling cycle**, with the first year guaranteed and the following two years approved on an indicative basis subject to review through an annual strategic planning process.
- ❖ Eligible HEIs will be funded through two block grants, one **based on central institutional costs and the other based on the cost of delivering specific programmes and the number of Equivalent Full Time Students (EFTSs) enrolled on each programme.**
- ❖ **The level of the grant for programmes will be set by the Commission** as a proportion of the total cost depending on the funds available for distribution. **The balance of costs will be recovered by HEIs through the charging of fees.** The proportion of the cost to be met by fees may vary according to the category of programme. Eligible students will receive scholarship support for their fees according to criteria set by Government

Eligibility to Receive Fund and Monitoring the Utilization of Fund

- ❖ To be eligible for funding HEIs must be registered by the Commission and Private HEIs must also have charitable trust status.
- ❖ **Programmes** for which funding is requested **must have been approved by the Commission or an authority delegated to act on behalf of the Commission.** (The Universities will establish a joint committee for this purpose operating according to criteria approved by the Commission.)
- ❖ **HEIs will be required to submit applications for funding in the form of Investment Plans based on criteria developed by the Commission,** which include evidence to show how programmes for which funding is sought meet the needs of industry and commerce or the wider community.
- ❖ HEIs must also provide evidence of their capability to provide the programmes in their portfolio at an acceptable quality level. This will be based on the outcomes of reviews by the Commission or some other quality assurance body recognized by the Commission.

Continued.....

- ❖ **The actual level of grant paid to HEIs will be based on the certified number of students enrolled and attending after the first two weeks from the commencement of each study period.**
- ❖ The effective utilization of funds will be monitored through key performance indicators (KPIs).
- ❖ The various University Acts and Promulgations give the universities power to approve their own programmes.

The major providers of higher education in the country are: the University of the South Pacific (USP); the Fiji National University (FNU) and the University of Fiji (UOF). These universities receive government funding which is almost 35% of the overall education budget. Table. 3 below shows the distribution of the overall education budget.

Table 3: Distribution of the overall education budget from 2011 to 2013

Year	Total National Budget (\$Billion)	Ministry of Education Budget (\$Million)	% of national education on Budget	Budget includes Grant(Capital &operating) to (\$Million)			Government Expenditure on Education (\$ Million)
				FNU	USP	UOF	
2011	1.9617	245.1	16	25	36.6	3	309.7
2012	2.0779	257.0	16	28	36.5	3	324.5
2013	2.3274	268.4	14	27	36.6	3	335.0
2014	2.8	370.0	19	38.5	36.5	3.5	541.5

Assessment/Evaluation System

- A positive new development in Fiji's attempt to give quality a higher priority has been the **development of the Fiji Qualifications Framework (FQF)**.
- The objectives of FQF is
 - a. to improve the quality of the tertiary education, and to improve synergies among different providers
 - b. Allow the award of National Awards set against National Standards
 - c. Provide the opportunity for the offering of different levels of programmes at different centers/institutions but which can lead to a National Qualification
 - d. Ensure that the quality of training provided meet basic needs of industry.
- The framework will outline how competency standards may be packaged to form a qualification.
- Each qualification will outline the minimum number of competency standards or credit points a learner must achieve.
- Where a learner has achieved some but not all, a statement of attainment will be awarded.
- The HEC is now assessing the programmes of institutions in Fiji by mapping them on FQF.

Continued.....

- It is mandatory that all qualifications will:
 - be aligned to the FQF
 - be based on national industry competency standards
 - recognize the competencies of people who are already in the industry
 - provide multiple pathways to achieve a qualification.
- The system can only function if the Providers develop learning programs that can be assessed against unit standards.
- To maintain quality, a Quality System that will be set up to oversee all training aligned to the framework.
- The beneficiaries of the framework are
 - LEARNERS - provision of quality educational qualification that enjoys national recognition and international comparability
 - WORKERS- clear learning path in the qualifications structure that facilitates and supports lifelong learning.
 - EMPLOYERS- competent workforce with the required skills and knowledge.
 - SOCIETY - benefits from a learning nation with the ability to adapt quickly to changing environmental situations.
- The Framework will provide for the establishment of an integrated education and training system that acknowledges the achievement of all learners equally and supports lifelong learning.
- Once FQF for Fiji is implemented properly the next phase will be to establish Accreditations and Certification body for Asia and the Pacific region.

Educational Issue

1. **Education is a fundamental pillar:** In common with people in other lands, we believe that education is a fundamental pillar of human rights, democracy, sustainable development and peace, and must therefore become accessible to all throughout life.
2. **Lifelong learning:** We also believe that higher education must likewise be accessible to all who desire it in their lifetime.
3. **Universal higher education:** While recognizing that higher education faces many challenges, we resolve optimistically to be able to provide for universal higher education by 2025.
4. **Excellence and relevance in higher education:** We believe in educational excellence and relevance in education and we are lifting our sights to the tertiary education sector to champion, preserve and exercise scientific rigor and originality, in a spirit of impartiality, as a basic prerequisite for attaining and sustaining an indispensable level of quality.

Continued....

5. Accountability to society: More than ever before, tertiary education institutions, especially universities, have a responsibility towards society to be accountable in the use of public, private, national and international resources and to ensure that society gets a fair return on its investment.

6. Linking the learner and the global knowledge society: The global environment is a compelling one with many challenges. Our need to excel in it requires a new orientation for tertiary education institutions. This new orientation must shift the focus back to the learner so that students are at the centre of the learning process, within a lifelong perspective, to usher in their full integration into the global knowledge society of this new century.

National Development Issues

1. **Managing change and promoting nationhood:** Over the years, higher education has proved its capacity to live with certainty, accept changes and to bring about change, in addition to fulfilling other important needs of the nation and that is to address socio-economic issues and to play a role in promoting unity, harmony, equity and a sense of nationhood among Fiji's diverse communities.
2. **Reclaiming morality and spirituality:** The people of Fiji are religious and, in this first decade of the new century, people are alert to the moral and spiritual decline and confusion in the world. We believe that tertiary education, especially the universities, must reclaim its leading role in setting the moral and spiritual tone of society that is based on faith in one God and his ultimate purpose is for the goodness of all living beings.

Continued.....

- 3. Honoring our heritage and identity:** Safeguarding the uniqueness of the blend of civilizations that make up Fiji today, its people, its cultures, its religions and geopolitics, its history, its sources of pride and its national needs will become a greater national priority as we meet the challenges of a modern global world of science and technology and as we seek, like other developing countries, to integrate national interests along with global developments.
- 4. Building a culture of peace:** Rather than dwelling pessimistically on the past 20 years, Fiji is now setting its sights today on the cherished aspirations of peace and stability, progress and prosperity and we reach out for these by inculcating the values and ideals of a culture of peace in young and old alike, and by ensuring that tertiary education has a duty and role to play in inculcating these peace ideals and mobilizing the intellectual community to that end.

Scholarships/Grants and Student Loan Schemes

1. National Toppers Scheme (NTS)

These are full scholarships for the top 600 applicants from Form 7 (Class 13) (and equivalent in Foundation) in 2013 in priority areas established by the government given in Table. 4 below.

Scholarships will cover: Tuition fees, accommodation (amount to vary depending on the choice of institution), pocket allowance, general service fee, book and materials allowance.

Bonding: All full-scholarship awardees would be bonded for a period that is 1.5 times the period of the study.

Table 4: NTS Summary

	Preferred Areas for National Toppers Scheme	
Fields	Qualifications	Proposed Nos.
1. Tourism	Bachelor of Commerce in Hotel Management.	17
2. Engineering	Bachelor of Engineering in: Civil Engineering (including Hydrology, Hydraulic Engineering, Road Engineering), Electrical/Electronic Engineering, Energy Engineering, Mechanical Engineering (including Mill Engineering), Chemical Engineering, Mining Engineering (including Rock Mechanics, Geology)	47
3. Mining and Milling	Bachelor Degrees in: Mining (including Rock Mechanics, Geology); mill engineering, Fish Technology; Food Technology	25
4. Medicine & Health	MBBS; Bachelor degrees in: Oral Health, Dietetics, Biomedical Engineering, Dermatology, Nursing, Public Health, Medical Lab Sciences, Physiotherapy, Pharmacy	171
5. Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry	Bachelor degrees in: Agriculture (majors: Plant pathology, Entomology, agricultural engineering, biosecurity, quarantine, agribusiness, agriculture marketing); Veterinary Sciences, Forestry, Fisheries (incl. Aquaculture)	85

6. Technology	Bachelor Degrees in: Computer Sciences (Networking, Software development, Programming), Library Sciences, Media & Journalism,	17
7. Environment / Marine Science	Bachelor Degrees is: Environmental Science, Environmental Management (including in Mining), Meteorology, Applied Climatology	17
8. Land/Town Planning	Bachelor Degrees in: Land Surveying, Urban and Regional Planning, Real Estate & Property Management, Geo-spatial Engineering, GIS/Land acquisition.	25
9. Commerce	Bachelor in: Accounting, Economics, Official Statistics, Project Planning & Management, Property Management and Valuation, Occupational Health and Safety.	20
10. Social Sciences	Bachelor degree in: Social Work/Social Policy/Policy Administration	1
11. Teacher Training	Bachelor of Education in: Primary Ed, Secondary Ed (Science, Technology, TVET, Food &Textiles, Home Economics, Special Education, Commerce, Social Science, Languages, Counseling, Computer Sciences)	128
12. Special Areas of High Priority - Diplomas & Certificates	Diplomas & Certificates in: Marine Studies (Nautical Sciences & Engineering), Culinary Arts, Mining, Land Surveying, Aviation (Aircraft Maintenance engineering and Avionics), Early Childhood Education.	47
Total		600

2. Tertiary Education Loans Scheme (TELS) for New Students

All other students who have completed Form 7(class 13) (or Foundation Studies) in 2013 can take loans under this scheme to cover their University Tuition fees. Loans are available under the following categories:

- ❖ Students with **over 250** mark in Form 7 studies (or equivalent in Foundation) in 2013 who wish to enrol in **bachelor degree programmes** on a fulltime basis (or who wish to enrol in Trade Diploma or trade certificate programmes).
- ❖ Students with marks **below 250**, including those who have below 200 marks, for full time studies in **TVET Diploma and Certificate** programmes.
- ❖ **Applications:** Students need to enrol directly in any of the approved institutions as per the criteria given above. They should submit the invoices to the Board within 1 week of the admission; within 4 weeks, the Institutions should also submit copies of the invoices directly to the Board for financial transfers.
- ❖ **Loan Repayments:** Repayment will be at 20% of the gross salary when the graduate starts working. Defaulters will see the loan balance recovered from the guarantors.
- ❖ **Interest Rates:** The loans are interest-free for students from families with parental income of up to \$25,000 per annum. For students from joint parental incomes of between \$25,000 and \$50,000, interest rate is 0.5 percent; those from families with incomes \$50,000 and \$100,000, interest rate is 1 percent, and those from families with incomes over \$100,000, interest rate of 2 percent.

3. Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS) for Existing Tertiary Students

All students who were enrolled in tertiary institutions in 2013 in any degree, diploma or certificate programme, and who have shown satisfactory progress, and need tuition funding to complete their studies, can also borrow under this scheme. An upper cap for the loan per student is set at 1.2 times the cost of the complete programme.

- ❖ **Applications:** Students need to enrol directly in 2014 as a full-time student, and submit the invoices to the Board; the Institutions must also submit copies of the invoices directly to the Board for financial transfers.
- ❖ **Loan Repayments:** Repayment will be 20% of the gross salary when the graduate starts working. Defaulters will see the loan balance recovered from the guarantors.
- ❖ **Interest Rates:** The loans are interest-free for students from families with parental income of upto \$25,000 per annum. For students from joint parental incomes of between \$25,000 and \$50,000, the interest rate is 0.5 percent; for those from families with incomes \$50,000 and \$100,000, the interest rate is 1 percent, and for those from families with incomes over \$100, 000, the interest rate is 2 percent.

4. Accommodation Support Scheme

Full-time students can borrow to support their accommodation costs (hostel or rental), food expenses, and bus fares if traveling from home or rented premises. Preference is given to students from maritime and rural areas, and to students who study closest to their homes where a programme of study is available.

- ❖ **Applications:** Students need to apply in the prescribed forms
- ❖ **Eligibility:** Since this fund is limited, priority will be given to students from rural and maritime areas as defined by the Government. Support will not be restricted to hostel accommodation but can include loans for private rental, reasonable food expenses and bus fares. Students who travel from their homes may borrow to fund their bus fares.
- ❖ **Loan Repayments:** Repayment will be 20% of the gross salary when the graduate starts working. Defaulters will see the loan balance recovered from the guarantors.
- ❖ **Interest Rates:** The loans are interest-free for students from families with parental income of upto \$25,000 per annum. For students from joint parental incomes of between \$25,000 and \$50,000, the interest rate is 0.5 percent; for those from families with incomes \$50,000 and \$100,000, the interest rate is 1 percent, and for those from families with incomes over \$100,000, the interest rate is 2 percent.

5. Students with Scholarships in 2013

The existing continuing scholarship awards, both overseas and local, will be honoured and will terminate at the end of the scholarship term. Continuation of awards will be on the same basis as when the scholarship was initially offered

6. Overseas Scholarships

Overseas studies will be merit-based and will apply only to programs that currently not available in Fiji, and which are high on Government's priority for Fiji. Students will be responsible for obtaining their overseas offer letters from institutions. Students must present offer letters on confirmation of awards from the Board.

- ❖ **Eligibility:** Toppers who have Form 7 marks of 300 or more in English and 3 best subjects in 2013.
- ❖ **Scholarships will cover:** Tuition Fee; Accommodation (amount to vary depending on the choice of institution); Pocket Allowance; General Service Fee; Book and Materials Allowance .However, where other Governments are offering overseas scholarships in fields available in Fiji, these will be administered as per the intent of the donors. Where necessary, the scheme may support top-ups of allowances for students under these scholarships. For donor-funded scholarships, the criteria laid down by the donor agency shall be followed for selection.
- ❖ **Bonding:** All full-scholarship awardees would be bonded for a period that is 1.5 times the period of the study.

Challenges, Strengths, Opportunities and Threats

1. What are our challenges?

- I. The most inspirational and pressing goal for tertiary education in Fiji up to 2025 is to equip the younger generation with new skills, knowledge and ideals to rebuild our economy, to create a stable and happy society and to establish Fiji as a knowledge hub. That is the most fundamental challenge facing tertiary education, taking greater responsibility for defining Fiji's future workforce, citizenry and society.
- II. How the challenges and difficulties facing the tertiary sector are addressed will determine the pace and nature of transformation of Fiji's tertiary education. If this process is managed as a national priority it will help Fiji to become a knowledge hub with a recognized world class system by 2025.
- III. These challenges include, but are not confined to financing, equity of conditions at access into and during the course of studies, improved staff development, skills-based training, enhancement and preservation of quality in teaching, research and services, relevance of programmes, employability of graduates, establishment of efficient co-operation agreements, and equitable access to the benefits of international co-operation.

Continued.....

- IV. Tertiary education in Fiji is also being challenged by new opportunities relating to information and communication technologies that are improving the ways in which knowledge can be produced, managed, disseminated, accessed and controlled. Equitable access to these technologies is a central issue in this respect.
- V. Tertiary education is also challenged by unprecedented access to open-door universities, colleges and institutes from around the world through the Internet.

While this is a welcome trend by increasing access to tertiary education, in time it will make a seamless and borderless tertiary education sector a reality which will create its own challenges in terms of regulation and revenue drain from Fiji to overseas providers of tertiary education.

- VI. Other internal challenges relate to limited diversity in tertiary education, limited capacity of tertiary education institutions locally, lack of infrastructure and related amenities such as boarding facilities, limited research and research funding, insufficient links of educational institutions with industry and the economy, small intellectual base, over-reliance on state-funding especially of state colleges and universities, absence of a market-strategy for export of education-related services and difficulty of recruiting and retaining high level faculty.

2. What are our strengths?

We regard the following as things that provide a vibrant platform for growth and development in the tertiary sector.

- A multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-racial society.
- A strong political will for development.
- A growing Fiji Islander diaspora providing an off-shore source of support.
- Affordable study costs.
- Strategic location along the main sea and air routes.
- An overarching quality assurance framework that is in the making.
- Attractive investment climate for service providers and for developing campuses.

4. What opportunities can we capitalize on?

Fiji is developing a reputation in the world for things such as sevens rugby, golf, Fiji Water, peacekeeping and a premier tourist destination, among other things. This reputation enhances Fiji's marketability as an attractive place to invest in and to study.

- Growing demand for tertiary education locally, regionally and internationally.
- Potential for the development of research and consultancy as a full-fledged activity in fields such as ICT, oceanography, sea-food industry, organic food industry, pharmaceutical [herbal and traditional etc.] industry etc.
- Geopolitical advantages such as our strategic location along the main sea and air routes and leadership position in the South Pacific
- Home of the University of the South Pacific: hosting 12 member countries and other regional organizations
- Establishment of a private university
- Establishment of the first national university to be called the Fiji National University
- Growing international reputation in tourism, sports, bottled water industry, [sugar cane and textile if quickly revived] to build on.
- Attractive investment environment for setting up campuses, especially for foreign universities.
- Availability of an untapped market for tertiary education both locally and overseas with the potential to generate huge revenue.
- Availability of land, space and its South Pacific setting as an attraction for Education providers

Strategies to Improve the Performance of Higher Education

Due to lack of Comprehensive System of international accreditation of trained manpower, government in its National Strategic Human Resource Plan 2011-2015 drafted policy to meet the needs. Table 5 shows the policy and strategy devised to improve the performance of higher education institutions.

Table 5: Fiji National Qualification Framework Policy

Policy 1: Progress the implementation of an international accreditation system in the form of the Fiji National Qualification Framework (FNQF), which is currently being setup to meet this need.

Policy	Strategies	Responsible Agencies
Policy 1.1: Government to progress the establishment of the Fiji National Qualifications Framework accreditation system.	Strategy 1.1.1: Adoption of the Fiji National Qualification Framework (FNQF) in the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC).	MoE FHEC

Continued.....

- It will be critically important for Fiji that all providers of higher education ensure that their activities are focused, add value and avoid duplication.
- However, it needs to be realized that duplication cannot be avoided without strong planning and regulatory bodies.
- To encounter this problem, the FHEC has established a Committee on the Accreditation of University Qualifications (CAUQ) that will develop procedures on how the 3 universities will manage their higher education sectors, defined as qualifications awarded at different levels.
- This Committee will have powers to assess new or revised programmes developed by the Universities and approve them so that it has the eligibility for funding.
- The Country also faces the plight of significant gaps in skills, primarily in the areas of TVET. Additional resources therefore needed to ensure that these needs are met.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has identified these needs as comprising the following: plumbers; carpenters, electricians, building finishing of high quality; building technicians; maintenance workers; civil construction workers; air conditioning; hospitality workers; hospitality middle management and IT workers (ADB, 2008: 185).
- These needs would be best served by the FNU.
- Currently FNU is working on reviewing and improving its Certificate and Diploma programmes and involved in consultation to implement the new TVET strategy.

Continued.....

- Fiji may also face quality risk due to competition between the Universities.
- The quality of higher education is a prime determinant of competitiveness now.
- It is therefore vital that Fiji puts a premium on the quality of higher education.
- This will mean the setting up and implementation of regionally and internationally benchmarked systems of quality assurance.
- There is currently a miss-match of supply and demand in tertiary education.
- There is lack of employment in many graduate areas, while there are gaps in some areas.
- In general, there is a large skill shortage in TVET as shown by the ADB report (ADB, 2008).).
- A close partnership needs to be developed between businesses and educational providers. For this reason, and to avoid increased demands on the Government for funding, such partnerships need to be systematically developed between the community and higher education institutions and the development of these partnerships should become one of the key performance indicators of institutions.
- The global knowledge society is inextricably linked to ICTs. High quality provision of education and research in ICTs is essential to Fiji's future development. This should be reflected in the plans of higher education institutions.

Continued.....

- In addition, ICTs need to be deployed urgently by all higher education institutions to improve their governance, management and operational efficiencies.
- ICTs also need to be used to make learning and teaching more independent and flexible.
- Applied research is also becoming one of the key requirements in Fiji, especially to assist the key industries of tourism, agriculture, marine resources, and to assist in public policy development.
- Fiji has established a Research Council that should encourage the Government to provide funding for research (which is extremely limited), focus it on a few relevant areas, and to disseminate the findings for the benefit of the economy and society.
- The Fiji economy has experienced major difficulties in recent years. In this situation, financing of higher education is even more challenging than normal.
- In this financial environment all new developments in higher education will need to be very prudent and ensure that the scarce resources available to education are used to enhance quality, access and new opportunities rather than to duplicate the provisions that already exist which will lead to a dilution of quality.
- The FHEC is working on developing a comprehensive funding model for tertiary education funding to address this issue.

Conclusion

- Higher education has played a leading role in bringing about impressive achievements under difficult circumstances in various parts of the developing world.
- For Fiji, it has improved a lot from what it was before.
- The formation of different institutions has increased the opportunities for people to achieve higher education and also to complete what they missed out several years ago.
- The HEC will continue to guide the future development of higher education in Fiji by bringing policies and strategies in place.