TVET in Fiji: Attitudes, Perceptions and Discourses

By

Isimeli Waibuta Tagicakiverata
(BEd, PGDipEd, MA.)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education
Faculty of Education and Arts
University of Newcastle
New South Wales
Australia

April 2012
I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other University or institution

____________________________
Isimeli W Tagicakiverata
April 2012
I am indebted to so many people whose invaluable contributions have guided me through this journey in higher education. They are:

i. My supervisors: **Professor Pam Nilan** (School of Humanities and Social Science) and **Dr Don Adams** (School of Education). Thank you so much for your patience, guidance, advice, words of encouragement and motivation. You have been a blessing for me throughout my candidature and are my role models in this endeavour. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

ii. My RHD colleagues in Room MC148, Ruth, Emma, David and Hope for their collegiality and the good times in our little crib. I would also like to thank Dr Terry Leahy, Barry Morris, Owen Jackson and Scott Eacott for giving me work teaching tutorials in sociology/anthropology and education. I would also like to thank Helen Moffatt, clerical assistant in the School of Humanities and Social Science for her kind assistance and friendship. Thank you Lena, Emma, Michelle and Steve for reminding me that there is a light at the end of this tunnel. Thank you Dr Margot Ford for the house in Mayfield.

iii. My sponsor: **FAB / Ministry of iTaukei Affairs** for giving me this opportunity to further my education. *Vinaka vakalevu vei kemuni na lewe ni Scholarship Committee, Ratu Semi Seruvakula, Tui Mailekai, Leba Mataitini ena nomuni veidigitaki. Vinaka vakalevu Epeli, Pita, Amelia, Alifereti kei Mere ena nomudou veiqaravi totoka.*

iv. My relatives and friends in Fiji, New Zealand and Australia, especially the Ravunacagi, Kaumaitotoya, Lalanabaravi and Tagicakiverata families for their support, encouragement and prayers. I am grateful for many friends in
Fiji and Australia who helped me maintain my sanity and focus with their companionship and friendship. *Vinaka vakalevu* Josaia Cakau, Paula, Simi, Loata *kei kemudou na vuvale nei* Nana Niti (Nadroga), Momo Cakau (Vabea), Nei Miri (Lautoka) *kei Nau* (Carramar). *Vinaka vakalevu* Father Epeli (Mosman), Ben, Jim, Naila, Ateca, Esava *kei Ravu* (Bundaberg). *Vinaka vakalevu* vei kemudou noqu itokani ena QVSOB NSW ena nomudou veivakauqeti. My grateful appreciation to the congregation of Navuloa Methodist Church, especially the community of Kapenaumi and also the congregation of Sydney CMF with Pastor Jo and Aqela for their prayers and support.

v. I am very grateful to my work colleagues at FIT/FNU: Mr Paula Cavu, Mr Naisilisili, Mrs Prasad and Mrs Mailekai for their constant words of encouragement. I also wish to thank my FIT friends: Emily, Evan, Ron, Kini, Navi, Veniana and Selai for their support.

Last but definitely not the least I wish to thank all participants who willingly gave their time to share their personal information and views for this study. Without you this would not have been possible. May God bless you all.

*Ni kalougata tiko. Vinaka saka vakalevu.*
This thesis is dedicated to my parents,

Pita & Elena Tagicakiverata
Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Fiji is undergoing major reforms. This study looks at the new climate of TVET in Fiji where the current government has given the green light to a new platform of TVET initiatives. This includes the newly formed Fiji National University that gives equal status to traditional and new technological professions. At the same time a broad-based secondary school curriculum with both academic and TVET subjects has been introduced. However, community acceptance of reinvented TVET has been very slow. This study is a response to this apparent lack of acceptance from the community. It focuses on the perceptions and attitudes towards TVET of students in junior secondary school. It also examines current discourses expressed about TVET by key stakeholders in the Fijian education system, including pupils, parents, teachers, education officers and the Minister for Education.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used during the fieldwork process to gather data from four case study schools from parts of Fiji, and from education stakeholders. The four theories guiding this study are: Constructivism, Social Reproduction, Post-Colonial Theory and Sociology of Knowledge. This study found that there is a mismatch between growth-oriented labour force needs and skilled capacities gained through education. Furthermore, a significant finding
related to the conditions that give rise to the habitus is that inequalities in terms of career opportunities and aspirations are reproduced by the education system especially for children from large, poor families and those who live with relatives.

Through efforts to work effectively with ‘grass-roots’ Fijian community members this study developed a new culturally appropriate methodology of ‘veivosaki-yaga’ during the focus group interviews. This study found competing viewpoints between stakeholders and between the different ways various groups of people currently understand TVET. Analysis of this contradictory data produced a discourse hierarchy and classification model which succinctly illustrates how TVET in Fiji is defined and understood differently by different stakeholders. This hierarchal model suggests possible reasons why there has been no consistent support for, and implementation of, TVET in Fiji. While there was consensus among high profile stakeholders that TVET has the potential to help Fiji meet its MDGs as well as its other developmental objectives, among ‘grass-roots’ stakeholders there was no such optimism or idealism.

In Fiji TVET has a generally negative perception in the community. In part this may be due to the diverse discourses that exist between major stakeholders such as senior government officials, teachers, parents and students. People at the top of the hierarchy associate TVET with highly paid professions and trades,
whereas those at the lower levels of the hierarchy consider TVET to be second-class education leading to low status, low wage-earning, labour intensive jobs.

Finally this study proposes a name and identity transformation from TVET to CTP – Career Training and Placement - to fulfill the vision and transformative discourse of major stakeholders and to eventually change the perceptions of the community about vocational education. CTP has the potential to be an inclusive innovative programme that aligns school subjects with career placement so that there is smoother transition between school and work for students in Fiji. In such a programme, school subjects and post-school training formerly viewed negatively as ‘TVET’ take their rightful place in the range of career-oriented study options available to junior secondary pupils and their families.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF MAPS &amp; IMAGES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chapter ONE: Introduction**

1.1 Chapter Overview .................................................. 1

1.2 The Study Background .............................................. 1

1.2.1 The Fiji context ................................................. 1
1.2.2 Fiji politics ....................................................... 3
1.2.3 The challenge of employment .................................. 5
1.2.4 A personal interest in this topic .............................. 7

1.3 Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) ................. 9

1.3.1 The global context of TVET .................................... 9
1.3.2 The regional context of TVET ................................. 11
1.4 An Overview of Fiji’s Education System .................................12
  1.4.1 The Fiji school system ..................................................13
  1.4.2 Secondary and Tertiary education .................................13
  1.4.3 The place of TVET in Fiji’s education system...............15
  1.4.4 Attitudes towards TVET in Fiji.....................................16
  1.4.5 Education assistance and scholarships in Fiji.................18

1.5 The Research Problem......................................................20

1.6 Purpose and Specific Objectives of the Study........................20

1.7 Specific Research Questions .............................................21

1.8 Methodology and Sample..................................................21

1.9 Theoretical Framework....................................................22

1.10 Why is this Study Important?..........................................23

1.11 Limitations of the Study..................................................24

1.12 Outline of the Thesis.....................................................24

1.13 Summary of this Chapter..................................................26

Chapter TWO: The Global Picture of Education in
Developing Countries: Review of the Literature......28

2.1 Introduction .......................................................................28
  2.1.1 Overview .................................................................28
  2.1.2 The global ramifications of education ..........................28
  2.1.3 Fiji’s colonial experience.............................................31
  2.1.4 Culture, values and non-formal education...................33
  2.1.5 Educational reforms and TVET...................................35

2.2 Globalisation and its Ramifications for Education............37
  2.2.1 Impact of globalisation on culture and education...........38
  2.2.2 The effects of the global financial crisis on education....40

2.3 Global Trends in Education...............................................43
2.3.1 Effects of inequality on education..........................44
2.3.2 The impact of population movement on education........48
2.3.3 New information and communication technology.........50
2.3.4 The commercialization of education..........................55
2.3.5 Implications for this study........................................57
2.3.6 Importance of stability and leadership on education......58

2.4 Alternative and Innovative Models of Education............60
   2.4.1 Innovations and education......................................60
   2.4.2 Implications of technology on education.....................61
   2.4.3 Overview of education delivery models.....................64

Chapter THREE: The Emerging Role of TVET in Global Education: Review of the Literature..............70

3.1 Emerging role of TVET in Global Education....................70
   3.1.1 TVET response to global challenges.........................70
   3.1.2 Global obstacles against TVET..............................77
3.2 Education and TVET in Pacific island Countries..............78
   3.2.1 Major social challenges of the Pacific islands...........79
   3.2.2 TVET versus academic education in the Pacific islands...83
3.3 The Place of TVET in Fiji.............................................85
   3.3.1 The lack of skills in Fiji......................................87
   3.3.2 Structure of TVET in Fiji.......................................90
3.4 Conclusion..................................................................93

Chapter FOUR: Theoretical Framework ...............95

4.1 Introduction ............................................................95
   4.1.1 Structure of the chapter.........................................95
   4.1.2 Overview of the theories.......................................95
4.2 Theoretical Framework ................................................................. 96
  4.2.1 Theory of constructivism ...................................................... 96
  4.2.2 Social reproduction theory .................................................. 98
  4.2.3 Post-colonial theory .......................................................... 104
  4.2.4 Sociology of knowledge ...................................................... 109

4.3 Summary ................................................................................... 112

Chapter FIVE: Methodology ....................................................... 114

5.1 Chapter Overview ..................................................................... 114
  5.1.1 Research questions ............................................................ 114
  5.1.2 Research methodology and design ....................................... 115
  5.1.3 Methodology justification .................................................. 117
  5.1.4 Overview of the fieldwork process ...................................... 120

5.2 Instrument Development and Design ........................................ 122
  5.2.1 Developing the questionnaire .............................................. 122
  5.2.2 Designing Interview schedules ......................................... 123
  5.2.3 The focus groups ............................................................... 124
  5.2.4 Piloting of research tools ................................................... 124

5.3 Sampling and Justification ...................................................... 125
  5.3.1 Questionnaire survey participants .................................... 125
  5.3.2 Interview participants ....................................................... 126
  5.3.3 Focus group participants ................................................... 127

5.4 Data Collection and Analysis Strategies .................................... 129
  5.4.1 Consultation phase ............................................................ 129
  5.4.2 Addressing measurement of attitude ................................... 130
  5.4.3 Classification of perceptions .............................................. 131
  5.4.4 Using a culturally appropriate research method ................. 131
  5.4.5 Veivosaki-yaga methodology (worthwhile discussion) ....... 133

5.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results ............................. 135
  5.5.1 Analyses of quantitative data ............................................ 135
  5.5.2 Analysis of qualitative data ............................................... 136
5.6 Research Limitations ................................................................. 136

5.6.1 Changes and reforms in the civil service .................................. 136
5.6.2 Cultural barriers .................................................................. 137
5.6.3 Limitations in the school environment ................................... 138
5.6.4 Language difficulty in the fieldwork ...................................... 138
5.6.5 Methodological limitations .................................................. 138
5.6.6 Maintaining ethical boundaries ............................................ 139

5.7 The Case Study Schools ............................................................. 139

5.7.1 School 1: Vunimono High School ......................................... 141
5.7.2 School 2: All Saints Secondary School ................................. 141
5.7.3 School 3: Nadi College .......................................................... 147
5.7.4 School 4: Nabua Secondary School ...................................... 149

5.8 Summary of the Chapter ............................................................. 152

Chapter SIX: Descriptive Analyses of Students’ Perceptions and Attitudes to TVET .................................................. 155

6.1 Introduction ............................................................................. 155

6.1.1 Background ......................................................................... 155
6.1.2 Structure of the chapter ...................................................... 156

6.2 Background of Student Survey Respondents ............................ 156

6.2.1 Data by sex, race and residence ........................................... 156
6.2.2 Parents and family backgrounds .......................................... 158
6.2.3 Family background and residence ...................................... 165

6.3 Student Preferences and Choices ............................................. 166

6.3.1 Perception of school ............................................................. 166
6.3.2 School subjects ................................................................. 171
6.3.3 Career pathways ............................................................... 173

6.4 Students’ Perceptions of TVET ................................................. 182

6.4.1 Awareness of TVET ............................................................ 182
6.4.2 Perceptions of TVET .......................................................... 190
6.4.3 Influences ........................................................................... 192
Chapter SEVEN: Stakeholder Perceptions about the Capacity of TVET to Facilitate and Sustain Economic Growth in Fiji......................................................... 198

7.1 Introduction ................................................................. 198
    7.1.1 Background.......................................................... 198
    7.1.2 Structure of this chapter.......................................... 200

7.2 Acknowledging TVET as a Key to Economic Growth ..........201
    7.2.1 Factors affecting enterprises in Fiji............................ 201
    7.2.2 Different stakeholders – summary of views.................. 202
    7.2.3 An NGO perspective................................................ 203
    7.2.4 The unemployment, poverty, crime cycle..................... 205
    7.2.5 A view from the Department of Youth in Northern Fiji.....207
    7.2.6 Views from the secondary sector..................................210
    7.2.7 A view from the public TVET sector............................. 213
    7.2.8 Identifying the training gaps.................................... 214
    7.2.9 TVET is vitally important for economic growth..............215

7.3 Paving the Way for TVET through Educational Reforms.......216
    7.3.1 Linking Fiji’s education system and employment..........216
    7.3.2 TVET initiatives from the Fiji Institute of Technology....219
    7.3.3 The mismatch between the curriculum and labour force needs223
    7.3.4 The view of the Minister for Education.......................225
    7.3.5 A contradictory view from the students........................227
    7.3.6 The initiative of removing examinations.....................228
    7.3.7 Evaluating comments about TVET and economic growth...230
    7.3.8 Evaluating comments about TVET and educational reform.232

7.4 Conclusion .............................................................................234

Chapter EIGHT: TVET Discourse in Fiji.......................235

8.1 Introduction ........................................................................... 235
Chapter NINE: Negative Discourse of TVET........260

9.1 Introduction ...................................................260
9.2 A Wary Perception of TVET.................................261
9.3 Negative Discourse from Parents .........................266
9.4 Negative Discourse based on TVET Legacy.............267
9.5 Negative Discourse from Teachers.........................269
9.6 Negative Discourse at Community Level .................271
9.7 Negative Discourse from Students.........................273
   9.7.1 Junior secondary level (Forms 3 and 4)..............274
   9.7.2 Focus group of senior secondary students (Forms 5, 6 and 7)..............................281
   9.7.3 Focus group of vocational (TVET) students.......285
   9.7.4 Focus group with Matua students...................291
9.8 Conclusion ....................................................294

Chapter TEN: Advancing TVET in Fiji.................296

10.1 Introduction ..................................................296
    10.1.1 Structure of the chapter ............................296
10.2 Influences in the Habitus of Students in Fiji ..........297
    10.2.1 The Web of Influence Model .........................300
10.3 TVET Discourse in Fiji ....................................303
10.3.1 TVET discourse hierarchy ........................................ 303
10.3.2 The TVET Discourse Model ..................................... 304
10.4 Discourses and Value of TVET in Fiji .............................. 309
10.5 The Problem of Awareness of TVET in Fiji ........................ 311
  10.5.1 School awareness .............................................. 311
  10.5.2 Community and family awareness ............................. 314
  10.5.3 Awareness strategies for the future ............................ 315
10.6 Major Challenges for TVET .......................................... 317
  10.6.1 School infrastructure ........................................... 317
  10.6.2 Curricular reforms ............................................. 317
  10.6.3 Implementation at junior secondary level ..................... 318
  10.6.4 Teacher qualification and role ................................. 319
  10.6.5 Wages associated with TVET .................................. 320
10.7 A New Direction for TVET in Fiji .................................... 321
  10.7.1 Fostering a new discourse of TVET ............................ 321
  10.7.2 Implications of the new CTP discourse – a dual curriculum ... 325
10.8 Summary of the Chapter ............................................. 327

Chapter ELEVEN: Conclusion ........................................... 328

11.1 Overview .......................................................... 328
  11.1.1 Restating the purpose and objectives of the study .......... 329
  11.1.2 Limitations of the study ........................................ 330
11.2 Summary of Findings of the Study ................................. 331
  11.2.1 Mismatch between growth-oriented labour force needs and skilled capacities gained through education .......... 332
  11.2.2 Negative attitudes and perceptions about TVET .......... 333
  11.2.3 Role of TVET in Fiji’s socio-economic development ....... 334
  11.2.4 Differing discourses of TVET in Fiji ......................... 335
11.3 Implications for Further Research .................................. 337
11.4 Implications of the Study ........................................... 338
11.4.1 Contribution to available body of knowledge of TVET……338
11.4.2 Improving TVET awareness and participation………………339
11.4.3 Enhancement of Fiji’s human resource planning capability..340

11.5 Recommendations of the Study ........................................341

11.5.1 Recommendation 1: Adoption of CTP dual curriculum….342
11.5.2 Recommendation 2: Improving community awareness....343
11.5.3 Recommendation 3: Improving the filtration of information ..344

References................................................................. 346
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: TVET Enrolments by gender 2003 - 2004 & 2007 - 2009 ......89
Table 3.2: Form Seven Enrolments by race 2003-2004 & 2007 ...........90
Table 5.1: Research Instruments..............................................116
Table 5.2: Interview Participants............................................126
Table 6.1: Student Roll and Ethnicity.......................................157
Table 6.2: Sex Distribution....................................................158
Table 6.3: Categories of Responses in Question 10......................183
Table 6.4: Responses to Question 10........................................186
Table 6.5: Cross-tabulated Responses against Question 10i...........188
Table 6.6: Cross-tabulated Responses for all Question 10 options.....189
Table 9.1: Focus Groups of Student-Participants........................274

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Global Numbers of Internet Users.............................53
Figure 6.1: Percentage of Parents' Employment...........................160
Figure 6.2: Family Features of Respondents..............................163
Figure 6.3: What Respondents Like about School (%)....................168
Figure 6.4: Subject Stream Choice for Form 5 (%)........................171
Figure 6.5: Dream Job of Respondents (%).................................174
Figure 6.6: Reason for Career Choice……………………………………..176
Figure 6.7: Reflecting on Career Choice…………………………………..178
Figure 6.8: Action if they Fail to Get their Dream Job (%)………………..180
Figure 6.9: Awareness and Knowledge of TVET…………………………184
Figure 6.10: Chart of Influence Based on Question 13…………………..193
Figure 7.1: TVET Career Pathways and Opportunities…………………..220
Figure 8.1: The Four Levels of TVET Discourses in Fiji………………….238
Figure 10.1: The Web of Influence (TWI)………………………………301
Figure 10.2: TVET Discourse Model……………………………………….305
Figure 10.3: Career Training and Placement (CTP)……………………….322
Figure 10.4: Evolution of TVET in Fiji…………………………………….323

LIST OF MAPS & IMAGES

Maps:
Map 1.1: Map of the Fiji Islands.........................................................2
Map 5.1: Locations of the Case Study Schools……………………………..140

Images:
Image 5.1: Participants of  Veivosaki-yaga Distribute Handouts...........134
Image 5.2: A Classroom Scene at Vunimono.................................141
Image 5.3: A Home Economics Class in Vunimono..........................142
Image 5.4: Vunimono School Frontage............................................143
Image 5.5: Principal Mckenzie Addressing an Assembly..................144
LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Information Statement for the Research Project..............391
APPENDIX 2: Research Ethics Committee Progress Acknowledgement.....393
APPENDIX 3: The Questionnaire..............................................394
APPENDIX 4: Ministry of Education Consent Form for the Case Studies....398
APPENDIX 5: Ministry of Education Consent Form for the Survey........399
APPENDIX 6: Consent Form for Ministry of Education Participants........400
APPENDIX 7: Consent Form for Government officials and Stakeholders...401
APPENDIX 8: Research Focus Group for Community Leaders.............402
APPENDIX 9: Research Focus Group for Teachers.............................403
APPENDIX 10: Research Focus Group for Senior and Matua students ....404
APPENDIX 11: Research Focus Group for Parents........................................405
APPENDIX 12: Interviews with External Stakeholders.................................406
APPENDIX 13: Principals’ Consent for Survey.............................................407
APPENDIX 14: Principals’ Consent for Case Study.......................................408
APPENDIX 15: Sample Request Letter.........................................................409
APPENDIX 16: List of Participants .................................................................410
APPENDIX 17: Fieldwork Images.................................................................412
APPENDIX 18: Categories of Jobs.................................................................414
APPENDIX 19: Table of Influence.................................................................415

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUSAID: Australia Agency for International Development
EFA: Education For All
FCA: Fiji College of Agriculture
FCAE: Fiji College of Advanced Education
FFA: Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency
FIEC: Fiji Islands Education Commission
FIBS: Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics
FILNA: Fiji Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
FIT: Fiji Institute of Technology
FNU: Fiji National University
FLP: Fiji Labour Party
FSM: Fiji School of Medicine
FSN: Fiji School of Nursing
IA: Internal Assessment
ILO: International Labour Organisation
LTC: Lautoka Teachers College
MDG: Millennium Development Goal
NCBBF: National Council For Building A Better Fiji
NCVER: National Centre for Vocational Education Research
PATVET: Pacific Association of Technical Vocational Education and Training
PCCPP: People’s Charter for Change, Peace & Progress
PRIDE: Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of Basic Education
RBF: Reserve Bank of Fiji
SDL: Soqosoqo Duavatani Lewenivanua
SOPAC: Pacific Islands Applied GeoScience Commission
SPBEA: South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment
SPC: Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SVT: Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei.
TAFE NSW: Technical and Further Education New South Wales

TAFE: Technical and Further Education

TPAF: Training Productivity Authority of Fiji

TVET: Technical Vocational Education and Training

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme


USP: University of the South Pacific

VET: Vocational Education and Training

WEI: World Education Indicators

WHO: World Health Organisation

Glossary of Terms

**Bonn Declaration:** refers to the UNESCO meeting of international experts on Technical Vocational Education and Training where they declared that TVET held the key to alleviating poverty and improving the overall living conditions of people especially those in disadvantaged communities.

**Burebasaga:** One of the three traditional confederacies in Fiji. It comprises 6 of the 14 provinces of Fiji. Rewa is its principal province with Roko Tui Dreketi as its highest ranking chief.

**FNU:** refers to the newly established Fiji National University, which is primarily composed of the tertiary institution formerly known as Fiji Institute of
Technology. The new university resulted from the merger of 6 tertiary institutions in Fiji.

**Government:** refers to the Fiji Government unless stated otherwise.

**iTaukei (Fijian):** refers to Indigenous Fijians or natives of Fiji. In the data tables the term ‘Fijian’ is used instead because this is the most widely recognised term in the community, settlements and schools.

**Indo Fijian (Indian):** refers to people of Indian descent in Fiji. In the data tables, the term ‘Indian’ is used instead because this is the most widely recognised term in the community, settlements and schools.

**Kubuna:** One of the three traditional confederacies in Fiji with Tailevu as its principal province and Vunivalu as its highest ranking chief.

**Matua Program:** The *Matua* Program offers school dropouts and adults an opportunity to complete their secondary education.

**Matua:** In Fijian vernacular language this maybe loosely translated as someone who is mature or an adult.

**Ministry of Education:** refers to Fiji’s Ministry of Education under the leadership of Minister Filipe Bole.

**Participants:** refers to all those who participated in this study as informants. This includes students, parents, teachers, community leaders and government officials.

**People’s Charter:** refers to the People’s Charter for Change, Peace & Progress initiated by Fiji’s interim government in 2008.

**Stakeholders:** this refers to Fiji government officials, school administrators, community leaders, business leaders, teachers, parents and students.

**Students:** refers to all students attending primary, secondary or tertiary institutions in Fiji depending on the context/usage of the term in the text.
some instances the term is used interchangeably to refer specifically to student-participants of this study.

**Tovata:** One of the three traditional confederacies with 5 provinces. Cakaudrove is its principal province and Tui Cakau is its highest ranking chief.

**TVET:** refers to Technical Vocational Education and Training. In this study it is defined as preparation for employment. In a wider sense it means mental, physical and psychological preparation for a career. In the Fiji context, and in this thesis this may also be referred to as vocational education, vocational training or vocational.

**Veivosaki-yaga:** refers to worthwhile discussion. It is the new culturally appropriate methodology developed from this study during the fieldwork.
Chapter ONE: Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter sets the scene of the study by providing an introduction to this thesis. It places Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Fiji Islands in the wider context of the South Pacific region and the world. The chapter presents an overview of Fiji’s social, economic and educational realities in its volatile political landscape. The research problem and questions are then outlined, as well as the methodology adopted for this study. It then outlines the theoretical framework as well as the purpose and significance of the study.

1.2 The Study Background

This section gives an overview of Fiji so that the context for this study is understood. It outlines the social and cultural backgrounds as well as the dynamic political situation in Fiji. It puts into perspective the major challenges facing the country such as unemployment, and provides an insight into the motivation and personal interest of this researcher about the place of TVET in Fiji.

1.2.1 The Fiji context

The Republic of the Fiji Islands is the social, cultural and geographical setting of this research. Spanning over 18,376 square kilometers and consisting of over
300 islands and islets, the Fiji Islands are home to approximately 835,000 people of mainly Melanesian descent. Image 1.1 below is a map of the Fiji Islands showing the major trading centers, towns, cities and surrounding islands.

Map 1.1: Map of the Fiji Islands

Indigenous Fijians (iTaukei)\(^1\) currently comprise over 57% of the population while Indo-Fijians comprise about 37%. Other small minority ethnic groups in Fiji include: Rotumans, Banabans, Chinese, Europeans, Part Europeans and

---

\(^1\) Since October 2011 the term iTaukei has been introduced in government and public sphere discourse to describe the indigenous people of the Fiji Islands. The term Indians is to be used to describe inhabitants of Fiji who can trace their origins to India. However, there is still avid debate in Fiji regarding the use of the term iTaukei instead of Indigenous Fijians, and Indians instead of Indo-Fijians. Therefore this thesis will use the old terminologies for the convenience of all readers, especially given the highly political nature of this debate.
Solomon Islanders (FIBS\textsuperscript{2}, 2011). Fiji’s indigenous society is made up of three large traditional confederacies (\textit{Kubuna, Burebasaga and Tovata}) which cover 14 provinces\textsuperscript{3}. Within each province there are villages, clans and sub-clans. There is a complex leadership hierarchy at various levels of Indigenous Fijian society (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). There are chiefs at village level and provincial level. Each province is managed by a provincial council which is responsible for development projects, training and other services at village level. These provincial councils are funded by the state and part of state government machinery.

Fiji’s Indo-Fijian community are descendants of labourers brought by the British colonial government in the early 1870s to work on sugar cane fields and as merchants. Fiji is a relatively multicultural society. Dominant religions are Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. Major industries are tourism and sugar but recently remittances from Fijians living overseas have become a major revenue earner for the country.

\textbf{1.2.2 Fiji politics}

Fiji has been a member of the British Commonwealth since its independence in October 1970. But the volatile political arena has seen the overthrow of three elected governments since 1987. Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth in August 2009 after President Josefa Iloilo abrogated Fiji’s Constitution (The Fiji Times, April 10 2009). Fiji functioned under Public Emergency Regulations\textsuperscript{2}.

\textsuperscript{2} FIBS: Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics.
\textsuperscript{3} These are: Tailevu, Naitasiri, Rewa, Kadavu, Nadroga, Ba, Lomaiviti, Bua, Macuata, Cakaudrove, Ra, Lau, Serua and Namosi.
Fiji’s Prime Minister Bainimarama has promised General Elections in 2014. Historically, Fiji’s political landscape has always been dominated by race and the main political parties have had strong racial bases. Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka led Fiji’s first military coup on May 14, 1987 overthrowing the Labour-Coalition government of Dr. Timoci Bavotra, which was widely perceived by Indigenous Fijians to be an Indian dominated government (Sharpham, 2000; Lal, 1988). Rabuka regained control of government with another coup in September 25, 1987 deposing the Governor General and declaring Fiji a republic. The Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei Party (SVT), was formed with the backing of Fiji’s Great Council of Chiefs and Fiji’s Indigenous population. Rabuka joined the SVT Party and became its leader (Premdas, 1993). He became Prime Minister after leading the party to victory in the 1992 and 1994 General Elections.

Mahendra Chaudhry’s Fiji Labour Party (FLP) managed to consolidate Indo-Fijian votes after sustaining heavy losses in the 1994 General Elections. FLP won the 1999 General Elections and Mahendra Chaudhry became Fiji’s first Indian Prime Minister (Ramesh, 2007). His government was overthrown by a civilian coup lead by George Speight in May 19, 2000.

There is sustained racial support for the major political parties in Fiji (De Vries, 2002). Indigenous Fijians have strongly supported the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua Party (SDL) led most notably by Laisenia Qarase, while the Indo-Fijian population has strongly supported the Fiji Labour Party, headed most notably by Mahendra Chaudhry in the lead up to the 2001 and 2006 General
Elections. The national elections in 2001 saw the victory of the SDL Party under the leadership of Laisenia Qarase. The Qarase government was re-elected in 2006 but a military coup overthrew the government in December of the same year. The military leader Commodore Frank Bainimarama has been in control of government ever since.

In 2007, Fiji’s interim government launched a national initiative to build a better Fiji through the People’s Charter for Change, Peace and Progress (PCCPP). A National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF) was formed and undertook nation-wide consultations prior to preparing a State of the Nation and Economy Report (SNE), which provided an analysis of the developmental needs and priorities as well as the aspirations of the people of Fiji (Fiji Government, 2008). Critics and opponents of the People’s Charter are many. This is aptly demonstrated by the numerous key political figures, especially members of the deposed SDL government of Laisenia Qarase, who refused to join the Charter team or contribute to the national consultation.

The picture of Fiji presented here is a complex one in political terms. Yet whatever the political future, Fiji must continue to function as a productive nation that provides adequate income for its citizens. TVET has a crucial role to play in this.

1.2.3 The challenge of employment

One of the biggest challenges facing Fiji is unemployment. Since 2007 the Fiji government has strategically attempted to reduce its civil service workforce
This is aptly illustrated by the thousands of civil servants laid off in April 2009 because of an age cap that the government suddenly introduced. A few months later, the Fiji Public Service Commission announced that the Fiji Government was intending to cut its work force further by as much as fifty per cent (Fijilive News, September 24 2009). Older people lost their jobs and this added to increasing unemployment and poverty in the country. These cutbacks mean that the dream of becoming a civil servant will be lost for many young graduates. For example, recently the Permanent Secretary for Education Dr Brij Lal revealed that only 150 out of 800 new teacher graduates had found teaching positions (who are civil servants in Fiji). The remaining 650 were still waiting for a job (Fijilive News, January 31 2012).

Unemployment is a serious threat to national security in Fiji, especially with the country’s relatively youthful population. Unemployment has globally been identified as a precursor to poverty and crime (AUSAID, 2006). One long-term solution explored in this study is TVET and its ability to develop technical and entrepreneurial skills to boost Fiji’s economic activity and productivity in key sectors such as tourism, construction and agriculture.

The challenge for this research is to understand people’s attitudes towards TVET, so that we might develop strategies for channelling these positively towards TVET. The ultimate objective is to suggest ways that TVET can guide and empower young people to find suitable employment and to contribute to their families, their communities and the nation.
1.2.4 A personal interest in this topic

My interest in this topic began in 2005 while I was Research Officer at the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT). It was becoming evident around that time that many high school leavers and university graduates were ending up without jobs. An earlier study by Mausio (2003) had shown that about 17,000 young people left high school in Fiji each year but there were only about 2,000 places for formal employment available in the country. Later Fiji Government figures showed that in 2007, 16000 young people left school but only 8000 proceeded to further education or employment (Fiji Government, 2008). The majority of school leavers, who have completed academic rather than vocational studies, are left to fend for themselves or to find other forms of income generation. Given these trends I was surprised to see that thousands of students were continuing on the same well-trodden academic path to an uncertain future year after year.

At the time TVET courses were offered in the education system as a viable alternative and there were many job opportunities on offer in TVET fields, yet there seemed to be little response from students in terms of choosing their educational pathways. This was my motivation for pursuing this intriguing question for my doctoral thesis. I was interested in understanding why there was little interest in TVET and why mainstream academic study continued to be overwhelmingly popular in secondary and tertiary institutions, despite high graduate unemployment.
I taught for ten years at secondary and tertiary levels of education in Fiji and I have experienced firsthand the lack of interest of young people in TVET, and the lack of public awareness about TVET. Many young people, who eventually end up in TVET programmes, only do so as a last resort - after they have exhausted all avenues of getting into a mainstream academic course. These were normally students who had failed in national examinations and those with no other option but to return to their village / settlement.

In 2005, I joined a research team hosted at the Fiji Institute of Technology. We surveyed over 1000 senior high school students across Fiji. It was found that a majority of participants (both male and female) were intending to pursue white-collar jobs as compared to technical jobs (Nilan, Cavu, Tagicakiverata & Hazelman, 2006). In the same year some of my colleagues at FIT and I visited 60 rural villages and communities throughout Fiji for the purpose of undertaking Training Needs Assessments (TNA). Our TNA survey involved over 1800 participants of all ages. We found that many high school leavers had returned to their villages to do subsistence farming after they failed to secure a tertiary scholarship or a white-collar job. Some of these young people had passed their final national examinations (Forms 6 and 7) but could not see other possibilities because their minds were set on white-collar jobs. I spoke to some who thought it would be embarrassing for them to go into TVET, especially when they had successfully passed Forms 6 and 7. For most of these young people, the idea of pursuing vocational training was not considered at all throughout high school (Cavu, Tagicakiverata, Naisilisili & Rabici, 2009).

---

4This research team was headed by Associate Professor Pam Nilan from the University of Newcastle Australia.
These findings drew my attention to the problem of deeply-held attitudes against TVET in Fiji. From this problem I developed the research question and plan for this doctoral study.

1.3 Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

This section outlines the concept of vocational education from a global and regional perspective. It puts into perspective the significance of TVET in national developments and emphasises the importance of TVET research such as this.

1.3.1 The global context of TVET

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is referred to in different contexts as Vocational Education and Training (VET), Training and Further Education (TAFE), Technical and Vocational Education (TVE), Further Education (FE) and Career and Technical Education (CTE). For the purposes of clarity in this thesis the acronym TVET will be used throughout, except when referring to the specific vocational education systems of other countries. In order to better understand TVET it needs to be clarified in the global arena of education and in terms of its historical development. There are differences between TVET and other forms of general education. One is the career pathway and the other is the contrast between abstract academic learning and the practical / applied learning offered through TVET. There are variations of
TVET adopted in many different countries such as the United States, Britain, Australia and small Pacific island countries such as Fiji, Vanuatu and Samoa.

Historically, formal TVET is thought to have its roots in Britain in the 1800s in the foundation of the Royal Institution of Great Britain in 1799 and the establishment of The Mechanics Institute in London in 1823. The concept of formal technical education spread throughout Britain and eventually throughout the world (Morrish, 1970; Bowen, 1981). In the last 50 years, TVET has emerged at the forefront of education in response to many significant development challenges facing the world. Poverty and unemployment are two of these major challenges. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on global unemployment showed that a significant percentage of young people are currently unemployed in every world region, and that a common factor for all regions is the mismatch of qualifications and skills with available employment (ILO, 2007). This mismatch also adds to the underproductive labour outputs of those already employed.

Educational reformers, national leaders and multi-sectoral stakeholders acknowledge TVET as a key solution to this mismatch problem at local and national levels. In parts of Africa for instance, a frequent solution offered for unemployment due to educational ‘over production’ is TVET. ‘Over production’ refers to the situation where students graduate with skills already in over-supply, such as public service clerical skills (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006; JICA, 2007).
Most governments around the world have different contemporary policies about TVET. The different frameworks of these policies were formed in response to globalisation, changing technology, and concerns about skills shortages (Kearns & Papadopolous, 2000), as well as the prevailing social conditions and cultures of a specific country.

1.3.2 The regional context of TVET

Trends in education have often tended to originate from Britain and the United States and have influenced Australasia and the rest of the world. For example, it can be argued that Australia’s VET model has been heavily influenced by British models. Australia’s Vocational Education and Training (VET) provides skills and knowledge for work through a national training system which consists of a network of industry, public and private training providers responsible to the State Governments and the Australian Government for ensuring consistent training throughout Australia. VET in the Australian sense aims to provide a smooth transition from school to employment. In Australia, VET enrolment is growing. In 2009, 1.7 million students were enrolled in the public VET system, a growth of 0.4% from 2008. In the same year, 87.6% of VET graduates were employed or in further study approximately six months after their training (NCVER\(^5\), 2010). This example from Australia shows how TVET can offer a key solution to the education / employment mismatch problem.

The success of the Australian VET programme in facilitating the transition of young people from school to work has perhaps driven the active promotion of

---

\(^5\)The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is Australia’s principal provider of vocational education and training (VET) research and statistics.
TVET in the region through AUSAID programmes. Small island countries in the South Pacific such as Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu and many others look to Australia to set the trend for education and development in the region. Many Pacific Island countries look to Australia for aid, trade and tourism development. Australia is a major donor in the region, providing over $1 billion in aid to the Pacific in 2010-11 (AUSAID, 2010). This substantial contribution shows Australia’s commitment to improving the lives and livelihood of people in the Pacific region. A priority for AUSAID is education, where it has committed $842 million for 2011-12. Furthermore, AUSAID has spent $149.5 million in establishing four TVET institutions in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu in the form of Australia-Pacific Technical Colleges (APTC). The establishment of these institutions indicates Australia’s recognition of the long-term significant contribution that TVET can make to local economies in promoting employment, productivity and sustainability (AUSAID, 2010). Fiji has certainly benefited from Australia’s input into TVET through the AUSAID initiative. The next section describes the education system in Fiji, which needs to be understood so that TVET development in the country can be appraised.

1.4 An Overview of Fiji’s Education System

This section provides a brief outline of the education system in Fiji, from primary to university. It puts into perspective the education opportunities available for children in Fiji as well as the place of TVET in Fiji’s education system. There is also a discussion about government assistance and scholarships available in the country, as well as remedial programmes to cater for school dropouts.
1.4.1 The Fiji school system

In 2010 there were 721 primary schools, 172 secondary schools and 69 vocational centres in Fiji (FIBS, 2011). As of January 2010\(^6\) there were three universities in Fiji. Education is compulsory in Fiji at primary and secondary levels so pupils in Fiji spend up to 14 years in formative education. Pre-school begins at 5 years of age and children normally enrol at primary school at 6 years of age. There are 8 classes in primary school (Classes 1 – 8), where students progress from one year to the next. There are no national examinations at primary level. However, there is a Fiji Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (FILNA) held in Classes 4, 6 and 8. Once students have completed Class 8, they enrol in a secondary school of their choice (Fiji Islands Ministry of Education, 2008).

1.4.2 Secondary and Tertiary education

While there are primary schools everywhere, Fiji still has only a handful of junior secondary schools in rural communities and on smaller islands. Junior secondary level is Forms 3 – 4, a two year course. Students sit the Fiji Junior Examination at the end of Form 4. Senior secondary is Forms 5 – 6, also a two-year course, and students sit the Fiji School Leaving Certificate Examination at the end of Form 6 (Fiji Islands Ministry of Education, 2011). There are even fewer senior secondary schools in rural and remote areas.

\(^6\) Fiji’s third and largest university, Fiji National University, began operation in January 2010.
Upon completion of Form 6, students have choices depending on the quality of marks they achieved. Students who score 250/400 and above have more options and may choose to progress to Form 7 or they could enrol in a tertiary institution or one of the local universities such as USP or FNU and do a certificate or diploma programme, then proceed to degree study. Form 7 is equivalent to university foundation and those that do well at this level are more likely to enter university degree programmes. Students at Form 6 are examined in five subjects. The total scores are computed from English plus the best three subjects. Students with high scores of 320 or more out of 400 (average of 80%) are normally those who get scholarships. There is a national scholarship selection process that favors Indigenous Fijians. In addition, a number of provincial councils in Fiji such as Rewa and Tailevu have set up their own scholarship schemes to assist people from their provinces with educational expenses.

Fiji has three universities: The University of the South Pacific in Suva, the University of Fiji in Nadi, and the newly established Fiji National University, the latter offering a variety of technical, academic and medical courses at a number of campuses. This new university is closest to the TVET paradigm in the range of courses, for example, applied engineering. At the secondary level, there has been a renewed emphasis on TVET. Out of 69 identified vocational training centres, 48 were secondary schools offering vocational programmes under a franchise. These franchise schools either offer Ministry of Education Vocational Programs or programs franchised by Fiji National University (formerly Fiji
Institute of Technology). There are also 17 special schools for students with special needs that offer some vocational training.

1.4.3 The place of TVET in Fiji’s education system

According to the Fiji Islands Ministry of Education Annual Report (2008) almost 80,000 students took pre-vocational TVET courses at secondary level, including the now compulsory TVET courses in Forms 3 and 4. This became possible with the implementation of the Internal Assessment (IA) programme from 2001. Students at junior secondary level now take seven compulsory subjects including two TVET subjects. Many teachers in secondary school agree that by the time students complete Form 4 they are supposed to have decided on a career pathway. They are also expected to choose subjects that match their chosen career aspirations. In Form 5, students have two options - either to continue in the main academic stream or to pursue TVET at any of the 48 secondary school-based vocational centres around Fiji. The vocational centres provide specialisations in automotive engineering, carpentry and joinery, catering, tailoring and office technology. Students can enter the vocational centres after Form 4 for two years, or one year if they have completed Form 6, after which they may proceed to do a certificate programme at a local tertiary institution (Sharma & Naisele, 2008).

Another significant educational reform in favor of TVET in Fiji was the formation of a third university – the Fiji National University (FNU). This new university, which became operational in January 2010, merged key tertiary training

---

7 These are: English, Math, Basic Science, Social Science, Commerce and two TVET subjects
institutions into what has become Fiji’s largest university with an estimated 25,000 students. This has been a brainchild of Fiji’s current Minister for Education Filipe Bole. He said in an interview that the merger had been in the pipeline for a while and that it was meant to emphasise the place of TVET in addressing Fiji’s development and human resource needs (Interview with Bole, Suva, February 2010). Key institutions that merged to form FNU were: Fiji Institute of Technology, Fiji School of Nursing, Fiji School of Medicine, Fiji College of Agriculture, Fiji College of Advanced Education, and Lautoka Teachers College (Fiji Government, 2009). A major advantage of this merger is that students in TVET fields will have access to degree programs at local campuses.

1.4.4 Attitudes towards TVET in Fiji

Published research has shown that global attitudes towards TVET have been generally negative. These negative attitudes are revealed in studies in Kenya (Simiyu, 2009; Nyerere, 2009; Shiundu & Omulando, 1992), in Thailand (Pimpa, 2007, 2005), in India, Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and to some extent in Korea and Taiwan (Park, 2005). Dr Man Gon Park, the Director General of the Colombo Plan College for Technical Education succinctly summed up the problem when he stated that ‘the negative social attitude towards TVET as a second-class system of education has severely diminished the demand for vocational education’ in many countries (Park, 2005, p.5). Park’s claim aptly describes the negative attitude problem of TVET in Fiji (Sharma & Naisele, 2008).
In Fiji there is significant public ignorance about TVET. The potential contribution of TVET to addressing key socio-economic issues, especially unemployment and poverty (Cavu et al, 2009) is not widely comprehended. Many ordinary people still do not understand what TVET is, let alone its capacity for building human resources and empowering young people entering the workforce. Politicians, employers and social commentators in Fiji continue to debate the ways and means of tackling unemployment, often without paying enough attention to the key factors of appropriate education and training.

While TVET has certainly been offered in the Fijian education system in different forms over the last five decades, emphasis has always been on mainstream academic education. In short, technical and vocational education has always been portrayed as non-mainstream (FIEC, 2000)\(^8\). This attitude appears to have been perpetuated by educators in their interactions with students, and white collar career ambitions have been universally encouraged. This has been exacerbated by a system where unequal higher education opportunities were available for TVET and academic high school graduates respectively. Technical higher education initially was offered only up to Diploma level, while mainstream academic education was provided up to doctoral level. Furthermore, at the end of the process, wages in the work place favored academic graduates over TVET graduates (Sharma, 2000). Therefore TVET has suffered from a traditional association with low educational status, low wages and manual labour.

\(^8\)FIEC – The Fiji Islands Education Commission Report was published in 2000 by Fiji Ministry of Education. It was the latest examination of Fiji’s Education system since 1969. There has been no subsequent comparable report.
1.4.5 Education assistance and scholarships in Fiji

Government assistance for education comes primarily in the form of subsidies which include the supply of free textbooks and tokens for free bus travel to school. The government also provides scholarships for Form 7, and for tertiary Diploma and Degree programmes. Scholarships offered by the Public Service Commission are available for all students, while Multicultural Affairs Scholarships are offered to Indo-Fijian and minority group students. The Fijian Affairs scholarship is available solely to Indigenous Fijian students. Selection criteria vary among these scholarships but one commonality is that students with the highest aggregate in the Form 6 national examination get priority selection.

As mentioned above there is some educational assistance at provincial level. The Rewa Provincial Scholarship for instance provides small financial grants for Indigenous students at all levels - including primary and secondary, but its priority is on tertiary level education. The selection criteria for provincial scholarships vary. For the Rewa Provincial Council scholarship, the student must be a registered member of the province and have scored high marks in the Form 6 national examination. According to Pita Tagicakiverata, Chairman of the Rewa Scholarship Committee, the committee is very particular about tertiary programmes that it will support. Programmes that will directly benefit the province’s development goals are given priority (Interview with Tagicakiverata, Suva, May 2009).
In addition to scholarships, there are education initiatives and programmes in Fiji that provide for young adults and adults who did not complete their secondary education. These are remedial programmes such as the Matua\(^9\) Programme at Nabua Secondary School, and the Bridging Programme at Fiji National University. These different programmes cater for people of all races, backgrounds and education levels. For example, the Matua Programme offers dropouts an opportunity to complete their secondary education in all fields including TVET. The Bridging Programme on the other hand provides short courses that provide the basic knowledge required for entry into tertiary certificate and diploma programmes. There is anecdotal evidence of graduates from both initiatives who have gone on to complete professional training in various fields, graduated from university and found jobs in Fiji and overseas.

Such is the diverse nature of Fiji’s education system. Successive governments have introduced new innovations and initiatives but the true measure of the system is its output – its people. While there may be different interpretations of what a successful education system is, Fiji’s system has done comparatively well in terms of achieving high literacy level (93.7\%) and the recognition of its qualifications abroad in countries such as Australia and New Zealand. This is aptly illustrated by the many teachers, nurses, doctors, mechanics and other skilled workers from Fiji who live and work overseas. Yet at the same time, the capacity of the Fiji education system to contribute strongly to overcoming poverty and unemployment, to drive sustainable economic development, is hampered by widespread negative community attitudes towards TVET.

\(^9\) Matua may be translated as mature, in reference to adult learners who participate in the programme.
1.5 The Research Problem

It seems clear that the current system of education in Fiji does not provide a smooth transition between school and work. Many school leavers and graduates are still unemployed. Technical jobs are available in the country, with crucial shortages of skilled workers in some fields, but there is still a general lack of interest in TVET. The problem can be pinned down to the doubtful attitude of young people, parents and teachers towards TVET in Fiji.

1.6 Purpose and Specific Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions and attitudes about TVET in Fiji, with special focus on students at junior secondary school level. The specific objectives are:

i. **Identify community attitudes and perceptions about TVET**

   Identify how perceptions and attitudes towards TVET are developed and nurtured through the school, family, and community of junior secondary students.

ii. **Identify discourses of TVET in Fiji**

   Identify and categorise the discourses of TVET in the community. This includes key stakeholders such as senior government officials, teachers, students and parents.
iii. Improve community awareness and participation in TVET

Propose strategies for changing community attitudes and perceptions at local and national levels in Fiji.

1.7 Specific Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

i. What are the perceptions and attitudes about TVET at junior secondary school level?

ii. What factors contribute to the construction and formulation of these perceptions and attitudes?

iii. How might these perceptions and attitudes towards TVET be made more positive?

1.8 Methodology and Sample

This research adopted a multi-method approach utilising both quantitative and qualitative designs within the case study construct proposed by Yin (1994). Since the research questions imply data collection that yields both breadth and depth, a multi-method approach was chosen. Researchers such as Strauss & Corbin (1990), Burns (1990), (Aiken, 1996) and Merriam (1998) agree that qualitative and quantitative methods may be used in the same research for the
purpose of complementing, verifying and strengthening data collection capabilities.

A total of 422 junior secondary pupils (Forms 3 and 4) of both sexes and ethnic/racial backgrounds were anonymous informants in the survey. These pupils were between the ages of 12 and 16 in four case study schools. In addition, there were 359 students who participated in focus group discussions and interviews. This also included some survey participants who contributed in open class discussions. There were a total of 85 adult participants in interviews and focus groups. These included senior government officials, school administrators, teachers and parents. Analysis of quantitative data was conducted using IBM SPSS (2010, Version 19.0) – a quantitative data analysis package. Qualitative responses taken in the four case studies from interviews were analysed using NVIVO (QSR, 2010) – a qualitative data management package. The methodology is described in detail in Chapter 5.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study blends educational and sociological theories to interpret school to work transition in the context of Fiji, including the possible TVET pathway. The work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the insights of educationalist Jean Piaget and post-colonial theories are combined in the theoretical framework that underpins this thesis. Accordingly, decisions and choices that are made by students regarding their education and career are
understood to reflect the cumulative influence of factors in their *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984).

The concept of *habitus* is significant for this research because it describes the sense of identity, belonging and dispositions for decision-making that shape students’ conception of the world around them and how they respond to their environment. This resonates with Jean Piaget’s theory of constructivism where the premise is that people construct their own understanding of the world they live in by creating meaning from their own life experiences (Piaget, 1983, 1985). Post-colonial theory is used to look at the historical relationship between popular career choices in Fiji and precedents set by colonial rulers in the past. For example, in Indigenous Fijian culture, technical knowledge tends to be devalued - a colonial inheritance from the past where Indian workers were brought into the colony to provide plantation labour while the sons of chiefs became clerks in the British colonial government. This negative view of technical knowledge is reinforced by the fact that in traditional Fijian hierarchy, only chiefs and priests made decisions. Other sub-clans such as carpenters, builders and fisherman merely listened and carried out orders; so technical knowledge in the modern sense is not regarded as powerful / high status knowledge. The theoretical framework for the thesis is described in Chapter 4.

### 1.10 Why is this Study Important?

This topic needs investigation because it has significance for the future of young people in Fiji and the economic sustainability of the country. Findings from this
research will provide stakeholders with data and information based on solid research for informing the necessary initiatives in developing programmes, campaigns, and making policy changes to facilitate a change of mindset and attitude towards TVET at school, community and government levels. These initiatives and programmes may mean that TVET is eventually regarded as equal to mainstream academic study in Fiji’s education system. This will improve the career options and employability of school leavers in Fiji.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The two main limitations of this study are external barriers and methodological limitations. External barriers in this research refer to constraints such as distance (PhD studies overseas), cultural expectations, environmental conditions and candidature time. Methodological limitations refer to other methodological approaches and directions that could have been pursued but were not undertaken due to the specific nature of this investigation and interest of the researcher. These limitations are further explained in Chapter 5.

1.12 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis comprises eleven chapters. This chapter – Chapter One – has introduced the thesis topic and given a sense of the background to the study. Chapters Two and Three are literature review chapters of this thesis. They define the boundary of this research project.
Chapter Two explores global and regional trends in education with emphasis on TVET and educational innovations. It discusses the role of TVET in technologically advanced educational environments as well as changing expectations of employers. Global and regional socio-economic problems facing developing countries are discussed in order to put into perspective the relevance of this study.

Chapter Three provides a broader literature review of TVET. It examines the important role of TVET in relation to the Bonn Declaration (UNESCO, 2004a). Then it provides a discussion on successful global, regional and national TVET initiatives, innovations and programmes. The chapter explores some of the common barriers and obstacles to TVET in terms of community attitudes, awareness and government priorities.

Chapter Four locates the research within a theoretical framework for understanding TVET in Fiji, and provides definitional overview of key concepts in TVET.

Chapter Five describes and defends the methodology employed in this research, beginning with the preparation phase, the selection of participants and the construction of fieldwork instruments and items. It examines the fieldwork process and provides an overview of data collection strategies, including the multiple roles of the researcher. There are also detailed accounts of interactions and participant observations as the researcher engaged the participants of this study. There are also details about how ethical boundaries
are maintained as well as a discussion on the mechanisms of data analysis. The final part of the chapter provides an overview of the case study schools and their involvement in TVET programmes.

Chapter Six begins the presentation and discussion of results of this thesis. Results in this chapter are based on quantitative data from the survey with students at junior secondary school level in the four case study schools. Chapter Seven begins the qualitative data analysis by looking at stakeholder perceptions about whether TVET can be the trigger for sustained economic growth in Fiji.

Chapters Eight and Nine continue to explore the diverse discourses of TVET in Fiji using qualitative data. Chapter Ten is the synthesis chapter and offers some reflections on the developmental goals and priorities of Fiji and the role of TVET in sustaining Fiji’s human resource needs. This chapter fuses together significant concepts from the four results chapters and presents some new ideas and strategies for the advancement of TVET in Fiji. Chapter Eleven is the conclusion. It considers the overall significance of the thesis findings and point towards the implications of this study for future research on TVET in Fiji.

1.13 Summary of this Chapter

As indicated above, this chapter has provided an introduction of the study. It has provided a summary overview of TVET in relation to Fiji’s educational landscape. It has provided a brief outline of the study, its objectives and
research questions as well as its methodology and theoretical framework. The next chapter defines the boundaries of the project and looks at relevant literature in the field.
Chapter TWO: The Global Picture of Education in Developing Countries: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Overview

This chapter presents the first part of the literature review of this thesis. There are two major parts of this chapter. The first part examines the key challenges for education such as globalisation, trade and stability. It peruses the vulnerability of education systems due to pressures on governments and stakeholders. The second part of this chapter examines global trends in education and the conception and implementation of TVET around the world.

The following section sets the platform for this review by explaining the significant role of education in shaping and defining the world we live in.

2.1.2 The global ramifications of education

The topic of education can be overwhelming when one attempts to hypothesise the linkages between paradigms of education and key socio-economic issues in one’s environment (Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson & Razavieh, 2010; Machin, 2006). Philosophical questions that one may ask include: What is education? How has education changed the world? And more practically: How can education help us adapt to changes in our world? Professor Konai Helu Thaman (1999), a Pacific academic, defines education as an introduction to worthwhile learning. But how do we decide what is worthwhile and what is not? Nevertheless, education,
whether formal, non-formal or informal,\(^1\) has helped create and sustain communities and civilisations for centuries (May and Aikman, 2003). It has improved technology, access to information, and overall standards of living (Kwapong, 2005). But disparities still exist between those in the developed world and the developing world (Goodspeed, Vazquez & Zhang, 2010).

These disparities in education and development have led to the exploitation of natural resources, indigenous peoples, women and children (Boyden, Ling & Myers, 1998; Basu & Van, 1998; Bannon & Collier, 2003; Limoncelli, 2010). For example, it can be argued that pollution and the Greenhouse Effect are global ramifications of progress (Bodley, 1998), with particularly harsh effects on developing countries. Research by Cornell University (2007) showed that pollution causes 40% of deaths worldwide, especially in developing and underdeveloped communities in Africa and Asia. The continuing struggle for natural resources which has led to destruction of the rainforest (Greenpeace, 2011), population displacement (De Wet, 2006), child labour (Kaushik & Zafiris (2003) and warfare (Korf, 2011; UNESCO, 2011a).

In the South Pacific islands (Oceania) as in many other parts of the world, history teaches that better technology led to unequivocal victory in warfare (Creveld, 1989). This is exemplified by the overwhelming power of British colonial warships compared to Fijian native war canoes in the 1800s. Metaphorically this was about knowledge, a ‘product of social processes’

---

\(^1\) Formal education is organised learning in a formal school setting. Non-formal education is also organised but may take place in any setting. Informal learning takes place as part of life experiences (UNESCO, 1997b).
(Bouma, 2000, p.2) and knowledge is power (Teasdale, 2005; Singh, 2000). History has many examples of how advanced systems of education produced new technologies, better standards of living and more lethal weaponry. The reality is that education has enabled humanity to thrive and succeed in different environments and in changing circumstances for millennia (Connell, 1980). One only has to look at the diverse communities, races and cultures that have shared different continents of this planet over the last millennium to appreciate the magnitude of educational empowerment.

The South Pacific islands, including Fiji, are no different. The indigenous communities of these islands, including the Maoris of New Zealand, are typical historical examples of imposed cultural transformations where one system of education was replaced by another (Chiriyankandath, 2007; Nabobo, 2001; Puamau, 1999; Ewins, 1998) in the act of colonisation. These indigenous communities had their own traditions, cultures, languages and systems of education (Thaman, 1995; Nabobo-Baba, 2004). While these were deemed uncivilised by early British colonial settlers, they were in fact structured and organised (Reynaud, 2006). One only has to experience the many colourful ceremonies, rituals and songs that commemorated and signified births, deaths and the seasons to appreciate the values and knowledge of indigenous peoples of the Pacific (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Kedrayate, 2002; Ravuvu, 1987). With the arrival of British colonisation and civilisation, these communities were literally forced to assimilate to an alien system of government, culture and education (Altbach & Kelly, 1978). This imposed assimilation resulted in the loss of many traditional skills, knowledge and values that had been passed down for
generations (Thaman, 1995). Legacies of these losses are still evident in some Oceanic indigenous communities today, particularly in the loss of cultural identity, native dialects and more urgently, the inability to cope with western education (Thaman, 1992; Tan, 1997).

2.1.3 Fiji’s colonial experience

In the British colonisation of Fiji, this imposed acculturation included Indian labourers who were displaced from their mother land and brought into Fiji by colonial administrators during the indenture labour era. Their appalling living conditions in Fiji as *girmityas* from 1879 to 1920 resulted in many deaths from disease, suicide and murder (Lal, 2004, 1985a, 1985b). Their descendants live on in Fiji today, and comprise almost 37% of Fiji’s population (FIBS, 2010). A twist, however, in the narrative of post-colonial and post-independence Fiji is the relative success of Indo-Fijians compared to native Fijians in the fields of education and business (Fraenkel, Lal & Firth, 2009; White, 2001a).

In terms of pass rates in national examinations and number of graduates from tertiary institutions, Indo-Fijians outperform and outnumber the Indigenous Fijian students (Otsuka, 2006; Sharma, 1997; Premdas, 1995). This highly visible ‘education gap’ has been the subject of many political and social debates, especially in the stop-gap government policy of ‘Affirmative Action’. This was clearly stipulated as a priority in the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) Party Manifesto prior to the 2001 General Elections (Durutalo, 2007; White, 2001b). One explanation for the success of Indo-Fijians is that they are very

---

2 *Girmityas* refer to indenture labourers from India who were brought to work on sugar cane farms in Fiji.

3 FIBS: Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics.
positively oriented towards education and that their families make huge sacrifices because of that orientation (White, 1997; Dakuidreketi, 1995). In Fiji, where Indo-Fijians cannot own land, the future lies in getting a job. Education is to Indo-Fijians, what land is to Indigenous Fijians (FIEC, 2000).

It would be a simplistic rationalisation to suggest that Indigenous Fijians are subconsciously lax because they know that they will always have their *yavusa* (clan) land to return to (Otsuka, 2006; Pareti, 2002). Perhaps part of the slow adjustment of Indigenous Fijians to western ideas may well be explained by the British colonial government’s protectionist native policy, which was implemented by Fiji’s first Governor Sir Arthur Gordon in the 1870s. The native policy prohibited Fijian labour and directed that Fijians remained isolated in their villages under the leadership of their chiefs. The argument was to ‘protect the natives from the harmful effects of external contact’ (Lal, 2004, p.5; Naidu, 2009). The legacy of this policy was a very slow transition to literacy and schooling by ordinary Indigenous Fijians. The sons of Chiefs, on the other hand, attended elite private schools set up for them by the colonial government. The aim was to staff the lower civil service with well-educated natives from the Chiefly Clans. This paradigm of white-collar clerical work survives to this day in the aspirations of Indigenous Fijian pupils and their parents.

In summary, the current complex socio-economic and developmental problems in Oceania’s island communities such as Fiji are rooted in their histories of colonisation and contact. Smith (1999), in her book *Decolonising Methodologies*, encourages indigenous and non-indigenous researchers to be
critical about underlying assumptions, motivations and values of research practices. The challenge for South Pacific educators in the twenty-first century is to deconstruct and decolonise (Burgess, 2000; Smith, 1999) these historical cultural legacies in order to identify ingrained values that need to be addressed under modern epistemological, pedagogical and social paradigms of education (Thaman, 2003; Murray & Storey, 2003; Bole, 2000; Nabobo, 2000; Nabobo, 1994; Teasdale & Teasdale, 1992). It is hoped that this PhD thesis is another step in that endeavour.

2.1.4 Culture, values and non-formal education

Pacific educators meeting at a colloquium at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in April 2001, conceded that the ‘thirty odd years of educational restructure, reforms and investments in the region had largely failed’ (Pene, Taufe’ulungaki & Benson, 2002, p.1) because education was mainly ‘fixated’ on improving qualifications and not on individuals. Professor Konai Helu Thaman of the University of the South Pacific commented at the colloquium that when students failed or dropped out at secondary level, they do not necessarily fail. She argued that if schooling was meant to provide ‘worthwhile learning’, then it was the system that failed them because it was not inclusive and accommodating to their needs in the community (Thaman, 2002, p.23). She was asserting that school subjects and the curriculum needed to be relevant to the students’ environments.

These analyses of educational shortfall in the Pacific were supported in later works by Hunkin-Finau (2008), as well as Hosia and Penland (2005) who
argued that education in the Pacific does not adequately encapsulate the visions, values, beliefs and world views of Pacific peoples. This suggests incongruity between the values promoted by western education and the values of Pacific communities may lie behind the apparent ineffectiveness of education in Oceania (UNESCO, 2003).

This incongruity may be effectively compensated for by non-formal education to help people deal with contemporary challenges in their communities and villages. Non-formal education mirrors how indigenous vocational knowledge and skills were transmitted between the generations before the introduction of schooling in Fiji. Oral communication in the form of stories and folklore carried coded messages that affirmed one’s status, roles and responsibilities in the village (Ravuvu, 1983). Children learned their place and vocational skills by observing and imitating their elders and older children in the community (Ravuvu, 1987). The unique role and place of non-formal education is aptly described by Kedrayate (2002, p.1),

Non-formal education was practised in Fiji before the advent of schooling. Young people learned the knowledge and skills for economic and social survival in a highly organized fashion with recognized and experienced adult members of the community as teachers. Learning was community-based and was through observation, imitation and on-the-job-experience. Adults also continued to learn through participation and sharing in community activities and ceremonies. Although the content, method and direction of what was learned was limited and confined, it was relevant to their way of life, the resources available and their ability to meet extended family and community needs. Learning was
community-based and it was an important process, as it ensured continuity and sustainability of community life.

Non-formal education is used all over the world to cater for youths and adults whose life circumstances have limited their knowledge and skills as described above. Non formal education empowers people with skills to actively participate and contribute to the economic and social activities of their communities (Hill, 2001). This is more or less how non-formal education is perceived, programmed and practiced in Australia (Livock, 2006), in India (Mitra, 2007), Nigeria (Aderinoye, 2007), Bangladesh (Islam & Mia, 2007), Solomon Islands (Maebuta, 2006) and in other developing Pacific Island countries (PIFS, 2007). Although non-formal education is different from TVET, the focus on skills applicable to the sustainability of local communities is certainly relevant.

2.1.5 Educational reforms and TVET

Many educational reforms, investments and collaborations between governments and donor agencies have taken place in the Pacific region. These were obviously intended to produce quality human resources. However, they ‘have yet to produce substantive results in the region because they do not provide relevant life skills and work skills’ (Teasdale, 2005, p.1). One answer to the problem was the formation of the PRIDE Project which was designed to encapsulate the visions and developmental aspirations of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) member countries. While Fiji gained some advantages from the PRIDE project initially, Fiji was expelled from the Pacific Islands Forum in 2009.

---

4 PRIDE: Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of basic Education, is funded by the European Union and New Zealand Agency for International Development and based at USP.
5 The Pacific Islands Forum of 15 member countries excludes Fiji, which was suspended in May 2009.
and is no longer involved. The reality in Fiji has been and is one of high unemployment (FIBS, 2009), rural to urban migration (Gounder, 2005), rising poverty, and rising crime (OSAC, 2011; Murray & Storey, 2003; Walsh, 2001). A major issue affecting young people in the Pacific is that ‘unemployment is high and there are definite links between unemployment and crime’ (Rodgers cited by Burese in *The Fiji Times*, 2011). Fiji is no different. The country has a population of less than a million, yet it has been experiencing an explosion of unemployed school leavers – as many as 8,000 annually (Fiji Government, 2008). Even so, the education machinery continues to churn out thousands more prospective white collar workers each year.

Previous research by Nilan et al. (2006) revealed that there is a mismatch between career aspirations of young people and actual human resource needs of Fiji. Later community research in Fiji by Cavu et al. (2009) showed that many school leavers were returning to their villages and settlements without any job prospects because they had been focused on securing white collar careers. In answer to this perpetual dilemma, one promising educational initiative now active in PIC (Pacific Island Countries) such as Fiji and Vanuatu is the new push for TVET - Technical Vocational Education and Training, (Sharma & Naisele, 2008; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006; Cavu et al., 2009; Teasdale, 2005; Sharma, 2000). TVET education aims to train young people in the specific trades and skills matched strategically to local labour force needs (FIEC, 2000). This initiative is explored in this thesis.

---

6 Dr Jimmie Rodgers is Director General of SPC, Secretariat of the Pacific Community.
The next section explores the concept of globalisation and its challenges for education. Then it explores dominant trends in education around the world with particular attention to the role of TVET in national developments.

2.2 Globalisation and its Ramifications on Education

The term ‘globalisation’ best describes the unified world culture in the twenty-first century (AUSAID, 2004; World Bank, 2004; Palmer, 2002). The global village is fast becoming what it literally means - a ‘village’, where access and equity prevail, distance and time are drastically condensed, and where borders are gradually disappearing (Conversi, 2010; UNDP, 2007). Advances in technology in terms of information, communication, transportation, medicine and education have revolutionised the way we live and interact (Archibugi & Pietrobelli, 2003). Wireless communication for instance has transformed basically every imaginable human domain. Today, we have live international video conferences and on-line distance education. In medicine, surgeons are able to perform complex medical procedures or tele-surgery using the internet and robots from thousands of kilometres away (Ceylan, 2004; Revill, 2002).

With such global advances, the twenty-first century has become more competitive, however more interdependent. The challenge for nations is how they will cope with the dynamic nature of their domestic pressures while simultaneously managing to adhere to their international commitments (Abugattas, 2004). Globalisation has brought about more competition and demand for skilled workers (Alvarez, 2001). Politics, ethnicity, religion,
geography and the economy are some of the key pressure points (World Trade Report, 2009). However, the basic resource that a nation can rely on is its people, and the best tool to equip them with is education (United Nations General Assembly, 2006; Abdi, Ellis & Shizha, 2005).

The UNDP Report (2007) refers to this as human capital. Power (2000) as well as ILO (2001) emphasise that nations will depend on the knowledge, resourcefulness and skills of their people to adapt and survive, and that better opportunities for growth and prosperity will only eventuate if education is insisted upon as a basic human right. This is reflected in the eight international Millennium Development Goals7 which 193 UN member countries agreed to achieve by 2015 (United Nations, 2000). However, Power (2000) warns that if education is reduced to a mere product then the world will become unequal, competitive, polarised and dangerous. TVET, in the context of Pacific island countries, is arguably much less of a standardised and globalised educational product than academically-oriented education, in that it can be specifically attuned to the needs of local communities.

2.2.1 Impact of globalisation on culture and education

As the world changes, cultures change as well; but some more readily than others. The reluctance of communities to change depends on key factors such as traditional culture, religion and geography. In developing countries the journey into the uncharted waters of cross-cultural interaction with its

---

7 The 8 MDGs are: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Achieve universal primary education; Promote gender equality and empowerment of women; Reduce child mortality rates; Improve maternal health; Combat HIV, malaria and other diseases; Ensure environmental sustainability; Develop a global partnership for development.
unpredictable effects is dreaded by many community leaders and religious leaders. The consequences of change such as loss of values and traditions are of major concern (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004; Wellins & Rioux, 2000). However, despite reluctance, communities and nations are inevitably becoming more multicultural and intercultural through social mobility and trade. Naturally, education systems will need to adapt and be accommodating to these changing environments and new demands for intercultural education (World Education Indicators, 2005).

With its unprecedented evolution in the last half century aided by advances in technology, we might pose the question of what is the central objective of education in this twenty-first century. In essence the primary purpose of education as set out in the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights succinctly expresses the vision for capacity building and peaceful coexistence through education:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups (Article 26.2).

The above UN declaration ties in well with The Delors Report published by UNESCO in 1996. This report has four pillars – learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together with others, and learning to be (Delors, 1996). These four pillars reaffirm the crucial role of education, that it can foster deeper and
more harmonious human development, thus reducing poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war. In addition, the Delors report argues that education can empower people to be responsible for their own lives, to develop their individual talents and to assist them in achieving their personal goals. However, if nations are to achieve objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals then the process of effecting change needs to begin at the micro level, with individuals and with families in local communities. In addition, goals will become more achievable if there is genuine visible commitment by governments in the form of favourable government policies and strategic planning designed for this purpose. This is absolutely necessary for a TVET initiative in a developing country.

2.2.2 The effects of the global financial crisis on education

The global financial crisis of 2008 had a profound impact on economies around the world (Green, King & Miller-Dawkins, 2010; McCord & Vandemoortele, 2009). Trade of goods and services, exports and imports were affected. In the African region, many states were hit hard. Nigeria for instance lost 25% of its exports earnings between 2007-09 (AfDB, 2010). Countries such as Mexico, Paraguay, Venezuela and Antigua and Barbuda lost over 10% of their GDP in 2009 (Green, King & Miller-Dawkins, 2010). In OECD countries such as Britain, Germany and the United States, many small to medium enterprises were closed and workers were laid off (OECD, 2009). In Australia, the Australia Taxation Office reported that 27503 businesses were declared bankrupt between 2008 and 2009 as a result of the crisis (ATO, 2009).
Those worst affected by the global financial crisis of 2008 were the poor, and those in developing countries (McCord, 2010; Griffith-Jones & Ocampo, 2009). This was because many developing countries did not have the support mechanisms and resources that developed countries had to absorb the impact of the crisis on their economies (World Bank, 2009; Koseleci & Rosati, 2009). Developing countries all over the world including small island states in the Pacific such as Fiji rely heavily on remittances from overseas. Tajikistan for instance gets 45% of its revenue from remittances. Moldova gets 38%, Tonga 35%, Lesotho 29% and Honduras 25% from remittances (World Bank, 2009). In Fiji, remittances make about 10% of Fiji’s GDP and a third of Fiji’s foreign exchange reserve (RBF, 2007; Prakash, 2009).

A study by Brown (2008) revealed that in Fiji 86.8% of households received remittances from relatives working overseas, whereas in Tonga the figure was much higher at 97.6% of households. The percentages above illustrate the heavy reliance of people in developing countries on inward remittances from family members working overseas (Lopez-Cordova & Olmedo, 2006) in developed countries. However, the global financial crisis proved to be disastrous when people working overseas were laid off. The effects were greatly felt in small economies that relied so much on this foreign revenue source. According to Robert Matau of the Island Business magazine (April 15, 2009), remittances dropped by as much as 30% for small Pacific island countries such as Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. This meant that family members in these developing countries had to find other means to support themselves and
their families. It also meant that many families found it more difficult to put food on the table, pay for utilities and meet other commitments.

The ramifications of the global financial crisis were transmitted to systems of education (UNESCO Education For All, 2010). In the case of developing countries, putting food on the table was priority. Many families had to choose between the education of their children and maintaining the livelihood of the family. That is why many children from poorer backgrounds during the crisis were forced out of school and into casual low-wage employment to support their parents (Harper, Jones, Mckay & Espey, 2009). Some little children were left alone by themselves for many hours while parents searched for work and food (Ruiz, Casares & Heymann, 2009). The reality in many developing countries, including Fiji, is that some children beg on the streets, while some are forced into criminal activities (Koseleci & Rosati, 2009). The numbers increase in terms of economic pressure. Baird, Friedman & Schady (2007) show a link between the drop in GDP per capita and increasing infant mortality around the world. It is estimated that between 200,000 and 400,000 children die annually, because of malnutrition as a result of the financial crisis (IMF, 2009). The situation is not so dire in Fiji. Nevertheless the crisis did have an effect on education.

While schooling is free in Fiji, many parents just could not afford the additional costs of school stationery, uniforms, transport and daily school lunches. For many poor families in Fiji and elsewhere in the world, having three full meals each day is an achievement in itself. School is a luxury they just cannot afford. It makes more sense for these parents in the short term to send their children to
work so they can contribute money to their families (Guarcello, Mealli & Rosati, 2009). Historical data show that child labour increases and school enrolments decrease in times of financial crisis. There is evidence for this from around the world such as in Tanzania (Beegle, Dehejia & Gatti, 2003, Argentina (Rucci, 2003), Venezuela (Blanco & Valdivia, 2006), the Philippines (Knowles, Pernia & Racelis, 1999) and Indonesia (Beegle, Frankenberg & Thomas, 1999). In times of hardship, children are forced out of school and made to work to support their families. This is also what happened in many parts of the world as a result of the financial crisis of 2008 (Harper, Jones, McKay & Espey, 2009). The ramifications continue in the form of poverty, unemployment and malnutrition in developing countries, including Fiji.

2.3 Global Trends in Education

This section examines the global trends in education in response to major global challenges such as inequality, population movements, and war. It also examines developments in education due to advancements in communication and technology and the relevance of TVET in helping address these challenges at community and national levels.

Power (2000) identifies three broad areas which pose challenges for education in the twenty-first century. They are:

i. Inequality (within countries and between countries)
ii. Population movements
iii. New information and communication technologies

These areas of challenge are further emphasised in studies by DeVary (2008), DiPrete and Buchmann (2006), Howell, Williams and Lindsay (2003), Figueredo and Anzalone (2003) and Alvarez (2001). All these studies indicate that these key areas drive the mechanisms for social change and ultimately influence global trends for education in the twenty-first century (Fahey, 2007; de Ferranti, Guillermo, Indermit, Luis & Norbert, 2003).

2.3.1 Effects of inequality on education

Global historical examples such as the recent riots in Syria, and the overthrow of dictators in Libya and Egypt (Human Rights Watch World Report, 2010) show that social and economic inequalities within countries cause divisions, political turmoil and instability. Inequality comes in a variety of forms: apartheid⁸, ethnic differences⁹, colour/race¹⁰, religion, geography and history. However, in contemporary societies inequality has to do primarily with differences in class, gender, access to education, employment, wages and standards of living (UNICEF, 2011; Huffman & Cohen, 2004; Cotter, Hermsen & Vanneman, 2004; Pinto, 2001).

The gap between the rich and the poor, the have and have-nots, has led to disparities in educational access in parts of the world (Rowlingson & McKay, 2012; Yalnizyan, 2000). Yet research has shown that social inequality in any

---

⁸ As in the example of South Africa before Nelson Mandela’s presidency. There was segregation of the races where blacks lived in ghettos away from affluent gated white communities (Price, 2000).
⁹ For example, the Rwandan conflict of 1994 caused by the animosity of Hutus towards the Tutsis (Nyankanzwi, 1998).
¹⁰ As in the civil rights movement in the United States such as the Freedom Riders (Arsenault, 2006)
form causes increased unemployment, poverty, violence and crime (Devey & Moller, 2003). It is often the case that inequality between ethnic groups and between communities leads to tensions and resentments.

In Fiji for instance the educational attainment gap between the two major ethnic groups in favour of Indo-Fijians has become a cause of concern and resentment for Indigenous Fijians (Puamau, 2001). The introduction and implementation of an Education Affirmative Action policy to bridge this divide was naturally celebrated by Indigenous Fijians but condemned by Indo-Fijians as tokenism and racism (Puamau, 2001; White, 2001a). This is perhaps what Riordan (2004) calls the politicisation of education. Indeed it may be construed that the Fijian political party in power at the time was merely extending its political agenda through a race-based policy, trying to gather more support. On the other hand, it was a drastic attempt to bridge education inequality in Fiji. This demonstrates that governments have the power to make a difference through changes in government policies and budgetary allocations. Yet since governments have varying priorities, the outcomes of radical policy change are often mixed. Education trends in this sense can be rooted in political ideology.

Governments all over the world have different commitments to education as illustrated by their spending on education as a percentage of GDP. For example, figures released by UNESCO (2007, p. 79) show that in East Asia and the Pacific, Fiji spent over 6% of its GDP on education. This expenditure lagged

---

11 Education Affirmative Action policy in Fiji was introduced to hasten the academic performance and achievement of Indigenous Fijians so that they are comparable with Indo Fijian achievements. This involved the allocation of scholarships in favor of Indigenous Fijians.
behind the Marshall Islands (over 11%) and New Zealand (over 7%). Other compared countries in the region were Australia (over 4%), the Philippines (over 2%), Tonga (over 3%) and Malaysia (over 5%). These percentages however, do not reflect the status of education in these countries in terms of school enrolments, years spent in school, or literacy and numeracy levels. Developed countries in the region such as Australia have a more advanced system of education than small island countries such as Fiji, Tonga and the Marshall Islands. Australia sets the trend and the standard in the Pacific because of the high quality of its education products, its abundance of resources and its financial aid\textsuperscript{12} to small island countries in the region.

A UNDP report of 2007 stated that economic inequalities in the world are widening. Inequality between countries may be illustrated by comparing the income gap between 20 percent of the world’s richest and 20 percent of the world’s poorest countries. The ratio jumped dramatically from 11:1 in 1913 to 74:1 in 1997 (Power, 2000). The implication for education is serious. The 2007 Education for All Report (EFA) (UNESCO, 2007) estimated that an astronomical figure of US$11 billion was needed annually in order for the world to meet its EFA goals by 2015. The report stated that the main challenge for international donors was how to provide effective short-term and long-term assistance for education in under-developed and developing countries.

Improving educational status cannot be achieved in isolation. Additional support to stimulate and improve national economies is necessary (Coxon & Munce, 2010).

\textsuperscript{12} AUSAID (2010) provides funding for Pacific Regional organisations such as PIF, SPC, SOPAC, SPREP, FFA, FSM and USP.
2008). The reason is because there is a clear relationship between national wealth and school-life expectancy (World Education Indicators, 2005). The 2011 Education For All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2011a) revealed that children in wealthy countries such as Australia (20.7 years), Britain (16.1 years) and Japan (15.1) have longer school-life expectancies than those in developing or underdeveloped countries such as Niger (4.6 years), Burkina Faso (6.3 years) and Pakistan (6.8 years). The Asia-Pacific Human Development Report (UNDP, 2010) revealed that within the Asia-Pacific region there is still a vast difference between countries in terms of life expectancy, gender equity, gender participation, education, employment, income and literacy levels.

In the Pacific region for instance there is vast difference in size, resources and wealth between Australia (ranked 2nd in global Human Development Index) and developing countries such as Fiji (HDI rank = 108), Tonga (HDI rank = 99) and Samoa (HDI rank = 94) (UNDP, 2010).

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011 (UN, 2011, p.5) stated unequivocally that ‘being poor, female or living in a conflict zone increases the probability that a child will be out of school’. This means that economic wealth, national stability and security are essential for improving education access and opportunities for the general population. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011 reported bluntly that the world was not on track to meet its EFA goals by 2015 (UNESCO, 2011a, p.1).
Furthermore, the EFA report noted that while changes were taking place globally such as improved child welfare, increased school enrolments and decreased mortality rates, these changes were very slow. The implication for education remains that inequality in any form is a barrier against education. Whether formal, non-formal or informal, education can only be effective in serving the community if the conditions are conducive; such as stable government, sustainable development initiatives, positive trade and employment trends.

2.3.2 The impact of population movement on education

The second major global challenge for education is population movement. This refers to rural - urban migration, international skilled migration and population displacement due to human conflicts and natural disasters. These movements affect education through impact on trade, stability and security (Rossi, 2008; Katseli, Lucas & Xenogiani, 2006) and subsequently on employment, standards of living, education opportunities and school enrolments (Malone, 2007; United Nations, 2006). This is certainly true of the rural-urban population movement in Fiji.

Another aspect of population movement that affects education is the resulting interracial and intercultural mix and the challenges of learning to live together (Global Commission on International Migration, 2005; Gounder, 2005). Conservative communities and traditional / religious leaders are cautious about this because the challenges that come with it are varied and many (Reynaud, 2006, Lingam, 2005). Recent history has shown that growing migrant
populations caused conflicts of values and cultures in host nations such as France (Parvez, 2011), Australia (Browne & McGill, 2010), Britain (Manning & Roy, 2010; Pitcher, 2009) and the United States (Huntington, 2004). Children grow up in mixed communities with the challenges rooted in their cultural differences (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004). However, cross-cultural experience is inevitable today (Bodley, 1998). There are many benefits of a multicultural education such as exposure to new cultures, languages, beliefs, ideas and the development of tolerance (Zirkel, 2008).

Ethnicity and religion remain significant for explaining unrest and bloodshed in parts of the world such as the Middle East and Africa (Goldsmith, 2010; Lemarchand, 2009). Yet even the most stable and most prosperous of nations are not free of conflict and crisis. Some well-known examples are: the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001 (Bram, Orr & Rapaport, 2002), the London bombing\(^\text{13}\) in 2005 and the impending bankruptcy of Greece (IMF, 2011). Developed countries also suffer from natural disasters that have great impact on national morale and economy such as the Black Saturday bushfire in Victoria, Australia in 2009 (ABC News, February 8 2009) the Japanese tsunami (Tappin, 2011) and the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand (Kemp, Helton, Richardson, Blampied & Grimshaw, 2011).

These devastations remind us that even the most powerful among us are vulnerable. This realisation implies that the key to long-term global solidarity

\(^{13}\) See the Intelligence and Security Committee (2006) Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005.
and sustainability is acknowledging that we are interdependent and recognising that we all share virtues of compassion and respect for human dignity. These are the same virtues enshrined in Delors’ (1996) four pillars of learning. Disasters in any part of the world are swiftly followed by waves of humanitarian assistance and donations.

Disasters and crises directly affect systems of education because education depends on government stability, trade and the employment of parents. The ramifications are serious for education because it is the medium that effectively relays valuable skills and knowledge to the next generation (Billing, 2011). It is also through education that we can extend important lessons about our history and hope that mistakes from the past are not repeated. Kedrayate (2002, p.1) supports this role of education by adding that ‘transmitting of knowledge, skills and attitudes to the young is an important activity for the sustainability of community living’. Therefore, if education is affected or stalled, then this may shape the future of the whole community.

2.3.3 New Information and Communication Technology
The third most significant challenge for education in the twenty-first century is technology, especially advances in communication tools such as the internet, mobile phones, television and other media forms. The reality today is that one does not need to travel overseas or meet foreigners to have a cross-cultural experience. Rather, the extensive use and accessibility of information technology tools have virtually brought the world to our doorsteps (Duck & McMahon, 2010; Ramos, Nangit, Ranga & Triñona, 2007). Even the lives of
those with learning or physical disabilities are enhanced and improved by the use of modern communication and interactive technologies (Bunning, Heath & Minnion, 2009).

Other powerful communication and social networking platforms such as Facebook, Tweeter, Bebo and YouTube (Stelter, 2008) enable virtually anyone in the world to disseminate and receive multimedia information at any time (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). We become spectators in conflicts or major events in any part of the world because of these internet platforms and live television services. This is the reason the Egyptian Government allegedly shut down internet access in Egypt during the uprising on January 27, 2011 (BBC News, January 28 2011). Fast access and exchange of audio-visual information has made us a virtual global family.

Advances in information dissemination and communication pose new challenges for communities and individuals in terms of access and privacy (Keith & Martin, 2005; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). The lack of control in the flow of audio-visual entertainment and social networking has been blamed for the promotion of cultures of violence, crime, racism and the new trend of cyber bullying, hacking and terrorism (Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2007). This brings to the fore the role of education and teachers in modern society (Munoz & Towner, 2009). Teachers, educators and parents now have the added responsibility of guiding young people in the proper and sensible use of these new technologies (Towner & VanHorn, 2007; Grant, 2008).
Parents today can limit the kinds of television programmes watched by their children as well as filter and monitor their internet access (Cankaya & Obadasi, 2009). The effects of cyber-bullying on students can be devastating to their school work and to their self-esteem (Bhat, 2008; Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008; Li, 2010). Research has shown that cyber bullying could lead to poor academic performance, absenteeism (Cross, Monks, Campbell, Spears & Slee, 2011; Beran & Li, 2007) and more seriously to suicide (Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Despite the negative ramifications of new technologies such as the internet, there are many benefits for education in the twenty-first century.

The internet and multimedia technologies have virtually revolutionised the way lessons are conducted in some schools (Gibson, 2011; Russell, Bebell, O'Dwyer, & O'Connor, 2003). In technologically equipped classrooms, teachers can virtually transport their students to any historical or geographical location on earth and even to the moon with a few key strokes of a computer. Students can virtually swim with the whales and watch the explosion of an atomic bomb, all from the comfort of their classrooms. Such innovative use of multimedia technology in the classroom makes learning very exciting. Briggs (2005) describes this as the kind of quality education that heralds important life opportunities for children.

The speed at which we have adapted to these new technologies is best described by the ILO Report (2001), in that it took 38 years for 50 million people to listen to the radio but it took only 4 years for the same number of people to
navigate the internet. That was over ten years ago. The technology today is even more advanced and the usage of the internet all over the world is even greater. Figure 2.1 below shows the dramatic increase in number of internet users from 2001 to 2011.

![Figure 2.1: Global numbers of Internet users, 2001-2011](image)

In 2001 there were about 495 million users of the internet. By 2011 the number had risen to a staggering 2.4 billion people, an increase of about 400 percent. The number of users of the internet per 100 increased from 8 in 2001 to 35 in 2011 (ITU, 2011a). This demonstrates the increasing popularity and heavy reliance on the internet for personal and professional usage for people of all age groups and ethnicities (Jones & Fox, 2009). In America, usage among teenagers increased steadily from 45% in 2004 to 71% in 2008 (Lenhart, 2009). However, access is not distributed equally. In the developed world about 77% of
people under 25 years of age use the internet on a regular basis, compared to only 30% in the developing world. Overall the ITU (2011b, p.1) revealed that ‘younger people tend to be more online than older people, in both developed and developing countries’.

Information and communication technology dominates many aspects of modern life today including educational research, school enrolments, internet banking, trading of goods and services (Horrigan, 2009) and even medical services (Ceylan, 2004). This includes personal communications via emails, social networking sites such as Facebook and Tweeter, as well as downloading songs and videos. Yet despite the advances, many developing countries still have limited internet access and low bandwidth. According to the ITU World Database Report, ‘disparities between regions in terms of available Internet bandwidth per Internet user remain, with on average almost 90’000 bit/s of bandwidth per user in Europe, compared with 2’000 bit/s per user in Africa’ (ITU, 2011b, p.3). Classrooms in developed countries offer access to world knowledge sources through information technology. However most classrooms in developing countries still rely solely on a teacher, a blackboard and standard textbooks, with no computer access.

Another modern technology that has become very popular and convenient for education is mobile-cellular phones (McNeal & Hooft, 2006). Education especially non-formal education depends on such communication devices to deliver information to rural communities. Research work by Valk, Rashid & Elder (2010) in the Philippines, Mongolia, Thailand, India, and Bangladesh,
show how mobile phones can be used to facilitate distance learning in developing countries and rural communities. In 2001 there were slightly less than 1 billion mobile phone subscriptions (users) in the world. Ten years later in 2011, the number of subscriptions has risen to almost 6 billion (ITU, 2011a). This shows a significant increase of almost 500 percent. Actual ownership of a mobile phone in developing countries is much less because people in poorer communities and villages tend to share mobile phones and its services (Hahn & Kibora, 2008; Donner & Steenson, 2008; James, 2011). Such sharing of resources is an expectation and common practice in many African, Asiatic and Pacific cultures (Rangaswamy & Singh, 2009). Despite limited availability in poorer communities, mobile phones still make a difference in the dissemination of information and communication.

### 2.3.4 The commercialisation of education

The fourth major challenge for education in the twenty-first century is the rising cost of education. The United States is the biggest provider of education in the world but is in stiff competition with Britain and Australia. The US earned about US$20.2 billion from its 723,000 international students in 2011 (Istrate, 2011). Britain earned over £14 billion between 2008-09 (Conlon, Litchfield & Sadlier, 2011). Australia reportedly earns A$17 billion annually from its educational products (Maslen, 2010) including 519,000 international students studying in Australian institutions (Matchett, 2012).

Education may be big business for rich countries but even that does not render them immune to social disparities. On the contrary the UK has one of the
largest income gaps among OECD countries with over 19% of 16-19 year olds neither attending school nor employed (Power, 2000). Dropping out of school is associated with unemployment and low wages. In the United States, income grew by 275% for the top one-percent of the population between 1978 and 2008 compared to a meagre 18% for the bottom twenty-percent of US population (Congressional Budget Office, 2011). Further indicator of disparity in the US is that the ratio of average executive pay check to that of an average worker was about 500 to 1 (Ransel, 2010).

The commercialisation of education has also caused the deprivation of poorer children (Singh, 2011) especially females, from accessing quality education and higher qualifications (Oxaal, 1997). A study in Britain by Roberts (2005) revealed that life chances of students depended on social class origins and that initial motivations and attitudes for career pathways stemmed from the family unit, family socialisation and environment. Roberts revealed that 80% of children from top class (management and professional) families entered university compared to 17% from lower non-skilled homes. This suggests that wealth and socio-economic status provide greater access to higher education and skills. Roberts’ second argument is that parents and family have a very strong influence on the attitudes and career pathway choices of children. Harris (2011) shares similar thoughts when talking about studies done in South Australia and Singapore. One of his conclusions was that there is strong influence of parents, family and peers on career aspirations. This is similar to Fiji where parents and family play significant roles in the life chances and choices of children (Cavu et al., 2009).
2.3.5 Implications for this study

The first part of this chapter has examined the nexus of factors that exists around education, which makes education vulnerable to global pressures and changes. These global changes (trends) and technological advances are important and worth considering in relation to education in Fiji in broad terms, and in relation to TVET.

Clearly there are challenges in terms of rising costs of education, and more importantly, the equal and equitable access of all ethnic groups and both sexes to basic formative schooling in Fiji. Another challenge is advances in technology in classrooms around the world and the desire to keep up with these global trends and innovations in Fiji. The third challenge at national level is the output of education in terms of relevant skills suitable for existing employment demands. Fourth, and slightly more contentious, is the contrasting performance and achievements of students from the two major ethnic groups in national examinations.

Meeting these challenges is directly dependent upon three key areas. First is the concerted effort and shared vision of major stakeholders such as national leaders and educators towards improving their standards of living. Second is the importance of national /economic stability and security, which are also crucial to the success and sustainability of education initiatives and projects. Third is the incorporation of modern technology and innovation in regard to classroom delivery and TVET.
Political will, initiative and vision determine the kind of education policies that a country will have (Kosack, 2009; Saleem, 2011). A priority for many countries is maintaining stability, security and encouraging investments. Foreign investors in developing countries would only be too willing to contribute if they could be guaranteed a safe working environment and a well-trained and productive workforce (Alvarez, 2001; World Bank, 2004). The World Bank Annual Report on Education (1999) supports the argument that educational attainment of individuals in developing countries is crucial if these countries are to compete successfully in the fast pace of market economies. Countries such as Fiji that have achieved universal primary education need to focus on secondary and post-secondary levels. For economic growth to take place, a high percentage of the population must have at least a secondary education (UNESCO, 2011b; UNESCO, 2001b). However, many developing countries are facing difficulties expanding their secondary education because of limited resources (World Bank, 2005; Lewin, 2008).

2.3.6 Importance of stability and leadership on education

Poor leadership, lack of vision, corruption and political instability are common recipes for poverty and inequality all over the world. There are historical examples of despotic leaders and dictators such Saddam Hussein of Iraq (Fang, 2004), Idi Amin of Uganda (Barron, 2003) and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe (Chan, 2003) whose own self-interests resulted in the impoverishment of their people. Despite the vast resources in these countries people still suffered because of their leaders. The same can be said for small
island states in the Pacific such as Fiji, which has had four major political crises resulting in the overthrow of elected governments (BBC News, December 5 2006).

The indicators in Fiji show that there is high unemployment (Fijilive News, January 31 2012) and that more than 26% of households are living in poverty (FIBS, 2010). The inflation rate in Fiji was at 10.4% as of September 2011 (Baselala, 2011). The reality on the ground in Fiji is that food, fuel and general cost of living are getting more expensive. These are the recurring costs of political instability in Fiji. The cost is even greater for education. Previous research in Fiji has shown that students drop out of school and some end up in criminal activities because their parents were unable to support their education (Tagicakiverata, 2003; Vakaoti, 2007; ILO, 2010).

As highlighted in past sections, population displacement and migration of skilled people or ‘brain drain’ are further results of instability and oppression. The challenge for countries (especially developing countries such as Fiji) is how to train and maintain their skilled workforce and not lose them to their more developed and stable neighbours (Birrell, Dobson, Rapson & Smith, 2001; McElmurry, Solheim, Kishi, Coffia, Woith & Janepanish, 2006; Kaushik, Jaiswal, Shah & Mahal, 2008). A typical example is the yearly migration of teachers, doctors and nurses from Fiji to New Zealand and Australia. This increased dramatically following the two military coups of 1987 (Voigt-Graf, 2003), and has increased again following the 2006 coup in Fiji. All these national crises pose
challenges for education in the sense that high unemployment and poverty directly affect school enrolments and education participation.

Three overarching effects of the global trends in education summarised by Powers (2000) and Howell, Williams & Lindsay (2003) are: changes in the contents and qualities of programmes offered, changes in the modes of delivery; and changes in costs. These challenges will be addressed later in relation to the role of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and the rationale of alternative educational models designed to cater for wider cross sections of the communities.

2.4 Alternative and Innovative Models of Education

This section examines new trends and approaches to education in the world. These trends and innovations have emerged in response to advancements in information communication technologies, especially in the wide and popular use of the internet, television and mobile phones.

2.4.1 Innovations and education

A challenge for education is the training of new skills to be commensurate with the new demands of the work force. One innovation in education service delivery is competency-based training. This is becoming a key feature of modern education, and both formal and non-formal schooling are gradually adopting this pedagogical approach (Guthrie, 2009). Competence refers to the ability to perform the tasks and roles required to the expected standards.
Guthrie added that ‘competence is context dependent, and ... the competencies that people display and / or value vary in different contexts’ (Guthrie, 2009, p.22). The rationale is that with competency-based training, learners will adapt better and contribute more to the work environment of their choice (Mulder, Weigel & Collins, 2007; Gonczi, 1999). This means that knowledge and skills acquired can be tailor-made for specific jobs and purposes. This heralds the place of TVET in education innovation. TVET is competence-based learning with emphasis on the acquisition of skills designed for specific careers (Dawe, 2004).

Luke, Freebody, Shun and Gopinathan (2005) in their study of educational innovation in Singapore emphasise that education systems need innovation and reform in order to cope with increasing demands for new skills, knowledge, and flexible competencies for globalised economies. They also urge that attention be given to contextualised content of educational materials to make them more relevant to learners in different parts of the world. This reminds us of the significant role and contribution of VET (Vocational Education and Training) innovations in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries which resulted in agricultural and business successes (Dawe, 2004).

2.4.2 Implications of technology on education

Howell et al. (2003) emphasise that the internet and other information technology devices are fast becoming necessities and that employers of the future will expect technological fluency and competencies (see also Stackpole, 2007; Weligamage & Siengthai, 2003; Morgeson, Campion, & Levashina,
The argument is that these technologies have revolutionised how lessons are delivered to students. In the future it is predicted that learning will no longer be confined to the classroom. Learners will have the opportunity to choose more relevant competency-based courses that meet their needs (Howell et al., 2003). Additionally, they can decide for themselves the mode of transmission that suits them.

Open education, distance education, and flexible education are modes of delivery for the future (UNESCO, 2002). Courses in these modes are becoming more abundant, especially those online. This increases the need for effective course-management systems and teaching strategies to effectively utilise these new technologies. Davidson and Goldberg explain the concept of participatory learning in regard to new learning modes that utilise new technologies. They say that,

Participatory learning includes the many ways that learners (of any age) use new technologies to participate in virtual communities where they share ideas, comment on one another’s projects, and plan, design, implement, advance, or simply discuss their practices, goals, and ideas together. Participatory learning begins from the premise that new technologies are changing how people of all ages learn, play, socialize, exercise judgment, and engage in civic life. Learning environments - peers, family, and social institutions (such as schools, community centers, libraries, museums, even the playground, and so on) - are changing as well (2009, p. 12).
Participatory learning in this sense is interactive and creative. There are no restrictions to the social situations where learning interaction / participation can take place. This is evident in the acquisition of technology skills by children. Children learn how to play video-games, surf the internet and use other gadgets around them by imitating adults and other children in their environment. Theoretical concepts of this kind of learning are taken up in Chapter 4.

In terms of formal schooling, another innovation is Open and Distance Education or Open and Distance Learning (ODL). This is a newer trend in education service delivery. The UNESCO report on Open and Distance Learning explains that:

The terms open learning and distance education represent approaches that focus on opening access to education and training provision, freeing learners from the constraints of time and place, and offering flexible learning opportunities to individuals and groups of learners. Open and distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of Internet-based information technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web (UNESCO, 2002, p. 8).
The positive implication for education is that people in remote communities will be able to access further education and training. On the other hand, the UNESCO report revealed that there is a paradox here. It revealed that,

The growing digital divide is actually leading to greater inequalities in development. This is giving rise to paradoxical situations where those who have the greatest need of them - disadvantaged groups, rural communities, illiterate populations or even entire countries do not have access to the tools which would enable them to become full-fledged members of the knowledge society (UNESCO, 2002, p. 9).

As expressed above, many developing countries are technology-poor when it comes to schooling. Nevertheless, they feel the need to move towards these new, more flexible modes of learning.

2.4.3 Overview of education delivery models

This section examines some popular education delivery models used around the world. These models are: Distance Learning, Open-Learning, Group-Study, Television-Radio, Honduras and Matua. These are used in secondary and tertiary levels of education.

The first is Distance and Flexible Learning. As the name implies, it gives access to learners who are constrained by geographical locations and distance from learning institutions, as well as those constrained by personal circumstances. Learners receive instructional materials via a combination of posted mail, video
discs and online broadcasts. A good example is the University of the South Pacific which caters for 12 regional island states. Students within countries who cannot attend normal classes because of work and family commitments are also accommodated under this service. At the University of the South Pacific there is the Center for Flexible and Distance Learning (CFDL) that is responsible for the delivery of courses through distance and flexible mode. The success of this service in the 12 member countries that own USP is reflected in the projected exponential increase in courses that are delivered through this mode. Whelan & Bhartu (2007, p.2) point out that there were 78 courses delivered in 2007 with an estimated increase to over 600 courses by the end of 2010. This represented 75% of all courses offered by USP. All USP member countries benefit from this service including: Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu.

A variation of this delivery mode is Open and Flexible Learning, which is unrestricted and open to anyone in the community to access courses and trainings. In the USP version, the main difference from the Distance Learning paradigm is that open and flexible learning is describes an optional delivery system for normal accredited degree and diploma programmes of the university. The Open Learning model allows anyone in the community who has an interest in improving their qualification and skills to participate. This means learning in a flexible manner, where learners are not constrained by geography, time and social obligations. Other examples of Open Learning in the world include programs in: India (Mehrotra & Sacheti, 2005; Mishra, 2004; World Bank, 2008),
South Korea and the Philippines (UNESCO, 2002; Figueredo & Anzalone, 2003).

The Philippines model, which basically extends non-formal education into accredited forms, is a model that effectively bridges the education divide between those who completed formal education (secondary and post-secondary) and those who are disadvantaged or out-of-school (Figueroedo & Anzalone, 2003). This indicates that non-formal education can be a key tool for capacity building and skills training in many developing and underdeveloped countries such as Fiji (Veramu, 2000; Kedrayate, 2002). Non-formal education can be very effective because it directly caters for all levels of the community in virtually any location (rural or urban). Non-formal training can be conducted in any setting such as village church, community hall, a classroom or a playground (UNDP, 2007; Cavu et al., 2009).

In addition, skills training can be tailor-made and directed at any specific group such as sewing for women, basic carpentry for men and also common interests such as small business management or English language lessons. The move towards accrediting these non-formal trainings provides an opportunity for many excluded individuals (such as school dropouts) to acquire basic skills with the added possibility of educational advancement or employment after getting accreditation. This system has been a success in the Philippines (Republic of the Philippines, 2001) and may possibly produce similar results if adapted in other countries, as suggested by the community research in Fiji by Cavu et al. (2009).
Another education delivery models used in parts of the world is the Group-Study model which is an extension of open-learning models whereby learners are provided with face-to-face support in allocated learning centres. Examples include Malawi and Indonesia (Yeom, 2001).

There is also the Television and Radio model which utilizes media resources such as radio and television. This model relies primarily on these mediums to deliver instructional materials to the wider community. These are used in Mexico (Calderoni, 1998), Brazil (World Bank & IDB, 2000) and Honduras (Figueroedo & Anzalone, 2003).

The Honduras model, called Educatodos (Leach, 2001) was designed primarily as a bridging programme for those who lacked basic primary education. Learners came from a wide cross section of the community and included anyone who was eager to get a basic primary education. This programme is a compressed version of formal primary education. Completion of the bridging programme meant that learners had equal academic status with those that completed formal primary, and could then proceed to secondary education. Adults and school dropouts benefited greatly from this arrangement and it provided opportunities for the ‘excluded’ to improve their status in their communities (Figueroedo & Anzalone, 2003).

A similar version of this programme, which is currently implemented in Fiji is called the Matua Programme. Adults or school dropouts can re-enrol at the
secondary school level which they left. Classes take place at nights from 6-9pm to cater for those with work and family commitments. Success stories in Fiji tell of people who have progressed further into tertiary levels and landed jobs because of this initiative (Olsen, 2005; Fiji Government Online, 2007; Bakalevu & Narayan, 2010).

The above mentioned models, especially the Philippines and Honduras models, are classic examples of educational innovations and reforms geared at addressing the status of the excluded and at the same time improving the knowledge, skills and competencies of the general population. The Delors Report (1996) emphasises that universities and tertiary institutions in developing countries have the responsibility to learn from their past and focus on the future. Stakeholders such as government leaders and educators need to actively engage in research aimed at finding solutions to urgent fundamental problems such as unemployment and poverty.

There is urgency for training institutions to provide the vocational and technological training of future leaders if their countries are to escape from their present cycles of poverty and underdevelopment. This is supported by Dunn (2008) who adds that non-formal and informal education and training is an overlooked factor in tackling major developmental challenges and that the TVET sector has a fundamental role to play in nation building. The challenge for governments is how to ensure the smooth transition from school and work for their youth. According to Emanuela di Gropello (2006, p.79) ‘TVET is increasingly considered a potentially useful tool for improving the labour market
- education linkage’. This implies the significant role of TVET in national developments around the world (UNESCO, 2004a).

The next chapter continues the literature review component of this thesis and examines the place of TVET in global education.
Chapter THREE: The Emerging Role of TVET in Global Education: Literature Review

3.1 Emerging role of TVET in Global Education

This chapter examines the emerging role of TVET in global education in response to the challenges facing the world, which were discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter has three parts. The first examines the global conception of TVET. The second examines the regional articulation of TVET in the Pacific, in particular in small island nations such as Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu. The final part of this chapter focuses specifically on the socio-economic situation in Fiji and examines the relevance of TVET and barriers against it in Fiji.

3.1.1 TVET response to global challenges

The pursuit of knowledge in the new knowledge-based global economy has heralded challenges in the form of new technologies, acquisition of new skills, rapid innovation and exchange of information and competition (Calderon, 2009). One ramification of these challenges for education is the demand for more skilled workers (Woods, 2011; Drucker, 1998). Recurring global challenges such as sustainable development, unemployment and poverty have triggered international organisations such as UNESCO, UNDP, ILO and The World Bank as well as donor agents such as USAID, AUSAID and JICA to respond strategically and collectively to these challenges. Education has always featured prominently in all known aid responses and initiatives. While access to
education has been improving overall, critical emerging issues are relevance of education and growing unemployment (Kearns & Papadopolous, 2000).

The ILO’s (2007) report on global unemployment showed that a significant percentage of young people are currently unemployed in every region, and that a common factor for all regions is the mismatch of qualifications and skills with available employment. This mismatch also adds to the underproductive labour outputs of those already employed. The global unemployment rate in 2010 was 6.2%. This was due to the increase of 22 million in 2009 to a total of 205 million people for 2010 (ILO, 2011), which could be attributed to the global financial crises of 2008. We know that a high rate of unemployment entails the risk of young people committing crimes and becoming involved in other illicit activities (Adams, 2007; Brewer, 2004).

Reforms are taking place all over the world in response to the crisis of youth unemployment (Atchcoarena & Grootings, 2009). Educational reformers, national leaders and multi-sectoral stakeholders are now acknowledging TVET as a long-term solution for endemic unemployment at local and national levels. This is a recognised solution to unemployment in parts of Africa (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006; ILO, 2007). This is in line with the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2010, p.82) which stipulates that ‘the broad aim of technical and vocational education is to equip young people and adults with the skills and knowledge they need to cross the bridge from school to work’. Maclean and Wilson (2009) argued that the dramatic expansion of university enrolments in higher education around the world has increased emphasis on
skills development for employability and the vocationalisation of higher education (HE). Maclean and Pavlova (2011) in their paper about the challenges of skills development for employment explained that,

With the trend of the massification of HE, universities are increasingly moving away from the tradition of mainly producing and transmitting academic knowledge and are putting emphasis on skills development for employability. This has resulted in a move towards the vocationalization of HE and the bridging of academic and vocational learning (Maclean & Pavlova, 2011, p. 321)

An example of this trend in Fiji is the formation of a TVET university, the Fiji National University, which gives emphasis to vocational education and skills training. A report commissioned by the Commonwealth of Learning examined that ‘in developing countries, as people achieve competence in basic education, TVET offers the skills they need to gain employment, work and live in their communities, and adapt to ongoing changes (Neal, 2011, p. 1)’. In the Pacific this led to the formation of PATVET (Pacific Association of Technical Vocational Education and Training) to promote TVET programmes and activities among the developing island countries such as Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Research on TVET dealing with the challenges of employment and poverty has been carried out by Jacinto (2009) whose work focused on Latin American youths from poor backgrounds and how vocational education could be used as a strategy to get them off the streets and into work. Kane (2009) looked at how TVET could be used to facilitate economic and social recovery of post war
Liberia, while Rajput (2009) examined the changing context of TVET for the Indian work force in the twenty-first century.

One notable innovation is the use of dual systems of TVET which combine school-based and work-based training in integrating apprenticeships into the formal education structure. This takes place in OECD countries such as Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Norway (OECD, 2007; UNESCO, 2010). The German version is the most widely copied in developing countries because it facilitates school-based classes with practical work-based experiences (Barabasch et al., 2009). The German and Japanese systems of TVET are argued to have stronger employer-educator links, implying a smoother transition from school to work under these systems (UNESCO, 2010).

The common argument is that TVET is effective because it is competency-based and can be implemented at multiple levels of the community (Guthrie, 2009; Collins, 2007). The strength in TVET is its flexibility in dealing with different groups of learners, its contextualised contents and the available open-flexible modes of delivery. The Commonwealth of Learning report articulated that open and distance TVET added value to the TVET system because of its adaptability, access and efficiency. Open and distance TVET increases the choices of learners and employers, increases access for those limited by geography and work commitments and decreases dependence on trained teachers through the use of instructional materials and video demonstrations (Neal, 2011). Maclean supports the emphasis on open and distance TVET by
adding that ICT (Internet Communications Technology) was essential to the delivery of instructional materials.

ICT is for all, not just for developed countries. The challenge is to use the internet, computers and satellite communications in cost-effective ways. UNESCO-UNIVOC is constantly seeking ways to assist disadvantaged communities to access ICTs. For example, a remote village in Bangladesh has been equipped with a shared satellite phone and a Botswana village has been given a computer through which students can log on and undertake distance learning. In the south of Africa, even the poorest countries can share TVET best practices via ICT. (Maclean, 2009a, p. 38)

In contrast, formal knowledge from schooling and higher education (HE) is often criticised for its lack of relevance in the lives of many learners and the mismatch with needed job skills (Figueroedo & Anzalone, 2003). Kelly and Kenway (2001) proposed that teachers and community leaders needed to play a more active role in establishing and maintaining network connections with stakeholders in the community. These would ideally include employer organisations and industry, so that there would be a smoother transition for students between school and employment. TVET, they concur, can effectively provide pathways between schooling, training and employment.

This is demonstrated by post compulsory TVET education in Australia operating through the TAFE system (Kell, 2004). VET enrolments in Australia are growing. In 2009, enrolment increased by 0.4% to 1.7 million students in the public VET system. In the same year 87.6% of VET graduates were employed or in further study, six months after their training (NCVER, 2010). This example
of success from Australia shows that TVET may represent a key solution to the education/employment mismatches that developing countries such as Fiji are experiencing.

UNESCO-UNEVOC (2006) provides the following definition of TVET which succinctly describes and summarizes the role and contribution of TVET in national sustainable development through competency-based training; and in improving labour productivity through right-skilling:

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) refers to a range of learning experiences which are relevant to the world of work and which may occur in a variety of learning contexts, including educational institutions and the workplace. It includes learning designed to develop the skills for practising particular occupations, as well as learning designed to prepare for entry or re-entry into the world of work in general. In both cases the learning may be intended to lead to direct labour market entry or to act as a foundation for entry into further education and training for specific occupations. TVET includes both initial vocational training undertaken by young people prior to entering the labour market and continuing vocational training undertaken by adults whilst in work or during periods when they are economically inactive. In other words, it encompasses both initial skills development and various forms of ‘re-skilling’ and ‘up-skilling’. Training for the unemployed is sometimes considered as a separate
category and designated Unemployed Vocational Training (UVT) (UNESCO, 2006, p.15).

The International Standard Classification of Education, ISCED (UNESCO, 1997b) identifies six levels of education. Level 1 is primary while Level 6 is advanced research level. TVET falls into four main levels which are:

- Level 2: TVET at lower secondary level for less academic students
- Level 3: TVET at upper secondary level, including forms of apprenticeship
- Level 4: TVET at post-secondary-non tertiary level such as Trade Certificate
- Level 5: TVET at tertiary level including Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas & Degrees (UNESCO, 2006)

In summary, the major reforms to TVET in parts of the world include changes in accreditation as illustrated in Honduras and the Philippines, and changes in apprenticeship schemes as in post-compulsory VET in Australia. Other major innovations include the incorporation of new information technologies, the introduction of competency-based curricula and the use of open-flexible modes of delivery (Neal, 2011; Figueredo & Anzalone, 2003; Kell, 2004). Pacific developing countries such as Fiji are actively involved in these reforms as illustrated by the introduction of Fiji’s Matua Programme, the TVET franchise programmes (Fiji Institute of Technology, 2008) as well as the Flexible and Distance Learning modes provided through the University of the South Pacific.
3.1.2 Global obstacles against TVET

Despite reforms and innovations the major challenges for TVET in developing countries continue to include: lack of infrastructure; lack of resources; low financial commitments; problems of communication in remote areas; low literacy levels; and traditional attitudes. A major barrier to TVET identified by UNESCO-UNEVOC (2006), which also lies at the core of this thesis, is the negative attitude of people, including parents, teachers and students, towards TVET, in particular the negative symbolic value of its accreditation, and the associated low status of TVET graduates in the community. It is still considered a second class system of education (Park, 2005; FIEC, 2000).

Previous research has shown that there have been generally negative global attitudes towards TVET. These negative attitudes are revealed in studies by Simiyu, (2009), Nyerere, (2009); Shiundu and Omulando,(1992) in Kenya, in Thailand by Pimpa (2007, 2005), in India (Mehrotra & Sacheti, 2005), in Indonesia, The Philippines, Sri Lanka and to some extent in Korea and Taiwan (Park, 2005).

Teachers, parents, students and community leaders often have diverse views about the purposes of education. For advocates of liberalism, the objectives of education are more inclined towards the development of a ‘well rounded’ individual, whereas advocates of vocationalism argue that the primary purpose of education is ‘the preparation for a vocation’ (an employable set of skills) so that one can contribute effectively to socio-economic activities in one’s
community (Kell, 2004, p.346). Whatever our views maybe, the underlying principal of education is to advance and improve individuals and communities.

The question however, is how we adapt our education and views of education in light of emerging challenges facing our communities and children. Issues such as employment, development and stability are trigger issues that affect basically everyone. Although TVET has been acknowledged by international organisations as the key to reducing unemployment and underemployment, there are still mixed results in its adoption and implementation worldwide.

3.2 Education and TVET in Pacific island Countries

This section examines the articulation and implementation of TVET in Pacific island countries. The countries referred to in this study are members of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and are stakeholders of the University of the South Pacific. These 12 small island nations are: Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Niue, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Nauru and Tokelau. Together they represent three major sub-regions of the Pacific – Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. Other countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and French Polynesia, though not included in this definition, may also be mentioned in discussions and regional data trends.
3.2.1 Major socio-economic challenges of the Pacific islands

Pressures of the global economy have serious ramifications for Pacific island countries (McCord, 2010; Griffith-Jones & Ocampo, 2009). The current status of some of these islands in the twenty-first century does not look promising; with political instability, ethnic violence, disease, poverty and unemployment (Murray & Storey, 2003; AUSAID, 2006). In a speech at the Lowy Institute in July 2007, Australian Member of Parliament Kevin Rudd, while discussing the political and racial turmoil in the Pacific and the costs it will incur the people of Australia, labelled the region an ‘Arc of Instability’, from Timor to the Solomon Islands and down to Fiji.

Notably, one of the key points outlined by Kevin Rudd on the strategy to halt the cycle of poverty and unemployment in the South Pacific is improving the systems of education. He said,

The most important challenge for education in the Pacific region is that schooling is not adequately equipping children with the basic skills needed to pursue further studies and training or to succeed in the labour market (Rudd, 2007).

In other words, systems of education need to provide what Kelly and Kenway (2001) refer to as the pathway between schooling, training and employment. This is the pathway that TVET can provide (Maclean, 2009b). However, this transition is currently lacking in many Pacific island nations, resulting in disillusionment of youth, and increasing unemployment. In Fiji for instance, 11,428 unemployed people, including school leavers and graduates, were
reportedly looking for employment between 2004 and 2005 (FIBS, 2007). The entire population of Fiji is less than one million. In 2012 the situation looks bleak for 650 teacher graduates who could not find a teaching position in the education system (Fijilive News, 31January 2012).

Overall, there have been noted developments in education with the establishment of tertiary institutions such as The University of the South Pacific in 1968, and recently the establishment of Fiji’s TVET university in the form of Fiji National University in 2010. However, issues of unemployment, poverty, political instability and poor economic growth still persist in most island nations in the region.

Government representatives from Pacific Island countries meeting under the banner of Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and Pacific Islands Forum (PIFS) have adopted and implemented various initiatives with the objective of improving education for sustainable development in the region. Two affiliated educational organisations were formed from these initiatives. These include PRIDE (Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education) and PATVET (Pacific Association of TVET). Both organisations have specific objectives of improving basic education and relevant educational outcomes. The Pacific Islands Forum Education Ministers at a regional meeting in 2001 agreed on a Forum Basic Education Action Plan 2001, which stipulated the commitment of all members to improving the quality of education so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes were achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Leaders also committed themselves
to ensuring that skills taught through training centres and non-formal education programmes matched the requirements for employment and livelihood in both traditional subsistence and market economies (PIFS, 2001).

According to the PIFS (2001) Pacific Island Countries had net primary school enrolment rates better than the average for developing countries, although rates differed significantly, with a low of 56% for Solomon Islands in 1999. In spite of this success in achieving high primary enrolments, there were weaknesses of school drop-outs and repeaters, as well as deficiencies in basic numeracy and literacy. The report also stated that increasing numbers of youth leave school without adequate life skills and competencies and are unable to either further their education or gain employment. The main educational obstacles identified include: lack of financial support; poor educational infrastructure and resources; remoteness; lack of proper staffing; and the irrelevance of the curriculum for Pacific cultures and the needs of many students living in traditional villages. These are also some of the reasons there have been mixed results in the implementation of TVET in the Pacific (Lene, 2009).

The most urgent problem facing Pacific Island countries this century is unemployment or joblessness (Maclean, 2009b). This problem has been exacerbated by rural-to-urban migration as people move in search of employment to support their families or in search of better education for their children (Gounder, 2005). When education systems do not produce the necessary learning outcomes and school leavers are inadequately skilled, the end result is unemployment (FIBS, 2009). When this trend continues for a
period of time the consequence for any country is disastrous. High unemployment almost always leads to high crime rates, poverty and violence (AUSAID, 2006). The current status of Papua New Guinea (PNG) with one of the highest crime rates in the world is testament to this relationship (OSAC, 2011). A survey conducted in 1997 showed that 70% of urban youths in PNG were unemployed and as a consequence the crime rates increased twentyfold between 1970 and 1990 (Levantis, 1998). One major concern that Pacific leaders now have is the increasing youthful population. If these youths are inadequately prepared in school without any clear career pathways then the threat of future national instability, crime and lawlessness, as in the example of PNG, is very real (Urdal, 2004; ILO, 2010).

The Pacific 2020 Report (AUSAID, 2006) revealed that developing Pacific Island countries with relatively high percentages of youth as per population included Fiji 31%, Samoa, 33%, Tonga 36% PNG 39% and the Solomon Islands with the highest at 42%. In comparison, Australia has a youth population of 19%. The above figures indicate the urgent need for Pacific Island governments to effectively address youth issues such as education and employment.

The Pacific 2020 Report (AUSAID, 2006) also revealed the clear lack of employment of male youths in Pacific Island countries. The male inactive category may also be described as those with casual attitudes often seen loitering in towns and cities without purpose. This may include street children who are not normally involved in self-employment. Although the agriculture
sector is heavily under-employed in many Pacific Island countries, the lack of interest of schooled young people in agriculture continues to be a challenge for leaders. This is compounded by urban drift and the dilemma that many young people face when there is a serious mismatch between their learning outcomes and the skills they actually need to find a job (AUSAID, 2006). A recent status report released by the ILO (2010) revealed that the unemployment rate for all youth is the highest so far with 13.1% globally and 14.8% for East Asia and the Pacific. Female youth continue to experience higher unemployment compared to males.

3.2.2 TVET versus Academic education in the Pacific islands

The establishment of PATVET in 2002 by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) with the objective of consolidating information and data from member countries and the development of a Pacific Qualifications Framework, has one notable success story. That story is in the network of 12 maritime training institutions in the region. Their close collaboration with local industry and their use of internationally accredited curriculum standards is an excellent working model for broader vocational training in the region. Elsewhere, the Asia Development Bank (2005b) maintains that TVET skills-training in the Pacific seems to have failed to reduce youth unemployment because initiatives have been largely driven by supply and not demand. Indeed the challenge for many TVET institutions and universities is their obligation to national development rather than their own interest in increasing enrolment numbers. Accordingly, PATVET has been preparing an inventory detailing TVET courses,
accreditations and institutions in the region. PATVET member countries as of 2007 included: Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu (SPC, 2007).

Strategies now adopted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and its TVET support partners include: strengthening of non-formal TVET to cater for the needs of the informal sector; infrastructural development of Pacific TVET institutions; improving labour market information systems to show relevance of TVET in the Pacific, and the development of TVET quality assurance systems and processes. The SPC (2007) meeting also endorsed TVET as an essential and integral part of Pacific education and training. However, it was acknowledged that the failure of TVET in parts of the Pacific was because governments, regional organisations and donor organisations continued to give priority to academic education, despite the fact that TVET is the key to social and economic development in the region. The Bonn Declaration declared that,

Since education is considered the key to effective development strategies. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) must be the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development (UNESCO, 2004a).

Though PIFS, SPC, PATVET and PRIDE have all acknowledged that the biggest single obstacle to TVET is the lack of interest and the negative stereotypical attitudes of people towards TVET, there has been no noted
discussion or initiative at regional and national levels aimed at changing these attitudes. TVET is still seen and presented as a second-best option for students who have not succeeded in more academic education streams.

This research project on the other hand argues for a different presentation of TVET potential. Noting trends in education worldwide and the unique role that TVET can play in improving national and community life in general, this thesis explores this terrain for the purpose of identifying directions for practical solutions that Fijian educators and community leaders can use to convince young people towards the path of TVET and to more fulfilling roles in society.

The next section examines Fiji’s education system, the establishment of TVET and its potential contribution to sustainable development in the country.

3.3 The place of TVET in Fiji

This section analyses the socio-economic situation in Fiji and examines the relevance of TVET and barriers against it in the country. The major challenges facing Fiji in the twenty-first century include national political stability, sustainable economic growth and unemployment with special emphasis on Fiji’s youth. Though Fiji has a commitment to meet its Millennium Development Goals, the above mentioned challenges, compounded by high rates of out-migration, are likely to deter Fiji’s national aspirations for the future (FIBS, 2010).
Fiji’s major industries are tourism, sugar, garment manufacturing and fisheries (FIBS, 2010). A recent big revenue earner, second only to tourism, is remittance from Fijians living and working overseas (Connell, 2007). In terms of school age there are an estimated 200,000 children or 25 per cent of Fiji’s population attending primary and secondary schools (FIBS, 2010).

One critical scenario is the bleak future of the sugar industry which provides around 30% of Fiji’s GDP and employs about 13% of the labour force. Displaced farmers around the country are already looking at alternative means of supporting themselves as more land leases expire and EU preferential prices for Fiji’s sugar come to an end (Lal, 2007). Another major economic challenge for Fiji is ‘brain drain’ in the form of migrating professionals or skilled workers. The recurring coup culture in Fiji since 1987 has been blamed for this. There are other causes of migration such as searching for better employment opportunities, marriages and family movements. The net migration figure stood at -10,133 in the year 2007 (FIBS, 2010), and may have increased since then as the economic situation in Fiji has worsened.

Tourism, in contrast to sugar, is a vibrant industry as Fiji remains one of the most popular destinations for Australians and New Zealander holidaymakers. Although the industry seems to have recovered from the military coup of 2006, there are still some critical issues affecting tourism development such as land and sea agreements with local landowning units. Apart from tourism, the second major foreign exchange earner for Fiji is remittances from Fijians living abroad. This ironically is directly attributed to the increasing number of
professionals and skilled workers working overseas such as nurses, doctors, teachers and soldiers (Voigt-Graf, Mohanty & Naidu, 2007; MacLellan, 2006).

### 3.3.1 The lack of skills in Fiji

Undeniably, one of the biggest challenges to Fiji’s development is the lack of skilled people needed in various key sectors such as hospitality, building, construction, engineering, manufacturing and agriculture (FIBS, 2007). While the education machinery churns out an annual figure of around 16,000 school leavers, there are only 8000 new jobs available (Fiji Government, 2008). Teacher and nurse training institutions as well as the Fiji Police Academy continue to turn away thousands each year. Graduates with university degrees in the fields of arts, humanities and social science can take up to ten years to find steady work – many had to complete a technical qualification to make themselves more employable (Nilan et al., 2006).

Yet there are sectors of the local labour market showing such a severe skills shortage that workers are brought in from overseas - skilled garment cutters, pattern-makers and embroiderers, building construction managers, qualified dive instructors, beauticians, chefs and air-conditioning technicians. Clearly, there seems to be little alignment of the education system with manpower needs (Nilan et al., 2006; Figueredo & Anzalone, 2003). TVET has been proclaimed as a global remedy for skills and employment mismatch (UNESCO, 2006).
In Fiji, vocational education initiatives began in the 1970s in response to serious manpower needs. This continued in the 1980s, but there were too many academic school-leavers for the number of white-collar jobs available. This was because it was hard to convince parents of the merits of vocational education (Tavola, 1991; Nilan et al., 2006). This is supported by Brock (1983) who argues that there is much less leeway for accommodating a mismatch between education and employment in small countries such as Fiji than in larger countries because of demographic pressures such as youthfulness and urbanisation. He further adds that while vocational institutions may have appeared in some small countries, they were merely cosmetic and carried very little status because a majority of people continued to see academic secondary and university as more desirable and more financially rewarding. Such is the reality of the status of TVET in Fiji today. The Fiji Islands Education Commission Report (2000) aptly expresses this community attitude towards TVET:

Fiji’s education system is so accustomed to academic education, however, that strong parental pressure for academic credentials has made the TVET programme a second-class option rather than a ‘second chance’ education. This can be explained in part by the difference in salary of blue collar workers compared to that for white collar workers (e.g. tradesman class II FJD $4,139 p.a.; class I, FJD $4,347; craftsman FJD $4,513 compared with starting salaries for diploma secretary FJD $6,192, clerical officer FJD $6,192, registered, nurse FJD $8,582, primary or secondary teacher diploma
or certificate FJD $10,436). Until wages for blue collar workers are more attractive, the status of TVET will continue to be below that of an academic education (FIEC, 2000, p.137).

The negative stereotypical attitudes of stakeholders such as community leaders, parents, teachers and students on TVET are major obstacles to sustaining Fiji’s growing economy especially in terms of providing suitable employable skills to meet key industry human resource needs (Sharma & Naisele; Sharma, 2000).

The harsh reality for Fiji is that thousands of school leavers and graduates join the unemployment queue each year because of irrelevant skills and qualifications, yet thousands more continue to follow this path. The two tables below clearly demonstrate the lesser interest in TVET compared to increasing Form 7 enrolments in Fiji in 2003 and 2004.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1536</td>
<td>1374</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>2181</td>
<td>1639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2319</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>2863</td>
<td>3162</td>
<td>2387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Form Seven enrolments by race 2003-2004 & 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijians</td>
<td>1447</td>
<td>1755</td>
<td>2271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo Fijians</td>
<td>2726</td>
<td>2793</td>
<td>2117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4368</strong></td>
<td><strong>4737</strong></td>
<td><strong>4658</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The challenge for educators is to change the attitude of stakeholders about TVET so that more young people may find suitable employment through TVET training and eventually improve Fiji’s overall development status in the region.

3.3.2 Structure of TVET in Fiji

The structure of TVET in Fiji is such that it caters (in theory) for all in the community. There are avenues available for school dropouts, school failures and adults in the community to re-enrol in secondary school and follow specific study pathways towards a trade certificate of their choice from the Fiji National University.

Two programmes in action in Fiji that specifically cater for early secondary failures and dropouts are: the *Matua* Programme and the Fiji National University Bridging Programme.
• The Matua Programme – began in 2003 at Nabua Secondary School with the primary purpose of giving a second chance to secondary school dropouts who wished to continue their education. The opportunity appealed to adults, single mothers and dropouts and the programme began with 222 students. The idea is to allow matua learners (adults) to re-enrol at the secondary level from which they had dropped out in their earlier school days (Olsen, 2005).

• The FNU Bridging Programme began in 2004 with the development of four bridging courses: Basic Mathematics for Engineering, Communication Skills, Basic Science, and Commerce. The courses were designed primarily to cater for students who did not complete Form 6 and those that dropped out at lower levels. The bridging courses are meant to provide the basic knowledge and skills that a student needs to be able enrol into any Trade Certificate programme at FIT (now the Fiji National University). Upon successful completion of the required Bridging Courses, a student is allowed to enrol into a relevant Trade Certificate programme (Fiji Institute of Technology, 2008).

The main structure of TVET in Fiji comprises three main organisations: school-based TVET under the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Fiji National University and non-formal training provided by the Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji (TPAF).
- The Ministry of Education Vocational Training (School-based TVET) - According to the Ministry of Education (2007) almost 80,000 students took pre-vocational courses at secondary level including compulsory courses in Forms 3 and 4. This figure became possible with the implementation of the Internal Assessment (IA) programme from 2001. Students at this level (Junior) take up seven compulsory subjects: English, Math, Basic Science, Social Science, Commerce and two TVET subjects. After Form 4, students have two options - either to proceed into mainstream academia (Form 5) or to pursue TVET at any of the 62 secondary school-based Vocational Centres around Fiji. The Centres provide specialisation in automotive engineering, carpentry and joinery, catering, tailoring and office technology. The Centres take students in after Form 4 for two years or Form 6 for one year, after which they may proceed to FNU for a Trade Certificate Programme.

- FIT (now Fiji National University) TVET began as a semi-autonomous organisation under the Minister of Education since 1986 and was governed by a 12 member Council most of whom represent private enterprises. Most of the full-time equivalent students (EFTS) concentrate at the certificate, diploma and advanced diploma levels. However the most innovative aspect of the original FIT TVET programme is the ‘franchising’ it offers. Students could start their studies toward a FIT trade certificate at secondary schools. FIT had 48 franchise centres in two fields – auto mechanics and carpentry / joinery. Some 740 students were enrolled in 2005. Also, FIT offered a diploma in business by distance learning, and
courses on engineering, mathematics and applied sciences. It also gave practical training in carpentry/joinery, plant maintenance and plumbing through satellite centres. In addition, it introduced through its Learning Centre three teacher-training programmes: Teaching Certificate in TVET, Diploma in Tertiary Teaching and Bachelor of Education VET - under franchise with Newcastle University, Australia (Fiji Institute of Technology, 2008; Sharma & Naisele, 2008).

- **Training and Productivity Authority of Fiji** - The mandate of TPAF as stipulated in its Annual Report (2008) is to provide training on industrial and enterprise needs for those outside the school system, and to promote improved productivity in enterprises. TPAF maintains close links with employers through its Board and sector focus groups. Training is provided to two types of students: unemployed school leavers, and workers in enterprises. TPAF also manages apprenticeship trainings. One of its most important tasks is the establishment of a national qualifications framework for technical and vocational skills. It is funded primarily by a grant/levy from all employers in Fiji (Sharma & Naisele, 2008; TPAF Annual Handbook, 2008).

### 3.4 Conclusion

This review has examined the complex array of factors that influence education and TVET on the global stage. There have been many innovations and reforms regarding TVET in response to global and national challenges. But one thing is
common: TVET is seen to have a remedial and stop-gap function that compensates for the inadequacies of formal schooling.

However, this review has revealed that despite all the research and pedagogical innovations in favor of TVET, the matter of successful implementation rests on whether people are convinced or not about the merits and advantages of TVET programmes. It seems the crucial point of intervention is at junior secondary level in Fiji because it is at this level that students are made to choose the combinations of subjects to take at senior level, supposedly based on their intended career aspirations.
Chapter FOUR: Theoretical Framework

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Structure of the chapter

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that guided the investigation of perceptions and attitudes about TVET as stipulated by the research questions of this study. It examines four main theories: Constructivism, Social Reproduction Theory, Post-Colonial Theory and Sociology of Knowledge.

4.1.2 Overview of the theories

The theoretical framework of this study was based on a blend of educational and sociological theories that can help explain the concept of school to work transition in the context of Fiji. The explanatory focus is on the interest (or lack of it) of students in following a TVET educational pathway. The decisions and choices that are made by students regarding their education and career are argued to reflect the cumulative influence of ideas and norms in their *habitus*. Habitus describes the sense of identity and belonging that shapes people’s conception of the world around them and how they respond to their environments (Bourdieu, 1984). The concept of habitus can be used to help to explain why Fiji’s indigenous people have a strong sense of attachment to their *vanua* (land) (Thaman, 1999), *mataqali* (tribe) and *lotu* (church) (Durutalo, 2007). Another way of looking at this phenomenon is through Jean Piaget’s theory of constructivism which is based on the premise that people construct
their own understanding of the world they live in by creating meaning of their own life experiences (Piaget, 1985, 1983). This resonates with the concept of habitus.

Theoretically, Foucault’s framing of discourse as power / knowledge (1977) is useful for explaining the values and discourses of education and career choice in the Fiji socio-cultural context. In Fiji, culture and tradition are cherished and passed down as knowledge from generation to generation (Ravuvu, 1983). Indigenous Fijians are born into specific clans and sub-clans with inherited roles, responsibilities and expectations (Halapua, 2003). Similarly, the majority of Indo-Fijian children are brought up in a caste system with close family units (Lal, 2004) that enshrine traditional values and practices. The transmission of important cultural knowledge is very strong here too and parents play a highly influential role in a young person’s life choices – especially career and marriage. In short, there are three significant areas of influence on education and career choice: family, school and the community. In this context the four theories below are presented as a plausible basis for investigating these influences. The next section examines in more detail the theoretical framework of the research.

4.2 Theoretical Framework

4.2.1 Theory of constructivism

Piaget’s theory of constructivism describes how students construct knowledge and create meaning (Bhattacharya & Han, 2001; Piaget, 1995) from life experiences in their environment. For Piaget the four key developmental
process are: assimilation\(^1\), accommodation\(^2\), equilibration\(^3\), and schemas\(^4\) (Woolfolk, 2005; Schunk, 2000; Woolfolk, 1987). From a very early age children develop schemas of everything around them. This includes all tangible and intangible objects and everything that their five senses come into contact with. These schemas also herald the development of language, which is used to categorise and label ideas and objects. Language is very important. Constructivism emphasises the significance of language especially mother-tongues, in the social construction of meaning (Hickman, 2001).

Schemas are constantly challenged when children come across new ideas, situations and experiences. Learning is a discovery and exploratory process that takes place through everyday life experiences. Sometimes negative experiences in the environment contradict an existing schema and this results in temporary disequilibria (Piaget, 1995), loosely described as moments of confusion in the attempt to assimilate and accommodate new experiences. The usual outcome is one of more sophisticated schemas (new knowledge constructs) to maintain a balance between the new experiences and existing knowledge. This means that the negative experiences have brought about new knowledge, new information and awareness about the environment, creating different meanings and new interpretations of the world.

Constructivist theory is supported by Vygotsky (1978), who shares Piaget's assumptions about how children learn. Vygotsky’s best-known concept is the

---

1 Assimilation occurs when a child perceives new objects or events.
2 Accommodation is the process of changing mental structures to accommodate new life experiences.
3 Equilibration is the process of creating a balance between new experiences and mental structures. This occurs when a person is attempting to make sense of new information or situation.
4 Schema refers to the basic building block of thinking. It could be an idea or action.
zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1978; Daniels, 2001; Hammond, 2002). It is argued that children learn to master concepts with the help of adults and other children in their environment. Vygotsky’s social constructivism emphasises the social aspect of learning and the role of culture and context in cognitive development. It points to the central importance of children’s immediate home environment or as Vygotsky calls it, the ‘zone of proximal development’ on perceptions and attitudes. Parents, teachers, relatives, neighbours and peers are all part and parcel of children’s wider environment. So the theory of constructivism assists our understanding of how perceptions and attitudes towards education and TVET are developed and refined in the key social spheres of home, school and the community.

4.2.2 Social reproduction theory

It seems clear that constructivism ties in with Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of habitus when it comes to grasping how student attitudes to TVET in Fiji are formed and reinforced. Parents, teachers, relatives, neighbours and peers help in the socialising process by facilitating, mediating and directing the transmission of knowledge for children and young people. Habitus describes the generative dispositions for decision-making that are inculcated in early life and become part of our habitual way of understanding the world and reacting to it.

In Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction the notions of cultural capital, habitus and field are central. Cultural capital refers to transmissible parental cultural codes and practices (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p. 204-205). Cultural capital encompasses the total sum of investments in morals, values, practices and
dispositions transmitted to children through the process of family socialisation, resulting in a distinctive habitus (Bourdieu 1984). Habitus is an important form of cultural inheritance and it reflects class position, status and location. Because family habitus varies by class, only middle-class or elite cultural resources can become cultural capital valued in education. As such Bourdieu argues that schools and teachers perpetuate this family-based reproduction process by rewarding those students who possess elite cultural capital. This happens through school curricula and assessment setting up content and assessment standards that favour upper and middle class children (Tzanakis, 2011). Collins (2009) describes school as a mechanism for perpetuating social inequalities in the community. Children from lower socio-economic status (SES) are implicitly disadvantaged because learning in school perpetuates the culture of higher SES communities.

The process of social reproduction through schooling is usefully demonstrated by Bidwell & Friedkin (1988). Their study showed that children from higher socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds performed better in school than lower SES children. The same was demonstrated in studies in the UK (Irwin, 2009) and the USA (Portes, Fernández-Kelly & Haller, 2009). These findings indicate the powerful influence of habitus on the moral, intellectual and attitudinal development of young people in diverse communities. The relatively better performance of higher socioeconomic students over lower SES students suggests the complicity of the school in perpetuating and rewarding higher cultural capital in the community. Of course there are some children who grow up in poorer, less privileged communities but then succeed academically and
gain cultural capital through their own efforts and the efforts of their (lower SES) parents. However, they are relatively few compared to those children from poorer, less privileged communities who fail to do well in the standard schooling system.

The family and the environment are very influential in the life choices of students. Bourdieu’s theory of social reproduction emphasises the strong moral, cultural, intellectual and attitudinal attachments children grow up with (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). These are values and cultural norms that are manifested in daily interactions with adults and peers through the shared habitus. Observation is an important tool for integrating and extending cultural capital. Children learn by observing adults and peers around them (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). This is a form of informal learning which was discussed in a previous chapter. Informal learning is learning that takes place as part of daily life experiences. This means that informal learning takes place every day. In the Indigenous Fijian cultural context, children learn traditional vocational skills and household chores by imitating others around them. Boys learn how to sail canoes, plant taro and to perform traditional ceremonies by imitating adult men in their community. Similarly, girls learn how to weave mats, cook and clean by emulating adult women around them. These tasks and responsibilities are valued and are a central component of cultural identity – a key facet of habitus.

Although these can be seen as stereotypical gender roles they are also core social expectations of the community. Children are expected to know their place in the family as well as their cultural roles and responsibilities (Halapua, 2003).
There are ranks in traditional Indigenous Fijian culture (Nabobo-Baba, 2006) and there are codes of conduct and expectations that come with each rank. Those who do not adhere to the cultural values of their rank or who do not demonstrate proper protocols that recognise the traditional hierarchy are normally frowned upon in the community and may be ostracised. Below is the ranked hierarchical structure of traditional Indigenous Fijian society (Williams, 1983):

i. Turaga (Chief)
ii. Sauturaga (nobles / chiefly family)
iii. Bete (priest)
iv. Matanivanua (herald, spokesman)
v. Bati (warrior)
vi. Mataisau (builder)
vii. Gonedau (fisherman)

Roles and responsibilities attached to these ranks are closely followed in village settings and during traditional ceremonies. Fiji is a conservative community and even people in urban areas still carry with them their cultural status and expectations according to rank. Children who are born into the above hierarchy are expected to take on the roles and responsibilities attached to their inherited status. A different, but equally strong hierarchical structure exists for Fiji’s Indian community. As Hindus, the majority follow a strict caste system which people are expected to abide by. The only time in Fiji’s history when this caste system was challenged was during the early years of the indenture labor system - *girmit* - where there were intermarriages between castes because of the shortage of women on the farms (Lal, 2004; Kelly, 1991). Children in Indo-Fijian families
develop a distinctive habitus that reflects not only their ethnicity and gender but the caste of their family.

The theory of social reproduction is relevant for this study because for the most part parents in Fiji expect their children to follow their lead, and in a conservative society that preserves traditional values, young people try to reproduce the social positions of their elders. This is a highly valued cultural expectation within the family and community and children subconsciously adhere to this expectation. For example, in the Indigenous Fijian community it is often generally perceived that children of chiefs will naturally display leadership qualities because they will eventually become chiefs in the future. Children of chiefs grow up with this expectation and tend to realise it as adults. Moreover, in this modern era chiefs and their heirs are expected to be well educated within the academic system. Similarly, the children of public servants are expected to be high achievers in school and in the community, and to become public servants themselves. In short, children are normally expected to get jobs like their parents, according to their rank.

These are the pressures and challenges of growing up in Fiji. Those children who do not quite meet cultural expectations are frowned upon because they are seen to have let their families down. In Indo-Fijian families, parents and grandparents likewise play very active roles in the upbringing of children; hence there is a strong likelihood of children following in the footsteps of their elders in maintaining the family business or taking professional career pathways (Premdas, 1995). Indo-Fijians are motivated to succeed in education and to get
employment because of the lack of land ownership. For many, education is the key to a better future for them and their families (FIEC, 2000; White, 1997). There is a stronger expectation of upward social mobility in subsequent generations than for Indigenous Fijian families.

In summary, young people in Fiji learn and emulate adults around them, whether they live in traditional villages or urban settlements. However, in recent years, the trend has shifted slightly and it seems some young people are visibly paving new directions for themselves. For example, children from lower cultural / social status communities may emulate role models in the wider community, rather than those in their immediate environment. There are many anecdotes about people from poor backgrounds who have gone on to achieve success in academia, the public sector and the private sector. These include some leaders of corporations and members of government.

The use of social reproduction theory for investigating attitudes to TVET in Fiji is to help clarify how perceptions and attitudes are developed in the *habitus* of students. The desire to emulate adults in the community and to meet social and cultural expectations appears to be a structural barrier against the take-up of a TVET pathway. Furthermore the desire for elevated social status has led to the determination of young people to pursue white collar careers instead of TVET. Previous research in Fiji by Nilan et al. (2006) and Cavu et al. (2009) showed that students in school were more inclined to pursue white collar careers because of perceived high social status and the anticipated prospect of higher financial rewards. However, the current state of the labour market means that
the majority of the senior secondary and tertiary graduate cohort each year will not be able to find white collar jobs.

4.2.3 Post-colonial theory

Another important theoretical framework for this research is post-colonial theory, which allows us to look productively at the history of Fiji’s colonisation to explain the current apparent bias against TVET. Post-colonial theory can be defined as the discourse about the relationship between colonial (European) powers and the countries they once ruled and colonised (Ahmad, 1995; Chakrabarty, 1992; Kumar, 2000). Quayson (2000, p. 2) explains that postcolonial theory ‘is a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects…and it also involves discussion of experiences of various kinds such as slavery, suppression, migration and resistance’.

A major figure of this theory, Edward Said, sets out a social and political critique of European colonialism in his widely acclaimed book Orientalism (Said, 1978). Said’s notion of the ‘Orient’ describes the colonial power relations where voices of the colonised were largely ignored or misrepresented and maintained the superiority and positive images of western society. Another theorist, Franz Fanon, was misinterpreted to promote violence because of his analysis that resistance against colonialism necessitated violence as a reciprocal response to that perpetrated by the colonisers (Frazer & Hitchings, 2008). In his book, The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon analyses the features of colonialism and the suppression and subjugation of the colonised (Fanon, 1963). Aligning these ideas with the regional context of the Pacific islands, Fiji’s first Prime Minister
Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, coined the term ‘the Pacific Way’ (Mara, 1997), in reference to the new regional identity and sense of self determination in the post-colonial Pacific. However, this sense of self-determination and Pacific identity is rather suspect when one considers the comments by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara at the United Nations General Assembly in 1970 where he paid tribute to Fiji’s former colonial master (Lawson, 2010). He stated that,

> We have had the help and guidance of the United Kingdom. Many of her traditions are firmly grafted, not only on our political institutions, but on our whole national life. The rule of law, parliamentary democracy, respect for the rights of minorities, a sense of fair play, give and take, are all taken for granted in Fiji, but they are, in a very real sense, a legacy from the British (Mara, 1997, p. 104).

The comments above reiterate Quayson’s ideas about the past and present effects of post-coloniality (Quayson, 2000). For Fiji, the British colonial legacy still remains despite Fiji’s turbulent political history of coups and its suspension from the British Commonwealth in 2009. Colonial impact continued in Fiji through ‘processes associated with neocolonialism and the influence of the local middle-class elites’ (Puamau, 2005, p. 4). These elites are described by Ratuva as founders of the ‘new post-colonial Pacific order’ (Ratuva, 2003, p. 247). Puamau added that these elites perpetuate and maintain the systems and structures of old Pacific masters through written history, education and language (Puamau, 2002). An example which is still true today is the elevation of English in school above vernacular languages such as Fijian and Hindustani (Puamau, 2005).
The complexity of the post-colonial situation in Fiji stems from the fact that the two major ethnic groups (Indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians) were both colonised by the British for different purposes and under different circumstances (Costello, 2010; Halapua, 2003). Indians were brought into the country initially in 1879 as labourers under the indenture system to work on sugarcane plantations for the Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR) company (Lal, 2004). When the indenture system ended in 1920, a second stream of Indians came for the purpose of commerce (Lal, 1985, 1983). Both groups of Indians were virtually handmaidens of the colonisers in establishing a working, self-sustaining colony in Fiji (Munro, 2005).

Anecdotes tell of blood, sweat and tears as Indian ‘coolies’ struggled daily under strict overseers and sirdars (foremen) to establish Fiji’s sugar industry (Nandan, 2005; Prasad, 2004; Lal, 2004). In contrast, apart from ceding Fiji to Britain, the Indigenous Fijian population virtually had no active part to play in the new colony. Fiji’s first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon decreed that Fijians were to remain in their villages under the leadership of their chiefs and not to be tainted by western influence or interaction with Indians (Lal, 2004). It seems to be an established historical fact that Fijian colonisation was voluntary and not the result of coercion or armed invasion. On the other hand, there is a historical account which suggests that Ratu Seru Cakobau⁵ had no choice but to cede Fiji to Great Britain to avoid paying a large fine imposed by the United States government for the burning of the residence of an American living on Nukulau

---

⁵ Ratu Seru Cakobau was high chief of Bau and considered by Europeans to be King of Fiji. This was not really true as his dominion covered only half of Viti Levu and parts of Lomaiviti. This division is called Kubuna Confederacy in modern Fiji.
Island (Williams, 1983). It is certainly clear from the policies of Sir Arthur Gordon that there was a protective attitude towards native Fijians compared to their harsh treatment of Indian labourers (Lal, 2004). Nevertheless, both groups were actively colonised and their respective senses of identity after the departure of the British were profoundly shaped by their experiences of colonisation. The systems of education that developed in the post-colonial period must be understood in relation to this.

Gradually, as the colonial government grew in the late 1800s, there evolved the need for ‘native’ civil servants. Flagship schools such as Queen Victoria School for boys and Adi Cakobau School for girls were established in the 1900s to cater for this need. Young native chiefs and the sons and daughters of chiefly clans were enrolled and groomed in these schools primarily for national leadership and civil service positions. Later many new schools became established throughout the country and the original flagship schools began accepting Indigenous Fijian commoners. Indo-Fijians were not permitted to enrol. Eventually, through elitist schooling, educated Indigenous Fijians of lower ranks were also channelled into the public service.

These early initiatives sowed the notion that formal education is primarily for white-collar employment. This stereotype continued to inform expectations of formal education in early post-colonial Fiji, and is still highly influential today. The school system - as well as the community - perpetuates higher status cultural capital and rewards the pursuit of white collar careers. This in turn becomes a common aspiration in all ethnic groups. Children from all
backgrounds in Fiji aspire for white collar, high status careers. And this is encouraged by parents and everyone in the community. Unfortunately this aspiration does not match labour force needs.

Another aspect relevant to interpretation using post-colonial theory is the disparity in educational achievement between the two major ethnic groups in Fiji. National examination results have consistently shown that Indian students perform relatively better than Indigenous Fijian students, including graduation numbers from tertiary institutions (Otsuka, 2006; FIEC, 2000). One plausible explanation for this is that the very different colonial experiences and outcomes of the two ethnic groups have forged diverse attitudes and values that are now apparent in post-colonial Fiji. The determination and consistent hard work of Indo-Fijians is aptly illustrated in their achievements in key areas such as education, business and agriculture. In a sense it reflects the pattern of intensive plantation labour in the colonial period. For Indigenous Fijians, their relatively slow orientation to the areas above may be attributed to the ‘protective’ native policies of early colonial governments (Halapua, 2003). These are the twin halves of British colonial practices in the Fiji Islands.

The implication of post-colonial theory for TVET is to clarify possible connections between career aspirations and colonial inheritances in Fiji. It helps to explain why there is such strong community support for young people to achieve good education and the strong association with white collar employment. The colonial policies of educating children of chiefs for leadership in Fiji has created a stereotype or conviction that formal education must lead to
white collar careers, higher social status and better wages. This precedence has set the trend and culture of self-determination in Fiji. Children from all backgrounds and castes are aware of the opportunities available to them and they are actively pursuing career dreams and aspirations strongly founded in the distinctive habitus of their communities.

4.2.4 Sociology of knowledge

The final theory used as a framework of interpretation is Michel Foucault’s concept of power / knowledge (1977), a focus in contemporary sociology of knowledge. Foucault asserts that knowledge is power and that it can be used to control people in society. He says that social control is maintained in what he calls ‘the disciplinary society’; ideas / knowledge perpetuated through social institutions such as school. As such, knowledge is socially constructed so that power remains in the domain of the ruling group. Foucault says that,

Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true.’ Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations (Foucault, 1977, p. 27).

For Foucault knowledge is connected to power and people can become oppressed if only a certain group of people such as the elite control knowledge. He argues that knowledge forms discourses (Foucault, 1972) and discourses
form the dominant ideological ways of thinking which govern our lives. Institutions such as school reinforce dominant discourses that favour the interests of elites.

The chiefly system in Fiji had been in existence for centuries. This social structure had some semblance of British hierarchy so it was used by colonial authorities to reinforce the power of the elite (chiefs) over lower ranked commoners (Williams, 1983). Chiefs were the first to be educated in Fiji, with flagship schools built specifically for their children. Formal schooling as mentioned in previous sections was introduced to supply the demand for public servants in the country. Hence education in Fiji has largely continued the social order and the status quo in favor of the elite (Thaman, 2003).

Returning to the framing of knowledge as discourse in the Fiji socio-cultural context, it is evident that such power relations exist within both the traditional conservative Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian social structures (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Lal, 2004; Halapua, 2003). Knowledge is something that people grow into. It is gained by learning and emulating village elders. Bakalevu (2003) points out that elders in the village are repositories of traditional knowledge and provide guidance and training. The learning context for people in traditional societies of Pacific Island countries is their home and community. That means that children learn by living and performing their roles and responsibilities in their family, village and community. Life in the community is a performance just like the Fijian meke (dance). It needs to be learnt, practiced and performed.
Knowledge is transmitted by those who hold authority according to seniority and rank which means their knowledge is powerful.

In traditional Fijian hierarchy only chiefs and priests made the decisions. They were believed to possess knowledge and wisdom, which were assumed to be sourced from deities worshipped by the priests (Williams, 1983). Other lower sub-clans such as builders and fisherman merely listened and carried out orders. Chiefs and priests possessed higher levels of knowledge and with it they wielded power and authority in the community. Technical knowledge and labour were the domains of lower ranked commoners, who toiled the lands, fished the seas and fought wars for their chiefs and priests.

The implication of this inheritance of a specific cultural set of power / knowledge relations for TVET in Fiji is that technical knowledge tends to be devalued in Indigenous Fijian culture - a traditional and colonial inheritance from the past. The emphasis on formal education clearly demonstrates the high value placed on mainstream academic knowledge compared to technical knowledge. Technical knowledge and skills in the modern sense still carries the same values and stereotype as it had in the traditional Fijian hierarchy. This helps to explain the desire of young Indigenous Fijians for white collar jobs as opposed to blue-collar employment.

In a certain sense, formally educated white-collar Fijians are viewed as decision makers and modern-day chiefs. Likewise in Indian communities, better educated Indo-Fijians gained prominence through their academic or
professional achievements and virtually became the new higher status Indo-Fijians (Lal, 2004), sometimes cementing this by marriage into a higher caste.

4.3 Summary

In summary, the theoretical frameworks discussed in this chapter provide the conceptual outline of the social and environmental factors that influence attitudes and perceptions in Fiji. When presented together, these theories offer a productive interpretive framework for understanding how young people make choices about their education and career. Together these theories offer a clearer perspective about the structural barriers against TVET during the process of school-to-work transition.

Post-colonial theory provided the historical / chronological foundation, which the remaining theories are built upon. Post-colonial theory allows us to grasp Fiji’s colonial inheritance that favoured formal education and promoted elitist cultural capital. The white collar career aspirations of many young people in Fiji is an outcome of this early promotion. Sociology of knowledge resonates with post-colonial theory because of its concern with how knowledge and education are used as instruments of control by the elite – a postcolonial legacy. This means that technical knowledge which in the traditional context belonged to lower ranked Fijians tends to be devalued in Fiji. This negative stereotype about technical knowledge is the precursor to the lack of desire for technical education and TVET.
Social reproduction theory is closely related to sociology of knowledge. It aptly illustrates and documents the historical repetition of post-colonial legacies such as the elevation of English in schools and the emphasis on white collar professional careers over blue-collar technical skills jobs. It allows us to understand the tendency of young people to emulate and reproduce the social status and cultural capital of their elders and parents. These are the values, cultures and knowledge that people grow up with and have a strong sense of attachment to. Constructivism permits explanation of how these post-colonial legacies become firmly entrenched in Pacific island communities such as Fiji because of the sense of ownership and new identity created from the remnants of colonialism.

It is the post-colonial habitus of young people in Fiji with which this study is concerned. This habitus is viewed as shaping their experiences, perceptions, personalities and interests. In terms of the transition from school to work, young people in Fiji aim for upward social mobility. In that sense they desire to be liberated from the shackles of traditionalism and the caste system through this new post-colonial identity. In Fiji young people are paving new directions for themselves by pursuing better education, pursuing the goal of white collar careers and elevating their social status. This means lack of interest in TVET. This insight poses interesting challenges for stakeholders about how TVET could be repackaged to accommodate changing trends in Fiji. This will be discussed further in Chapters 10 and 11.

The next chapter presents the methodology of this study.
Chapter FIVE: Methodology

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter has two main parts. The first provides an examination of the methodological strategy adopted in this research. The second sets the scene for the research by providing descriptive details of the four case study schools.

The methodological examination begins with explanation of instrument development, and proceeds to detail sampling size and its justification. Then it explains data collection issues including the fieldwork process, Human Research Ethics approval, data analysis, and ends with strategies used for interpretation and validation of results. The methodological design that this project pursued was determined by the research questions that formed the basis of this study. The supporting literature, as well as the theoretical framework discussed in previous chapters also shaped the methodology. A mixed method approach was chosen, incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches. These are two widely-acknowledged frameworks for social science research (Merriam, 1998; Aiken, 1996) and appropriate for investigating the attitudes and perceptions of junior secondary students and other stakeholders towards TVET in Fiji.

5.1.1 Research questions

The research questions for this study were:
i. What are the perceptions and attitudes about TVET at junior secondary school level?

ii. What factors contribute to the construction and formulation of these perceptions and attitudes?

iii. How might these perceptions and attitudes towards TVET be made more positive?

5.1.2 Research methodology and design

A multi-method approach was developed by utilising both quantitative and qualitative designs within the case study construct proposed by Yin (1994). Since the research questions imply data collection that would yield both breadth and depth, a mixed method or multi-method approach was chosen. Researchers such as Cobb (2000) Merriam (1998), (Aiken, 1996), Strauss & Corbin (1990), Attinasi (1992), Baird (1996) and Burns (1990) agree that qualitative and quantitative methods may be used in the same research for the purpose of complementing, verifying and strengthening data collection capabilities.

The multi-method approach used in this research resembles the practice of triangulation intended to strengthen and ensure accuracy of data (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Tellis, 1997; Denzin, 1984). Additionally, multiple sources such as individual accounts, documents and observation accounts are mechanisms of triangulation adopted in this study to address reliability and validity issues (Thurmond, 2001; Levy, 1988; Yin, 1984). Primary data gathering tools used were: questionnaire, interview, focus group, document search, observation and
the Indigenous Fijian approach ‘veivosaki-yaga’ (see 5.4.5). Table 5.1 below provides an overview of the methodological tools used in this research, while details are discussed later in this chapter.

Table 5.1: Research Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sampling</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Brief Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CASE STUDY</td>
<td>Selective sampling from two clusters of schools – TVET &amp; Non TVET</td>
<td>4 schools (2 TVET &amp; 2 Non TVET)</td>
<td>This provided the depth and focus necessary for this investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURVEY</td>
<td>Selective sampling of junior secondary students</td>
<td>422 junior secondary students</td>
<td>This was the most efficient means of gathering information from a large sample.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEW</td>
<td>Selective sampling based on hierarchy and influence in the school and communal systems.</td>
<td>105 adults and students</td>
<td>Key stakeholders were approached for their input on key issues. A personal approach was needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOCUS GROUP</td>
<td>Selective sampling of key groups</td>
<td>359 students 35 adults</td>
<td>Facilitates discussions of stakeholder groups in an organised setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEIVOSAKI-YAGA (a form of focus group)</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>15 adults</td>
<td>Introduction of a culturally appropriate method relevant for traditional communities such as Indigenous Fijians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBSERVATIONS</td>
<td>General observation of students and teachers in their natural environments</td>
<td>OPEN</td>
<td>Observable behaviour and interactions add a fresh first-hand perspective to fieldwork data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANECDOTES</td>
<td>General ad hoc comments, narratives and accounts from students, teachers and general stakeholders</td>
<td>OPEN</td>
<td>General interactions in the school environment as well as the public so here can yield fresh, unfiltered information on matters pertaining to the investigation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.3 Methodology justification

The Case Study approach was identified as the ideal overarching methodology to use because it was able to achieve holistic in-depth investigation (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison, 2007; Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991; Stake, 1995). The Case Study approach is selective in the search for quality and depth and offers a voice to individuals or groups of individuals participating in the study (Wiersma, 1991; Tellis, 1997; Verma & Mallick, 1999). Researchers such as Stake (1995), Yin (1993), Pyecha (1988), Levy (1988) and Denzin (1984) have identified different types of case studies used in research and attest to their plausibility as method. Four case studies of schools with unique contextual, geographical features were used for this research, hence the use of Denzin’s (1984) data source triangulation concept to address the research questions.

Within each case study school, the researcher used Denzin’s (1984) data source triangulation concept by using surveys followed by selective interviews, focus groups and observations to verify data. Three justifications for using this approach are: with case studies, there is opportunity to investigate and highlight features unique to each school; there is opportunity for comparisons to other case studies, and there is also plausibility for generalisations for like-schools (see Stake, 1995; Lancy, 1993).

The survey was a significant data source in the four case study schools. The primary logic for using the quantitative method of the survey was its ability to reach a large number of participants in a limited period of time. In the case of
this research, the survey provided a convenient means of identifying and categorising ethnographic details, personality traits, attitudes and perceptions (Johnson, 1994; Hoinville & Jowell, 1978). Development of the survey questionnaire is further discussed below.

The main qualitative tool used was interview. It is one of the most important sources of information because the interviewer can always use an open-ended or unstructured form of interview to elicit as much information and depth as possible from participants (Creswell, 2002). However, it might be unwise for a researcher to totally rely on the respondent and accept all information without corroboration and confirmation from other sources. Although information from an interview is fresh, direct and exact, it is not necessarily trustworthy because of the subjective and opinionated nature of the exercise. It is the responsibility of researchers to verify interview data with other sources. Another qualitative method used in this research which yielded similar depth was the focus group. An advantage of focus group is that it provides opportunity for open discussion with more participants than an interview. Details of development of the interview schedules and focus group schedules are given below.

This study used an additional source of information, in the form of direct observations. This included both participant and non-participant observations by the researcher. During participant observation, the researcher takes on a role and becomes involved with the participants or group being studied, participating in some of their activities. One can become a participant by just being there in the same environment and time (Lancy, 1993). Such participation offers a
researcher a first-hand opportunity to delve into the lives, relationships and perceptions of each participant or group (Kvale, 1996; Jenkins, 1994). Reflexivity was achieved in this research through the use of personal notes and reflective journal to record activities, interactions and personal thoughts throughout the fieldwork process (Watt, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). Schwandt (2007, p. 260) defines reflexivity as ‘a process of critical reflection on ones biases, theoretical predispositions (and) preferences’. Reflexivity in this research with school students, teachers and other stakeholders in the community ensured that the researcher constantly repositions his role with changing circumstances in the field. This researcher actively participated in school activities in each case study school, teaching normal classes and supervising extracurricular activities. The researcher was constantly confronted with his dual roles which demanded his flexibility as a researcher. Apart from directly participating, the researcher was sometimes a non-participant observer; staying aloof from the study group but actively analysing their interactions (Calderón, 2011). In observational research, observations can be formal or casual depending on opportunities available to the researcher. For corroboration, the researcher in this study used photographs and video-recording to aid in clarifying some aspects of observation.

Another element of methodological triangulation used in this research for verification purpose is Document Analysis. This included reviewing of school annual reports, statistical data, media publications and other relevant papers pertaining to this investigation. Some documents have high levels of accuracy such as official media releases but there are also some that may lack accuracy
due to changing situations in the field. Though there may be elements of bias and ambiguity, an advantage of document analysis is that the information is already on paper. All that is needed is confirmation, interpretation and analysis, as well as verification from other data sources.

5.1.4 Overview of the fieldwork process

The fieldwork took place in Fiji between January 2009 and February 2010. The fieldwork process and preparations began in early 2008. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Newcastle in late November (Reference number: H-2008-0372). By the end of 2008 all necessary request documents, including consent forms and information documents had been sent to the Fiji Ministry of Education, as well as to administrators of the target schools. The researcher arrived in Fiji to formally conduct the fieldwork in January 2009. Specific permissions from the Ministry of Education (see Appendices 1,4,5,6 & 7) and school principals to conduct the case studies were sought through formal consent forms (see Appendices 1, 13, 14 & 15). Principals, teachers, students, parents and community leaders who were invited and agreed to participate in interviews and/or focus groups were all given information statements and consent forms. All participants brought back filled consent forms, especially parental consent forms from students at junior secondary level (see Appendices 4-12). The first set of interviews conducted was in the Ministry of Education, namely the Permanent Secretary, Senior TVET, and Education officers. Additional interviews with stakeholders took place within the case study period.
To enable effective management of data collection in the field, the process was divided into phases. Phase One was a broad survey. The survey was conducted within the case study schools and involved a total of 422 junior secondary school students. Phase One provided the first set of primary data, followed by Phase Two which utilised qualitative tools of interview, focus group, observation, document analysis and anecdotal evidence. Interview and focus group data comprised the second set of primary data.

From February 2009, the researcher was attached at four case study schools for a period of four weeks each. Within the course of attachment in the four schools, the researcher attempted to participate as much as possible in curricular as well as extracurricular activities of the schools. His role as observer-participant is best described by Wax and Wax (1980, p. 3) in that ‘voluntary participation of the researcher in activities of the host is a visible gesture of commitment…. [and assimilation]’. The first two weeks in each school were spent on adaptation and observation, making use of field notes and diaries in recording anecdotes and accounts from students, teachers and parents. It was important to understand the culture and ethos of the schools before setting about gathering data of a more formal kind (Verma & Mallick, 1999). In the third week the survey as well as the focus groups was conducted. The final week in each school was reserved for conducting interviews with school administrators.

In November 2009, upon completion of preliminary data analysis, all interview participants were sent their interview transcripts and asked to verify their responses. Additionally, principals of surveyed schools were sent preliminary
results of the data of their respective schools. A revisit to the case study schools took place in January 2010, with a series of meetings with school administrators and interview participants for the purpose of gathering necessary feedback on their interview transcripts and associated preliminary analyses. In February 2010, the researcher was also able to meet with the Fiji Minister for Education, Filipe Bole, to discuss his views on TVET and preliminary findings of this study.

5.2 Instrument Development and Design

5.2.1 Developing the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed with the primary objective of revealing significant attitudinal indicators of participants on the main research questions (see Appendix 3). Key considerations that went into the construction of the questionnaire were: academic level of participants, age, background, length of the questionnaire and level of English. It was resolved to use multiple choice-type questions because they are more convenient for respondents in Fiji (Cavu et al., 2009). In addition there was also concern about time limitations in the classroom setting and the need to spend minimal time in completing the survey. Previous research in Fiji by Nilan et al. (2006) and Cavu et al. (2009), attest to the appropriateness of using multiple-choice questionnaire items in a survey in the Fiji context.

Items underwent several drafts to arrive at the relevant level of comprehension for the target participants. Culture, religion and gender sensitivity were also factored into the construction of items. The questionnaire consisted of three
main parts. Part One focused on the ethnographic details of respondents (Best & Kahn, 1998). Part Two looked at additional family details while Part Three addressed the research questions of the study. The three parts of the questionnaire may be described as having an inverted pyramid structure in that it began with broad identifying questions, then proceeded to background details and ended with specific attitudinal indicators.

Questions were designed to elicit expressions of attitude towards school, career and family (Groves, Fowler Jr, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer & Tourangeau, 2009; Tittle & Hill, 1967). The questions were posed in a straightforward manner to enable students to signal choices and decisions about various aspects of their lives and to express them on paper. Reflective questions elicited expressions towards key elements in participants’ social environment such as personal motivations, interests, ambitions, role models, beliefs and values (see Nilan et al., 2006).

5.2.2 Designing interview schedules

Interview participants were initially identified relevant to the research questions of this study. Key stakeholders were categorised into two main groups: Internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders referred to all groups in the immediate school environment such as school administrators, teachers and students. External stakeholders referred to all other groups including government, parents and the wider community. In determining the specific interview schedule and the specific interview items, the following factors were considered:
i. Status and role of the participant in relation to the topic
ii. Relationship of the participant to education and TVET
iii. Relevance of the participant’s contribution to the topic
iv. Formality, language, time and venue of interview

5.2.3 The focus groups

Focus groups brought together people from similar backgrounds in relation to the topic for a discussion session. Items for discussion were selected based on relevance to the groups and geared towards addressing the key research questions. Items used were intended to be guides and to initiate discussion. The researcher initiated and facilitated the discussions and used responses to further engage the participants. The main focus groups were:

i. Teachers (in the case study school)
ii. Parents (of students in case study school)
iii. Senior students (in case study schools)
iv. Community leaders (of case study students)

5.2.4 Piloting of research tools

All primary data research tools (survey, interview and focus group) were piloted and revised in Fiji prior to actual use for this research. The survey questionnaire was sent to two schools for piloting and was also discussed with a group of secondary school teachers prior to its fieldwork use. A significant point raised from the piloting was the difficulty and confusion that students might face in
distinguishing between Likert-style attitudinal option scales such as: Strongly Agree and Agree or between Disagree and Strongly Disagree (Aiken, 1996). This became a semantic issue in the cultural context of Fiji because there were no exact translations of these terms in Fijian vernacular languages. In Fijian vernacular languages one either agrees with something or disagrees. There are no degrees of agreement or disagreement. To resolve the problem, the scale was revised so that the choice of agree or disagree was clear for the survey respondent. The interview schedules as well as focus group schedules were piloted with the assistance of secondary school teachers attending an in-service training at Fiji Institute of Technology (now FNU) in January 2009.

5.3 Sampling and Justification

5.3.1 Questionnaire survey participants

A total of 422 junior secondary pupils (Forms 3 and 4) of both sexes and ethnic/racial backgrounds were anonymous informants in the survey. These respondents were between the ages of 12 and 16. The survey phase of the research used what Babbie (2008) refers to as multi-stage sampling to determine case study participants. Multi-stage sampling involved the selection of clusters and making random selections from these clusters. The four case study schools formed two main clusters— TVET and Non-TVET. Hence there were two TVET schools and two Non-TVET schools. The sampling variations employed were intended to achieve a reasonable scope and breadth crucial to this research. As such, the schools selected were from geographically diverse parts of Fiji – Central Division, Northern Division and Western Division.
5.3.2 Interview participants

In qualitative approaches such as interview and focus group Tuckett (2004) describes the use of ‘heterogeneous groups’ in ensuring that a wide diversity of views are represented. In this regard, participants were invited as representatives of key stakeholders of the community. Government officials, school principals and key stakeholders who consented to be involved in interviews were asked to separately meet with the researcher at a designated place, convenient to each interviewee. A total of 105 people representing stakeholders were interviewed (see Appendix 16). Some of the interviews were less formal and took place in informal settings such as classrooms or tea rooms and involved casual conversations and discussions. Each interviewee was asked to respond to questions listed in the relevant interview schedule (see Appendix 12). Some of the interviews were audio-recorded, while others were recorded in note form to respect the wishes of participants. Table 5.2 below is a summary of interview participants by group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government officials (including Ministry of Education)</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>Principals and teachers (in case study schools)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii</td>
<td>Junior, senior and Matua students (in case study schools)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>Community leaders and other stakeholders</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Interview Participants

At the four case study schools, the researcher spoke informally with approximately 40 pupils at each school. In these situations, fieldwork notes were made afterwards. The notes provided insights into the nexus of factors
that determined or shaped attitudes and perceptions to TVET. According to the cultural norms of Fiji as attested by the research experience of Nilan et al. (2006), young people under the age of 16 are reluctant to talk when a formal interview or focus group schedule is employed and a digital voice recorder is present. It is possibly a cultural feature in Fiji that deems children voiceless in the affairs of the family and where children are constantly reminded by adults of their place in society (Williksen-Bakker, 2004). It is for this reason, among others, that child-participants often have difficulty in confidently expressing themselves in questioning situations. The informal conversations went some way towards overcoming this hurdle.

5.3.3 Focus group participants

The justification of using focus groups was to enable the participation of a wider cross section of the community (stakeholders) in lively informal discussions (see Tuckett, 2004) on the issue of TVET and its potential. The group-based approach has been identified as less stressful than interviews because participants are not directly confronted by the researcher and can rely on colleagues in their group to generate and discuss ideas (Cavu et al., 2009).

Parents who consented to be involved in focus groups were asked to meet either at school or at a local venue at a time convenient to them. They were asked to consider the questions listed on the parent focus group schedule (see Appendix 11). The focus group discussions were audio-recorded. Teachers of pupils at the case study schools, as well as senior students and community leaders who consented to be involved in focus groups were also asked to meet
at a local venue at a time convenient to all. They were asked to talk about TVET according to their focus group schedule (see Appendix 8 - 10).

Before each focus group began, participants were each provided with a handout containing guide questions for the discussion. Aside from their verbal contributions, participants were also asked to note down some of their ideas on paper which was collected at the end of the session. The purpose of this was that some participants might have had ideas or opinions which they were unable to verbally articulate due to personal or cultural reasons. Some may not have had ample opportunity to fully express themselves simply because of time constraints.

A significant factor in the success of a focus group in the cultural context of Fiji is the ability and competence of researchers in eliciting discussion from all participants (Stevens, 2001). From the researcher’s field experience, culture can be a powerful inhibitor and often restraints participants from appearing contradictory or confrontational in a discussion setting (Cavu et al., 2009; Tagicakiverata, 2003). In the focus groups for teachers as well as for parents, all sessions ended in consensus, with very little expression of diverse views.

Gender was another inhibitor observed from this research, as women were less likely to contribute fully in a discussion in the presence of men. At times the researcher had to strategically pose questions directly to women participants before receiving a response. Otherwise men would dominate the discussion. It became obvious that women were conforming to the traditional cultural etiquette
where men were expected to speak first. This is similar to the concept of *madua* (shame) observed by Williksen-Bakker (2004) in the Fiji cultural setting. In an attempt to involve women in the discussions, the researcher tried as much as possible not to appear confronting or imposing. This was made possible through the development of a culturally appropriate method of *veivosaki-yaga* for Indigenous Fijian participants (see Section 5.4.5).

### 5.4 Data Collection and Analysis Strategies

#### 5.4.1 Consultation Phase

Consultations regarding primary elements of this research had been progressing since 2005 when the researcher worked for the Fiji Institute of Technology (now Fiji National University). He joined two research teams in that year. One involved visiting 60 rural villages and settlements while the second involved school surveys. These projects provided the background interest in TVET as the researcher was able to touch base with grassroots people in community. Reports from both projects were published in UNESCO / UNEVOC International Handbook of Education for the Changing World of Work (2009) (see Cavu et al., 2009). Key stakeholders from tertiary institutions in Fiji, Ministry of Education and TVET section were consulted prior to the commencement of this research endeavour. This study was also made possible with the support of Fiji National University, Fiji Ministry of Education and scholarship from the Fiji Ministry of iTaukei Affairs.
5.4.2 Addressing measurement of attitude

For this study, attitude is stipulatively defined as human choices and preferences based on personal values, culture and socialisation. This definition is derived from the works of researchers such as Akey (2006), Tourangeau and Rasinski (1988) Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Attitude is related to one’s beliefs (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2002) as well as one’s ‘disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event’ (Ajzen, 2005, p. 3). In a classroom situation attitude is believed to affect attention and behaviour (DeLamater & Myers, 2011), which might be outwardly expressed through boredom and unresponsive behaviours (Nickerson, 1998). It is arguable therefore that attitude is a derivative of experiences in one’s habitus. This means that a decision one makes such as a career choice is not a result of isolated independent events but a cumulative result of a process rooted in one’s social space.

The ranking and measurement of attitude is crucial in terms of establishing validity and reliability of the data findings (Aiken, 1996). The survey enabled the researcher to rank and measure attitudes across a large sample of participants from geographically and culturally diverse cross-sections of Fiji. The anonymity of the survey added to its reliability because in Fiji’s cultural context, participants were more likely to express their opinions freely than in other forums where identities were known.

While the survey data revealed basic attitudes, the focus groups and interviews provided depth in terms of explaining logic and reasoning behind these
attitudes. Observations of participants in their natural environments (school and home) offered observable-behavioural accounts and allowed assessment of manifestations of attitude.

5.4.3 Classification of perceptions

Perception in this study refers to personal views and thoughts of individuals that are strongly connected to personal attitudes and emotions. In the case of student participants, it was decided to distinguish between opinions and ideas that were formulated from recall of knowledge, and those formulated through personal experiences. This assumes there is a marked difference in perceptions because individuals will have different views of the world depending on their life circumstances and experiences (Tyerman, 1968; Farrington, 1980; Reid, 1985). For example, a child growing up in an affluent family and one growing up in poverty will have different views of the possibilities that life holds (Adinkrah, 1995).

5.4.4 Using a culturally appropriate research method

In the search for a culturally relevant qualitative data collection tool in Fiji, one that might overcome the apparent cultural problem of ‘shyness’ in speaking, a new kind of qualitative research tool was developed. Veivosaki-yaga is derived from time-honoured Indigenous Fijian practices for generating useful knowledge from discussion. It therefore breaks new ground beyond both Otsuka’s (2006) Pacific-oriented talanoa research and the standard focus group procedure used in western research.
The *talanoa* methodology proposed by Otsuka basically involves casual *ad hoc* talk and story-telling in a group to elicit information. Otsuka (2006, p. 3) says that *talanoa* ‘culturally connotes talking about “nothing in particular” and interacting without a rigid framework’. Developing the previous work of Vaioleti (2003), Otsuka considers *talanoa* as a culturally appropriate design for group data collection in Fiji. However, the *talanoa* approach might not be appropriate for gathering information on all topics in Fiji.

The researcher’s experience as an Indigenous Fijian is that *talanoa* is merely *ad hoc* talk that people engage in when drinking *kava*, meeting casually in a supermarket, on the streets or at large gatherings. The gist of the *talanoa* concept is its literal and contextual Fijian interpretation of story-telling and nothing more - as accurately described by Otsuka above. This phenomenon is not limited to Indigenous Fijians but has cultural parallels with Indo-Fijian culture and the culture of other Pacific communities. The disadvantages of *talanoa* as a methodology are its overly casual nature and the difficulty in exercising control over the direction of the narratives in an information-gathering forum. As in any ordinary story-telling session among peers, the topics and themes change rapidly depending on the spontaneous contributions of participants.

The fundamental weakness in both Otsuka’s (2006) and Vaioleti’s (2003) *talanoa* concept is that they have stretched the literal meaning of the term beyond its contextual cultural relevance. For example, a problem encountered by Otsuka in his *talanoa* fieldwork was that some participants were not honest in their account. A significant aspect that Otsuka failed to realise is that honesty
and truth are characteristics beyond the boundary of a typical Fijian talanoa. On the contrary, exaggeration is expected and hyperboles are plentiful. Moreover, out of respect for the ‘foreigner’ (Otsuka is a Japanese researcher) some participants may not have been really forthcoming with Otsuka because they were merely facilitating and ‘playing along’ with his desire for talanoa. The major methodological problem lies in how Otsuka’s participants (Indigenous Fijians) most likely perceived the word talanoa, which in Fijian literally means casual story-telling.

Participants in talanoa are not bound by any rules or obligations other than their own interest in expressing themselves, often resulting in exaggerations. Emasi Qovu (Suva, May 2009) a former Fiji member of parliament explained that traditional methodologies such as talanoa can be effective in gathering data. He referred specifically to muritalanoa as a plausible approach. Muritalanoa may be loosely translated as ‘following a story’. It refers to people who listen in on village or peer story telling sessions and literally take action as a consequence. However, a potential downfall of muritalanoa is that the participants are perceived as receivers of the message and not so much as initiators or creators in the system. In other words, most people present are listening to a dominant person in the group express views, they do not express their own.

5.4.5 Veivosaki-yaga methodology (worthwhile discussion)

The recent emphasis on talanoa research in the Pacific, despite its inherent methodological limitations, may lie in lack of understanding of the existence of more contextually relevant forms of group discourse. A more contextually
relevant form of productive group discourse which was developed from this study is termed *veivosaki-yaga*, which in Fijian parlance means ‘worthwhile discussion or conversation’ The term *veivosaki* connotes a neutral sense of conversation and dialogue rather than storytelling. *Yaga* literally means ‘useful or worthwhile’. By engaging in *veivosaki-yaga*, Indigenous Fijian participants are psychologically tuned in to a form of communal dialogue that demands their serious consideration and response.

This is not a new concept at all but already exists in Fijian culture as demonstrated by Cavu et al. (2009) in their study of 60 rural Fijian villages (see Image 5.1 below of a *veivosaki-yaga* in progress in a rural Fijian village).

*Image 5.1: Participants of Veivosaki-yaga Distribute Handouts*
The formal elements incorporated in *veivosaki-yaga* are similar to those which bring order to a focus group session under the control of the researcher. Furthermore, some of the formal elements of *veivosaki-yaga* mirror the existing custom of *Bose-Vanua* which is a formal village meeting chaired by a Chief or village head-man. Here ordinary people are invited to speak on aspects of the matter at hand.

In *veivosaki-yaga* methodology, the researcher embodies the role of the Chief and Chairperson who initiates, controls and mediates the discussions, bringing participants into dialogue on important matters. Yet while *veivosaki-yaga* is much more formally organised than *talanoa*, it still carries a measure of relaxed informality that ordinary people would find conducive and participatory. In this study, the focus groups for parents and discussions with some community leaders were conducted through *veivosaki-yaga* methodology. The approach was successful in encouraging participants to speak openly but with a sense of a serious topic. In the *veivosaki-yaga* groups conducted for this research, Fijian language was used throughout.

### 5.5 Data analysis and Interpretation of Results

#### 5.5.1 Analyses of quantitative data

All survey data was entered into IBM SPSS Statistics (2010, Version 19.0) – a quantitative data analysis package. Simple descriptive analysis - frequencies and cross-tabulations - were carried out.
5.5.2 Analysis of qualitative data

Notes taken in the four case studies were entered into NVIVO – a qualitative data management package (QSR, 2010) and analysed by themes that emerged. The transcripts of interviews and focus groups conducted with parents, community leaders, teachers, Principals and Ministry of Education officers were also entered into NVIVO and subjected to a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was guided by Foucault’s (2002) notion of discourse analysis and Ball’s (1990, 1995) model of educational discourse. Where interviews and discussions were conducted in Fijian language, they were translated into English before analysis.

5.6 Research Limitations

There were some notable limitations of this study. These were external barriers and methodological limitations. External barriers in this research refer to environmental elements such as distance (PhD study overseas in Australia), cultural expectations in the fieldwork environments in Fiji, environmental conditions both in Australia and Fiji and time constraints. Methodological limitations refer to limitation of research design and direction.

5.6.1 Changes and reforms in the civil service

The political situation in Fiji added strain to this research in that drastic changes were taking place in the country during the period of fieldwork between January 2009 and January 2010. The Fiji Constitution was abrogated in April and Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth. Hundreds of civil servants were
forced into early retirement, including teachers. There was some confusion as government ministries were merged or reconstituted and major reshuffling of senior government officials.

Some of my scheduled meetings and interviews had to be cancelled because officials were being transferred. A number of civil servants approached for interview refused outright, some were reluctant, while others asked not to be recorded. Only a handful of civil servants agreed to recorded interviews. Three officials in acting positions refused to be interviewed until they were confirmed to their civil service positions.

5.6.2 Cultural barriers
While adapting to the field work environment, preparation was needed for subtle cultural traits that might prove troublesome while working with major ethnic groups - Indigenous Fijians and Indo Fijians. Identifiable cultural traits such as gender stereotypes, social hierarchy, communal sensitivity and social consensus proved to be obstacles to the unrestrained expression of views and ideas in focus group sessions. For example, men mostly led the discussions while women made supporting gestures and nods. It was only in focus groups with teachers that women freely expressed their views, but even then they gave men the first opportunities to speak. Such experiences stimulated the development of a more culturally relevant methodology such as that used in this research in the form of Veivosaki-yaga (5.4.5).
5.6.3 Limitations in the school environment

In all the case study schools I became a substitute teacher and taught or supervised classes whenever a teacher was absent. Yet while I contributed as much as possible to the schools, I felt that I was denying myself time to focus on my research. In a typical eight-hour school day, I would be spending as much as five hours on teaching and supervising classes, and the rest spent on talking and discussing with teachers. Classroom hours can be stressful especially when the student-teacher ratio was as much as 50 to 1, which I encountered at two of the case study schools. Subjects that I ended up teaching in the schools varied and included: English, Math, Basic Science, Social Science, Basic Drawing, Metal Work and Home Economics.

5.6.4 Language difficulty in the fieldwork

Despite the fact that all students in the study schools had satisfactory working knowledge of English, I was worried that certain vocabulary and phrases used in the questionnaire, focus groups or interviews were likely to be misinterpreted or misunderstood by participants. It was for this reason that I spent time discussing key terms and concepts with students prior to the survey, focus group sessions and interviews.

5.6.5 Methodological limitations

Methodological limitations in this study refer to other methodologies and directions that were not considered because of the interest of the researcher and the nature of this study. Some of these alternative directions could involve use of different survey designs, selection of participants and different sample
sizes. This researcher acknowledges that other methodologies such as action research or a longitudinal study approach might provide useful data, but they were beyond the scope of this research.

5.6.6 Maintaining ethical boundaries

Participants were informed that participation in this research was voluntary and those that participated would have their identities protected. During interviews a number of participants requested not to be recorded. Some interview participants requested that the interviews be conducted in Fijian vernacular, while some others requested that the interviews be informal. All requests were acted on. It is considered that the research was conducted according to the approved protocol for ethical Human Research.

5.7 The Case Study Schools

This section provides a descriptive and pictorial overview of the four case study schools used for this research. They are:

i. Vunimono High School, Nausori.

ii. All Saints Secondary School, Labasa.

iii. Nadi College, Nadi.

These schools yielded quantitative and qualitative data as described previously in this methodology chapter. The student researcher spent time in each school for the purpose of this study.

Below, photos are integrated within the descriptive content. The use of photos is intended to add depth and visual information to the descriptions especially when talking about local environments, school infrastructure, students and teachers. Map 5.1 below shows the locations of the schools in Fiji.

Map 5.1: Locations of the Case Study Schools

![Map showing the locations of the schools](image)
5.7.1 School 1: Vunimono High School

Vunimono High School is situated along the banks of the Rewa River near Nausori Airport and is approximately two kilometers from Nausori Town. The school was established in 1907 and is managed by the Sanatan Dharam Mahamandal of Vunimono, one of the largest Hindu religious organisations in Fiji. Vunimono High School is a multicultural school catering for students of all ethnicities. It is a predominantly Indian school with Hindu prayers and rituals taking place as part of the daily school programme.

![Image 5.2: A Classroom Scene at Vunimono](image)

There is a morning prayer and an afternoon prayer which all students must recite. Vunimono High School is a relatively large secondary school with an average enrolment of over 1000 students each year and over 70 teaching and ancillary staff. The school offers academic programmes from Forms 3 to 6, as
well as Vocational Education. The school has relatively good academic results with improving pass rates\(^1\) in Form 7 (FSFE\(^2\)) of 71\% in 2007 and 91\% in 2008. Form 6 (FSCL\(^3\)) pass results in 2008 rose to 60\%, up from 48\% while Form 4 (FJCE\(^4\)) pass results were 90\%, up from 83\% in 2007. Although the school offers TVET courses, teachers at the school say that TVET courses are not as appealing as mainstream academic courses.

Image 5.3: A Home Economics Class at Vunimono

There are several large structures that make up the school, which together appear to dominate the suburb of Vunimono because it stretches some 200 meters along the main road towards Nausori Airport. The school offers an

---

\(^1\) Source: *Reminiscence* 1.Vol.1, April 2009. This is the official school newsletter.
\(^2\) FSFE: Fiji Seventh Form Examination for Form 7 students.
\(^3\) FSCL: Fiji School Leaving Certificate Examination for Form 6 students.
\(^4\) FJCE: Fiji Junior Certificate Examination for Form 4 students.
imposing view from Rewa River as well as from the air. The majority of students in the school come from nearby villages in the provinces of Tailevu, Rewa and Naitasiri, as well as settlements and suburbs near Nausori Town.

Due to its sound academic reputation, students have been known to attend the school from as far away as Suva City. The school was described by Principal Gurdayal in 2007 as the flagship school of Nausori because it was the biggest school in Nausori District. However, the principal was mainly referring to the relatively better academic performance of the school in comparison to other schools in the district.

*Image 5.4: Vunimono High School Frontage*
5.7.2 School 2: All Saints Secondary School

All Saints Secondary School is a large school in a rural setting about four kilometers from Labasa town, in the province of Macuata on the large northern island of Vanua Levu. It is owned and managed by the Anglican Diocese of Polynesia. The school is a multiracial secondary school catering for students from nearby villages and settlements around the town of Labasa. Students also come from distant provinces such as Bua and Cakaudrove. Many students who come from afar stay with relatives while attending the school.

Image 5.5: Principal Mckenzie Addressing an Assembly

The school was established in 1911 by Anglican Mission Education through the pioneering work of Rev. H.E. Latewood and Rev. A.T Milgrew. It was the first school for Indian children in Vanua Levu. School records show that there have
been numerous changes and developments over the years. The school now has about 60 teaching and ancillary staff and a student enrolment averaging 800\textsuperscript{5} between 2009 and 2011.

According to Principal Kaliote Mckenzie in 2009, the school caters primarily for students from middle and lower income earning families, many of whom are farmers, fishermen and owners of small businesses in Labasa. In a personal interview she talked about her efforts to change the attitude of students and to improve the image of the school. She says that many students come to All Saints Secondary School as a second option but would prefer to attend Labasa College, a more highly regarded secondary school in Vanua Levu. However, Principal Mckenzie believes that her school has a lot of potential.

\textbf{Image 5.6: Principal Mckenzie Briefing her Staff}

\textsuperscript{5} Source: All Saints Secondary School Office documents and Alpha school magazine.
Exam results are slowly picking up and the overall behaviour and discipline of students have improved during her tenure as principal. The school has a sports academy to cater for those who have a strong sporting orientation.

The school is one of a handful of secondary schools in Fiji that still offers Forms 1 and 2 as well as levels up to Form 7. According to Principal Mackenzie in 2007 the school was making preparations for the TVET franchise programme. The principal is a strong advocate of TVET because she believes that TVET can provide employable skills for many young people in the district. In terms of infrastructure, the school has some impressive features such as the school computer lab and well-appointed classrooms.

Image 5.7: A Computer Studies Class in the Computer Lab
Another convenience for the school is its close proximity to Labasa Town. The trip takes about 5 minutes by taxi or 10 minutes by bus. Some students walk home from school to Labasa Town.

5.7.3 School 3: Nadi College

Nadi College is located about 500 meters from the central business district (CBD) of the city of Nadi in western Viti Levu. It was established in 1966 by Dr Shaukat Ali Sahib. According to Principal Ganeshwar Prasad in 2009 the establishment of the school was primarily his accomplishment. It was the vision and determination of Dr Sahib that saw the establishment of the school to cater for students who cannot find a place in any other school.

Image 5.8: Nadi College School Compound
The majority of students come from nearby villages and settlements around Nadi. The school is managed by the Fiji Education Society. The school’s mission states that the school is ‘committed to providing quality education and harmonious development of students in all aspects of life’.

Principal Prasad explained that the vision set forth by the founder of the school and the mission of the school compels them to enrol any student into the school as long as they have an interest in education. He added that as a result of this policy the students they have accommodated over the years have probably tarnished the reputation of the school. This includes perceptions of poor discipline and low pass rates in national examinations.

6 Source: Nadi College office documents.
The school is a multiracial school with a mix of Indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijian students and pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. The school offers academic courses up to Form 7 as well as franchise TVET programmes in Catering and Automotive Engineering. Despite the franchise TVET programmes, teachers at the school admitted it was difficult to convince students to pursue TVET career pathways. Although the school has had many difficulties, Principal Prasad was keen to point out that the school set new records in the 2008 national examinations. He added that the positive new levels of achievement could be attributed to new strategies they were implementing in the school.

Principal Prasad talked about his efforts to improve his own performance as principal. He tried as much as possible to meet all the school requirements of his teachers. He had also increased the monitoring of students to reduce truancy, absenteeism and lack of discipline. He said that he had sought the assistance of the police and the general public to reduce loitering of students in Nadi. In the school he encouraged teachers to spend quality time with weaker students (slow learners). He felt that the overall improved examination results in 2008 had been encouraging for the school and were testament to the success of his new strategies.

5.7.4 School 4: Nabua Secondary School

Nabua Secondary School is located about four kilometers from Suva City CBD. It was founded in 1972 to cater primarily for Indigenous Fijian students. The school serves the community by enrolling students who are unable to find places at other secondary schools in Suva and Nausori. Pupils are typically
from nearby settlements such as Nabua, Namadi, Mead Road Housing, Marine Quarters, Samabula East, Raiwaqa, Raiwai and Jittu Estate.

Some of these are low-income earning areas prone to many socio-economic problems and crime. Some are illegal squatter settlements where there are visible signs of poverty and very poor sanitation. These show signs of desperation and poverty and are the kinds of conditions that some students in the school come from. Nabua Secondary School was established with these communities in mind. Image 5.10 shows the main school block, while Image 5.11 shows the debilitating conditions of an illegal squatter settlement in Suva.

Image 5.10: The Main School Block at Nabua Secondary
Nabua Secondary School is a committee managed school with about 600 students and 50 teaching and ancillary staff. In the late 1980s the school introduced vocational training in Light Engineering, and Carpentry and Joinery, so that pupils could learn employable trades.

In 2002 the school was recognised by the government as a Centre of Excellence, which meant an injection of funds for infrastructure developments. These increased funds saw the construction of new classrooms, a computer laboratory, two science laboratories and a school hall. However, more significant was the introduction of the Matua Programme which caters specifically for adult learners. This programme offered adults who had not completed their secondary education a chance to complete their education. By the account of Principal Marika Uluinaceva (Suva, May 2009) many graduates
from the *Matua* Programme have gone on to achieve success in tertiary institutions and gained well-paid employment.

**Image 5.12: Vocational Catering Class**

---

## 5.8 Summary of the Chapter

The first part of this chapter described the research methodology undertaken in this study, as well as its justification. Data collection instruments used included: survey, interview, observation and focus group. The primary objective of the design was to identify and measure attitudes and perceptions of students towards TVET. The biggest challenge for this research turned out to be the major changes taking place in government during the duration of the fieldwork in Fiji and during the write-up of the thesis. An unforeseen benefit from the
research process was the development of a culturally appropriate methodology in the form of veivosaki-yaga, which has a lot of potential for use in research with indigenous peoples in the South Pacific. The four case study schools were described in detail.

The second major part of the chapter has provided a descriptive and pictorial overview of the case study schools. The schools are located near major towns and cities. While there are many similarities between the schools in terms of co-education and facilities, there were some notable contrasts. These contrasts included differences in programmes such as the Matua Programme which was unique to Nabua Secondary School, and the TVET franchise which was only available in Nadi College and Nabua Secondary School. Another notable contrast was the community status of the schools. Vunimono High School was considered a premier school in Nausori District because of its higher pass rates in national examinations. This was in contrast to the three other case study schools, which were not as highly regarded in their surrounding communities because of their relatively poorer performances in national examinations.

In Labasa there is a more desirable school in the form of Labasa College, a government school. In Suva there are many prominent schools such as St Josephs, Marist Brothers and Yat Sen. In Nadi, the most prominent school is Swami Vivekanand College because of its high academic achievements. These contrasting prominent schools help suggest the kinds of students that might enrol in the case study schools in terms of differences in academic achievements and socio-economic status.
Following this chapter there are four chapters that detail the results and findings: Chapters 6 to 9. They present the quantitative and qualitative results that emerged from the analyses of the data from the surveys, focus groups and interviews. These were conducted with stakeholders such as senior government officials, school administrators, teachers, parents, students and community leaders (see Appendix 16 for complete list of participants). Chapter 6 presents survey findings. This is followed by Chapters 7 to 9 which provide in-depth analyses of the qualitative data. Chapter 10 is the synthesis chapter which consolidates the key ideas from the results of this study.
Chapter SIX: Descriptive Analyses of Students’ Perceptions and Attitudes to TVET

6.1 Introduction

This chapter begins the presentation and discussion of results. Results in this chapter are based on quantitative data from the survey of students at junior secondary school level. The survey was conducted in four case study schools, as described in the previous chapter. The data presented demonstrate student awareness and interest in TVET. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the background of student perceptions of education and TVET. This will set the stage for the qualitative analyses in Chapters 7 to 9.

6.1.1 Background

This chapter is guided by two of the research questions:

i. What are the perceptions and attitudes about TVET at junior secondary school level?

ii. What factors contribute to the construction and formulation of these perceptions and attitudes?

The first question was translated into four survey questions in the student questionnaire (Q6, 8, 10 and 11 – see Appendix 3). The first research question (i) above is based on the assumption that perceptions and attitudes are indicators and manifestations of human interaction and socialisation. Hence, the
questions derived from this are designed to elicit responses that reflect the students’ perceptions and attitudes about TVET.

The second research question above (ii) implies a retrospective search for the roots of students’ perceptions of, and attitudes towards, TVET. These will hopefully point to social and environmental influences in the lives of junior secondary students.

6.1.2 Structure of the chapter
This chapter has three main parts. The first part (6.2) provides an overview of the background details of respondents of the survey. The second part (6.3) provides analyses of responses assumed to reflect respondents’ perceptions and attitudes. These refer to relevant areas such as: school, school subjects and career direction. The third part (6.4) focuses specifically on perceptions about TVET. This includes awareness and knowledge of TVET, as well as elements of influence in the students’ habitus. This researcher ensured the credibility and authenticity of students’ responses in the survey by emphasising their anonymity and the confidentiality of the information they divulged.

6.2 Background of Student Survey Respondents

6.2.1 Data by sex, race and residence
There were a total of 422 students in junior secondary school who participated in the survey. These were students from the four case study schools.
Table 6.1: Student Roll and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
<th>CASE STUDY SCHOOLS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL SAINTS</td>
<td>NADI COLLEGE</td>
<td>NABUA SEC SCH.</td>
<td>VUNIMONO HIGH SCH.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIJIAN</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>273</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIAN</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACES</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data in Figure 6.1 above, a clear majority of students (65%) were Indigenous Fijians (273), while Indo Fijians comprised 32% (133). Other races (Rotumans, Chinese, Europeans) were 3% (16). The difference in ethnic numbers was beyond the control of this researcher. It is judged to have had no significant bearing on the results of this study.

Most of the survey respondents lived in traditional villages (37%) or in suburban residential areas (39%). A small proportion identified their residence as town / CBD (7%) or rural settlement / farms (17%). Three of the four schools had a more or less even racial mix of students. However, Nabua Secondary School showed a significant racial disparity in favour of Indigenous Fijians. The reason for this is detailed in the school’s historical establishment to cater for Indigenous Fijian students who were unable to find entry into other nearby secondary
schools. This was described in Chapter 5. A majority of students at Nabua Secondary School come from nearby housing commissions and squatter settlements (see photos in Appendix 17).

In terms of gender distribution, there were mixed figures among the four schools. Two of the four schools (Nadi College and Nabua Secondary) had numerical disparities in sex but these were judged to pose no significance for the outcome of data because there were almost even numbers of male (216) and female (206) respondents overall. Table 6.2 below shows this distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>CASE STUDY SCHOOLS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL SAINTS SEC SCH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NADI COLLEGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NABUA SEC SCH.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VUNIMONO HIGH SCH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>216</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>206</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>422</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.2.2 Parents and family backgrounds

The analysis of the family backgrounds of respondents provided a useful perspective on the reference points from which students make their judgments, decisions and choices – in other words their habitus. For example, the types of
employment that parents have are key indicators of educational attainment, financial security, social status and influence. These are important factors in understanding the social and psychological upbringing that students experience. Survey respondents were asked to identify and describe the employment of their parents.

The nine employment categories used in this research were adapted from Erikson and Goldthorpe’s (1992) Taxonomy of Occupations. Categories are listed in descending hierarchy as:

i. professional

ii. para-professional

iii. public servant

iv. private sector

v. trades / technical work

vi. agriculture

vii. petty trade / shop keeper / casual worker,

viii. semi-skilled / unskilled paid work

ix. unemployed / domestic work / unpaid work

Examples of specific jobs in each category are listed in Appendix 18. Details of parents’ employment from the survey data are presented in Figure 6.1 below.
Figure 6.1: Percentage of Parents’ Employment

The bar graph above reveals the disparities in employment figures that exist between male and female parents. A clear majority of female parents (77%) are identified as unemployed, domestic workers or not involved in paid employment. On the other hand 23% of women participate in some form of employment or economic activity, including professional and para-professional jobs. The higher number of women in unpaid work is not a new revelation but merely reflects the
trend that has been the norm in contemporary Fiji society. While it is encouraging that women in Fiji are actively participating in economic activities and competing with men for higher level jobs, the disparity between the sexes is still significant (see Nilan, 2009).

Male parents reflected contemporary social norms and expectations in that a clear majority (92%) participated in paid employment. In contrast, only about 8% of male parents were identified as unemployed or involved in unpaid work. Unpaid work in this sense is presumed to refer to small scale farming or fishing for domestic consumption. The graph shows that a total of 14.8% of all parents (21.8% male and 7.8% female) were involved in higher social status careers in categories of: private sector, public servant, para-professional and professional. These are considered white-collar careers because of their association with neat clothing and indoor work environments. They are also perceived as higher income-earning jobs because they encode management capacities, entrepreneurial skills and higher academic qualifications. These are jobs such as doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, business executives, and government officials.

About 42.9% of all parents (70.3% male and 15.4% female) were identified in occupations such as semi-skilled, casual work, agriculture, and trades/technical work. These jobs may be classified as blue-collar because of their perceived association with manual, labour-intensive work and ‘dirty’ work environments. These include: mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, labourers, cleaners, hotel
workers and other low-qualification, low-wage earning jobs. Some of these are jobs traditionally associated with TVET in public perception.

In the survey students were asked to identify features of their families (Question 2, see Appendix 3). These included family type, composition, values and religiosity. A slight majority of 53% lived with their immediate families. 24% indicated they lived in a large household, which comprised immediate family members plus other relatives. In Fiji this usually means that there were more than two adults or two sets of parents in the extended family who shared responsibilities for looking after the household. This is not an unusual arrangement in Fiji, as the two main ethnic groups (Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians) are both communal by nature. This is a way of strengthening family/kinship/village bonds. There is perceived strength in living together in the sense that people share resources such as food, shelter and clothing. Sharing and caring for one another sustained and maintained these kinship bonds.

In Fijian vernacular it is the custom of solesolevaki, which may be loosely translated as ‘communal contribution’. It means that everybody participates and contributes to the family. This is aptly demonstrated by communal activity during functions such as weddings, funerals and births. The principle is simple. Everyone shares the load and contributes in whatever way possible.

When it comes to schooling, adult relatives decide on the best arrangement for children in their extended family. It is therefore common for children to be moved to other relatives for the purpose of education or for family convenience,
particularly for students who come from rural villages or outer islands. They are often sent to live with relatives on Fiji’s main islands (Viti Levu and Vanua Levu) to attend secondary or tertiary education. 17% of respondents indicated that they lived with guardians (or relatives) who were not their biological parents, which further demonstrates this reality.

The graph (Figure 6.2) below shows the family features that respondents revealed about their families.

**Figure 6.2: Family Features of Respondents**

![Graph showing family features of respondents](image)

- modern: 3%
- marginal: 26%
- strictly traditional: 28%
- aware of traditional role: 33%
- liberal family: 2%
- moderately religious: 15%
- strictly religious: 43%
- single parent family: 10%
- an only child: 4%
- adopted: 4%
- with guardians: 16%
- extended family: 24%
- immediate family: 51%

(n=422)
A handful of respondents identified themselves as adopted (4%) and some others indicated that they were an only child (4%). The low percentages here are not surprising because adoption is still a new concept in Fiji. It is rare to find Indo-Fijian or Indigenous Fijian couples without children in Fiji, especially in rural villages and settlements. Most couples without children in Fiji are known to look after children of relatives and family members. It is also rare to find families with a single child because most families have at least two children. However, times have changed and people are changing their family compositions to suit their finances and situations. Divorces, separations and children born out of wedlock are a reality in Fiji. This is reflective of the 10% of respondents who indicated they came from single-parent families.

Religion still plays an important part of life in Fiji with 58% of total respondents indicating that they belonged to either strictly or moderately religious families. The percentages were 63% Indigenous Fijian and 55% Indo-Fijian. This is a significant piece of data because it suggests that religion still remains a focal point of family life in Fiji. It is quite rare to find families that do not ascribe to any religion in Fiji and only 2% of respondents indicated this. The major religions in the country are Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. These religions have a host of denominations and sects that people follow.

The final component of family background relates to culture and tradition. Survey results revealed that a total of 63% of respondents were either aware of their cultural roles or strictly abided by them. In Fiji parents are usually keen to educate their children on basic cultural values and roles. An example in
Indigenous Fijian culture is one’s ability to demonstrate proper protocol during traditional functions and ceremonies. This may be demonstrated by the skilful preparation of the traditional drink kava during a traditional Fijian ceremony to welcome or to farewell guests. Kava is an integral part of traditional Fijian protocol and male children in particular are expected to learn its preparation and presentation from home.

Yet Fijian people are becoming more westernised. 27% of respondents indicated their families followed both traditional and western ways of life and were adept at both. Some families in Fiji no longer speak their vernacular languages at home, preferring to speak English.

### 6.2.3 Family background and residence

Data from this survey implies that parents’ occupation determined to a significant degree the residential location of families. Parents with white-collar jobs (professional, para-professional and public servant) were more likely to reside in towns and suburban residential areas. This was true for the 66% of respondents whose fathers had white collar jobs. On the other hand, 34% of respondents with fathers in white-collar jobs indicated that they lived in rural villages and on farms. Some of these fathers were identified as teachers or public servants who might have taken positions in rural areas of Fiji.

At the other end of the spectrum, 62% of respondents with fathers in lower category jobs (agriculture, petty trade/ casual worker, semi-skilled/unskilled and unemployed) lived in villages and farms. The remaining 38% of respondents
with fathers who had lower category jobs had probably relocated to live with relatives in urban centres for the education of their children or to find employment.

Important data relating to family composition is that 51% of Indigenous Fijian students indicated that they lived with extended families or guardians. This is in contrast to only 22% of Indo-Fijian students. This suggests that more Indigenous Fijian families were resorting to ‘solesolevaki’ (communal contribution) and family reorganisation in order to cope with financial pressures and the need for education.

6.3 Student Preferences and Choices

The survey design relies on eliciting basic indicators in the form of choices and preferences to identify traits consistent with, and reflective of, mindset. It can be argued that attitude is displayed, demonstrated and reflected by individual choices in our social and personal spheres (Pijanowski, 2009). In reference to the two research questions given at the beginning of this chapter, this section looks at the place of education, and beyond that, TVET, in the mindset of students.

6.3.1 Perceptions of school

Question 3 of the survey (see Appendix 3) asked about perceptions of school. Students were asked to express their attitude towards school by selecting items that reflected their thoughts of school. It was clear from responses that they do
not have many negative perceptions about school. However, a handful of respondents expressed dislike of school because of bullying (8%). This is not isolated to Fiji but a problem in schools around the world as revealed by the work of Rigby and Slee (1999) and Atlas and Pepler (1997).

Some respondents indicated difficulties with teachers who were unreasonable or unfair (4%). A few were negative about exams (2%) or irrelevant / boring subjects (3%). There is nothing new here. Firstly, bullying is a negative and undesirable element of schools everywhere. Insulating students from bullying is a mammoth task because of the dynamic nature and interpretation of the concept (Pepler & Craig, 1997). Secondly, accusations about unfair teachers are part of school culture. There are occasions when teachers are strict and tough and this may be viewed as vindictive by students. Teachers have been blamed for the monotony of their classes perhaps because of a lack of creativity and poor lesson planning. Thirdly, some students do not like exams especially if they are struggling in class. These are some common reactions and perceptions about school.

Far more interesting in terms of this study were the identification of positive aspects of school.

Figure 6.3 below reveals what students liked about school. Respondents made multiple responses to this question.
Figure 6.3: What Respondents Like about School (%)

The graph above illustrates the specific areas that students liked about school. The great majority indicated that they liked school because they get to learn new things (86%). This figure does not necessarily imply that the remaining 14% think otherwise. They may have selected other options which adequately expressed what they felt about school. It may also depend on the interpretation of the statement because some respondents may feel that they learn new things every day, even outside school.

On this question, the second biggest selection with 73% was preparation for employment. This shows that despite their young age, many students at junior secondary school level are possibly already developing long-term projections and plans about their future. Another popular choice was useful ideas for life (58%). These ideas might be awareness of one’s socio-economic environment, getting on with different kinds of people and learning important skills such as numeracy and literacy. The 42% who did not select this option probably felt that
some subjects at school have little practical value in the real world. They might wonder, for example, how they would use knowledge of geography if they became a plumber. Nevertheless, respondents demonstrated that they were able to make evaluations and judgments about their education, even though they were still quite young.

Special interests such as sport, music and art scored 54%. Two of the case study schools offered a specialist sports program. Special interests such as sport, music and art scored 54%. Extra-curricular activities are part of school because they are important in shaping character, interests and talents. There are notable examples in Fiji of people whose interests and talents in sports were nurtured in school and who have gone on to become international professionals in their sport. Notable Fiji examples are Waisale Serevi (Fiji Rugby Union), Joe Rokocoko (New Zealand All Blacks), Lote Tuqiri (Australian Rugby League) and Vilimaina Davu (Netball - New Zealand Silver Ferns). Another famous Fiji sports personality is Vijay Singh who ranks among the top golfers in the world. The success of these sports personalities provides motivation for young people in Fiji to pursue their talents in sport.

Some respondents indicated a positive experience of making friends at school (40%). This indicates that students recognized and acknowledged the socialising and networking advantage of school as a platform for building their social and cultural capital. On the other hand a majority of 60% did not respond to this, implying that making friends was not as important as learning new things. This is an important indicator because it demonstrates that respondents
at junior secondary level were mature enough to make important distinctions between their peers and their education.

Around 39% of students indicated that they liked school because they were able to choose their own school subjects. 61% did not choose this item. This suggests that many students had their subjects chosen for them by their teachers or parents, which is a common practice in Fiji. On the other hand it is possible that some students were oblivious to the significance of making these choices in school. It can be argued that those (39%) that selected this option were conscious of the significance of this in terms of their career directions. Students’ awareness of this depends of course on the advice that they get from home and from school.

38% of respondents indicated that school prepares them for adult life which presumably refers to the learning of employable skills and trades. On the other hand there were 62% who did not choose this item. Perhaps they felt that preparation for adult life cannot be taught entirely in school but occurs through a process of socialisation and adaptation in the community.

In summary, there was an overall positive perception of school from these junior secondary school students. There was a sense of personal growth indicated by respondents. School was seen as a positive learning environment, a place where interests and talents are nurtured. It was identified as somewhere that networks and friendships are established and employment for the future is prepared.
6.3.2 School subjects

Students at junior secondary school level in Fiji are provided with a curriculum that contains both mainstream academic subjects, as well as TVET subjects. Hence, it may be argued that students at this level are actively exposed to TVET. In reference to the two research questions above, it was necessary to find about the perceptions that students have towards TVET. These perceptions and attitudes are arguably reflected in the choice of subjects they intend to pursue in Form 5 - the senior level. All subjects (including TVET oriented ones) are compulsory for all students until Forms 3 and 4. Survey respondents were all at the junior secondary school level where they choose the subjects that will lead them to the career path of their choice. Question 11 (see Appendix 3) presented items for choice that represented subject combinations or streams. Respondents were asked to identify the stream they intended to take in Form 5. Figure 6.4 below reveals the preferences in percentages for subject streams.

Figure 6.4: Subject Stream Choice for Form 5 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stream</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOCATIONAL TRAINING</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER SUBJECT COMBINATION</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGRICULTURE, HOME EC,…</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY (MIX)</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TECHNOLOGY</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTS</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMERCE</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURE SCIENCE</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=422)
In the context of Fiji’s education curriculum all options in the graph above including some measure of vocational training because it has become part of the mainstream curriculum. However, a distinction still exists in the education system between vocational training and most other streams.

The vocational training stream has subjects such as Carpentry, Automotive, Hospitality and Catering. The four consecutive streams listed after vocational training in the graph above have some TVET components but they are not considered as TVET. These hybrid streams include optional TVET subjects such as Engineering Drawing, Wood Technology, Home Economics, Office Technology and Agriculture. Despite the TVET integration, these streams are classified as academic.

It is clear from the graph above that Pure Science is the most popular choice (30%). This is the pathway to high status careers such as medicine and nursing. Pure Science is the most academically challenging stream. It includes Physics, Chemistry and Biology. Commerce (16%) is the second most popular stream and is associated with high paid jobs in commercial institutions. This stream includes Accounting and Economics as its core subjects. Technology is popular (15.7%) because of its close association with Computer Studies which students find appealing.

A significant revelation is that vocational training was the least popular stream and the most academically challenging stream was the most popular choice,
even though only a small proportion will ever enter it because of the Form 4 examination grades required. The preference ranking of streams above indicates that TVET components may need to be integrated into other streams to gain more appeal. This point is clearly demonstrated by the hybrid streams Technology (15.7%) and Science & Technology (10%). These slightly higher figures suggest that TVET integration appeals more to students’ interests. Students would be more likely to consider hybrid streams that combine traditional academic subjects and TVET subjects, especially if they did not gain entry to Pure Science.

The three main actors who determine the selection of school subjects are the students, the parents and the teachers. It is common knowledge that students are influenced by parents or teachers to pursue certain fields of study (Cavu et al, 2009). Sometimes choices are determined by the students themselves based on their own interests and motivations. The data in the chart above (Figure 6.3) clearly shows lack of interest in vocational training. The next chapter uses qualitative data to show the connection between school subject choice and career prospects of students. It examines how career pathways are decided and the career aspirations of respondents.

6.3.3 Career pathways

Respondents were provided with a list of specific careers and asked to identify their three best choices (see Question 4, Appendix 3). Responses from the survey show that a clear majority of respondents intended to have Professional (44%) and Para-professional (29%) careers in the future. Many may be
oblivious to the fact that many para-professional jobs require technical skills that are taught in TVET subjects. The graph below shows the percentages of respondents and their selected dream jobs.

The overwhelming response in favour of professional and para-professional careers, with a combined total of 72.6% (306/422), is testament to the popularity and appeal of anticipated white-collar jobs. Respondents were asked to choose a second and third dream job in the survey. A clear majority continued to select white collar professions.

**Figure 6.5: Dream Job of Respondents (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dream Job</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para Professional</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades, Technical work</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty trade shopkeeper, casual worker</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled, unskilled paid work</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed, domestic worker, unpaid work</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=422)
Only 0.2% of respondents were interested in Public Servant jobs and only 2.6% were interested in Private Sector jobs. In Fiji these occupational categories are associated with lower level civil servants and officials such as clerical officers, secretaries and typists. Most senior level public service jobs and senior level private sector jobs fall within the categories of professional and para-professional jobs. These included; doctors, nurses, teachers and managers which were the most popular choices.

An interesting absence from the categories above is Agriculture which actually registered no response (0%) at all from the survey. This is concerning because Agriculture contributes about 10% of Fiji’s Gross Domestic Product and directly and indirectly employs thousands of people in urban and rural Fiji (FIBS, 2010).

20% chose jobs that could be categorised as trades and technical occupations. This possibly reflects a changing attitude in society regarding career choices. It implies that young people were gradually becoming aware of the attractive job opportunities available in trades and technical fields. Perhaps public consciousness is growing about the high graduate unemployment in traditional white collar fields.

A follow-up question was Question 6 (see Appendix 3) which probed reasons for career choice. Respondents were offered several possible reasons, as Figure 6.6 below shows.
Responses from the survey show that over half identified financial rewards (good income) as their main motivation for choosing a career. This suggests that respondents who choose careers such as doctors, teachers and managers do so because of the anticipated high wages. This does not necessarily imply that the remaining 49% who did not choose this option have no interest in a good income; rather they may have focused on other features such as personal interest or working with lots of people. The result implies that while a good income may be attractive it is not always the most important career motivation.

The second most popular reason was personal interest, with 42% indicating that was a factor for determining career choice. It makes sense that a student who excels at drawing would pursue a career in architecture, for example. 34% attributed their choice to the influence of parents and relatives. There were also
those who were able to make connections between their school subjects to their chosen careers (27%). Some were already aware of the qualifications needed for their chosen jobs (22%) such as degrees and post graduate qualifications.

Some specified the kind of environment that they would like to work in. This mainly included those who wished to have lots of interaction with the general public, such as public servants, health officials, teachers and those in the hospitality industry (25%). Also significant was the contribution and influence of teachers on the career choice of students (16%). This was obvious because of the daily classroom interactions that teachers have with students. Advice from teachers is very highly regarded by both parents and students.

Supplementary questions regarding career choice were Questions 6b and 6c. These questions asked respondents to identify jobs that they would never consider. A clear majority of 85.4% indicated that they would never want to get low-level technical, casual labour jobs.

Question 5 asked about orientation. It was explained that orientation had to do with personal interests, positions, skills, activities, talents, roles as well as cultural and traditional values. 19% reported a religious orientation which implied that their family and school lives revolved around their religious beliefs and practices. 15% had a traditional orientation which implied that their family lives were traditional and conservative. 12% indicated that they had a leisure orientation which suggested that they had more freedom to venture out and participate in leisure activities. However, 46% indicated that they had no
knowledge of their orientation. As indicated earlier, respondents had difficulty conceptualising the idea of orientation and this researcher faced difficulties trying to explain the concept in English and in the Fijian vernacular.

A follow-up question regarding career direction and choice was Question 7 (see Appendix 3). The question offered a series of self-reflective statements. Respondents were asked to select the most relevant statements that best described them. The statements touched on sensitive subjective areas such as future happiness, success and family support. Figure 6.7 below shows this result.

**Figure 6.7: Reflecting on Career Choice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My future happiness depends on getting my dream job</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My success depends on support from home/ school</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will decide my own future career</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers/ parents will decide my career for me</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My parents know what is best for my future</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing well in high school</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(n=422)
A clear majority of respondents (81%) indicated that their success in the future depended on school success. This preference is supported by anecdotal evidence from family members, relatives and neighbours about life success stories due to education. In Fiji, there are many tales of children from rural villages or from poor families who have become successful professionals and government leaders through educational success. These life stories provide hope for many students from poor backgrounds in Fiji. Responses indicated that students know if they work hard enough they can shape/determine their own futures (65%). Some indicated that their happiness depended upon getting their dream job (49%).

Many acknowledged the support from families and teachers as crucial for success in the future (46%). Almost a quarter of students (24%) indicated that parents know what is best for them in the future. This suggested the continued reliance of students on their parents and teachers for career guidance and advice.

Question 8 of the survey offered an opportunity to consider a career backup plan. Respondents were asked what they would do if they did not get their dream job. They were asked to make one choice from the list of options.

The graph below (Figure 6.8) shows the results.
The most popular action (33%) was to look for another job that matches their qualifications. This perhaps implies reluctance to venture outside of their comfort zones or fields they were familiar with. They might not consider improving their qualifications but would continue searching for a suitable job. This might point to lack of awareness about opportunities and avenues to improve one’s qualifications in Fiji. Perhaps they would not consider an alternative employable qualification such as TVET. This implies lack of awareness of opportunities for obtaining employable skills in Fiji.

About 21% of respondents indicated that they would join the British Army if they failed to get their dream jobs. Fiji has over 3000 of its youth (majority male and
minority female) recruited into the British Army and stationed in conflict zones around the world. However, this recruitment drive stopped when Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth in 2009. A popular choice now is joining the Fiji Army because of the military government that is currently in power in Fiji. Many senior public servant positions are occupied by senior military officers. This has made military service more attractive because of the career pathways available for its officers.

While 12.5% indicated, perhaps rather idealistically, that they would use their talents in sports, art and music to earn a living, slightly fewer (12.3%) indicated pragmatically that they would return to school and pursue vocational training. This small percentage shows that there is at least some recognition about TVET and this is something that could be built upon. Smaller numbers indicated that they would return to their villages or make use of natural resources, while 14.7% admitted that they had no idea what they would do. This data suggests they find it hard to imagine not getting a job that suits them and are reasonably optimistic about finding one.

On Question 9 a clear majority of 79.5% indicated they would blame themselves for not achieving their dream jobs. This suggests that students were mature enough to recognize their own responsibilities and efforts. They acknowledged that their success or failure depended upon their own efforts. Yet as we have seen earlier, many indicated still rely on their parents and teachers to guide their decisions.
6.4 Students’ Perceptions of TVET

This section addresses the perceptions and attitudes of junior secondary students towards TVET. It is arranged under four headings:

- Awareness of TVET
- Perception of TVET
- Interest in TVET
- Social influences

In general TVET seemed to be a hazy concept for the junior secondary school students. During the fieldwork, students often had to think hard to come up with a response to the question of what TVET is about. The survey was designed to elicit responses through questions that guided respondents carefully.

6.4.1 Awareness of TVET

The 422 junior secondary school students were asked about their awareness and knowledge of TVET (see Question 10, Appendix 3). The question provided ten possible responses. Respondents were asked to select all options that they deemed reflective of their state of awareness. An advantage of this question type (as discussed previously) is that all respondents were able to respond to at least one option. The ten options provided in Question 10 are divided into four main categories as shown in the table below. These categories reflect graduated levels of awareness about TVET.
Table 6.3: Categories of Responses to Question 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION 10: What do you know about TVET?</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10i I have no idea</td>
<td>Responses which indicate little or no knowledge / awareness of TVET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10ii I have heard about it but don’t really know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10iii It is part of secondary school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10iv It is an alternative to mainstream classes</td>
<td>Responses which indicate awareness of a place of TVET in the Fiji school system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10v It is a continuation of secondary education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10vi It is only for academically weaker students</td>
<td>Responses which indicate awareness but with stereotypical view of TVET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10vii It is for students who can’t get into University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10viii It is for those who want manual labour jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10ix Skills training for a job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10x It provides more relevant job training</td>
<td>Responses with the highest level of awareness about TVET, taking TVET beyond school and into training and employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first category (10i-10ii) indicates a general lack of awareness about TVET. The second category (10iii-10v) reflects those who are able to relate TVET to the school system and who are able to identify the place of TVET in education. The third category (10vi-10vii) represents some stereotypical responses about
TVET in Fiji. The final category represents the highest level of awareness about TVET, where TVET is linked to training and employment.

The survey design, as explained earlier, eliminated the use of a Likert Scale because it seemed such scales are difficult for junior secondary school students in Fiji to understand and respond to. Therefore, the response-option design adopted in this study was intended to elicit willing engagement by respondents. The results show that this design was effective in that Question 10 was well-answered. The graph below shows a visual representation of responses. It is calculated by tallying the total response for each option (10i-10x) against the 422 respondents.

Figure 6.9: Awareness and Knowledge of TVET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have no idea</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have heard about it but don’t really know</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training for a job</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is part of secondary school</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is for those who want manual labor jobs</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is an alternative to mainstream classes</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is for students who can’t get into University</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a continuation of secondary education</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is only for academically weaker students</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is for those who want manual labor jobs</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It provides more relevant job training</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The graph shows almost half indicated that they had little or no knowledge of TVET. The percentage was calculated from the number of those who said that they had no idea what TVET was (n=91, 21.6%) and those who had heard about TVET but do not really know what it was (n=176, 41.7%). This is an important finding because it demonstrates lack of awareness about TVET in schools and in the community. As a former school teacher in Fiji, this researcher finds it puzzling that such a large percentage of students at junior secondary school imply little or no knowledge of TVET. TVET subjects are compulsory in the current junior school curriculum. This finding illustrates the timeliness of this investigation.

Respondents were asked to choose more than one option. There was a total of 770 responses. The data shows that the 422 respondents made an average of 1.82 responses. This suggests that those who claimed to have no knowledge of TVET (n=91, 21.6%) actually chose other options as well. This finding infers that they were not really clear in what they thought about TVET.
Table 6.4: Responses to Question 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION 10: What do you know about TVET?</th>
<th>Frequency (n = 770)</th>
<th>Percentage (out of n=422)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10i I have no idea</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10ii I have heard about it but don’t really know</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10iii It is part of secondary school</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10iv It is an alternative to mainstream classes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10v It is a continuation of secondary education</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10vi It is only for academically weaker students</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10vii It is for students who can’t get into university</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10viii It is for those who want manual labour jobs</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10ix Skills training for a job</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10x It provides more relevant job training</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the frequency of option selection it seems their awareness was firmest about the following:

- I have heard about TVET
- It is part of secondary school
- It involves skills training

The fact that for the majority their knowledge is partial and perhaps not very secure became obvious when the option I have no idea, was cross-tabulated.
with the remaining nine options (see Table 6.5 below). The data revealed that most of the n=91 respondents actually did know more about TVET than their selection of 10i initially indicated.

A logical deduction is that they ticked option 10i if they did not recognise what TVET was at first. But things changed when they read the remaining nine options. They actually recognised some of the other options and ticked them as well. Out of 91 respondents who ticked 10i, a clear majority (n=82, 90%) indicated through selecting other options that they knew more than they originally indicated. This means that the design of the question and the listing of the options enabled them to recollect things they knew about of TVET.

The table below (6.5) shows the cross-tabulated responses when Q10i is matched against options 10ii – 10x.
Table 6.5: Cross-tabulated Responses against Question 10i

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION 10i Cross-Tabulated against 10ii - 10x</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage out of 91</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10ii. I have heard about it but don’t really know</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10iii. It is part of secondary school</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10iv. It is an alternative to mainstream classes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10v. It is a continuation of secondary education</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10vi. It is only for academically weaker students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10vii. It is for students who can’t get into University</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10viii. It is for those who want manual labour jobs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10ix. Skills training for a job</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10x. It provides more relevant job training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In fact 14 students were able to identify TVET with skills training for a job, while 16 agreed it was part of secondary school. 18 showed some recognition by acknowledging they had heard about TVET. These findings concur with those derived from Table 6.4 above.

The design of the survey is crucial in these findings. If Question 10 had adopted a different response type such as a Likert Scale or open-ended question, these kinds of responses would most likely not have been elicited. From the above revelation, a full cross-tabulation of all Question 10 responses was conducted and some interesting trends emerged. The table below illustrates this.
Table 6.6: Cross-tabulated Responses for all Question 10 options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-tabulated Question 10 responses</th>
<th>10 i</th>
<th>10 ii</th>
<th>10 iii</th>
<th>10 iv</th>
<th>10 v</th>
<th>10 vi</th>
<th>10 vii</th>
<th>10 viii</th>
<th>10 ix</th>
<th>10 x</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10i I have no idea</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10ii I have heard about it but don’t really know</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10iii It is part of secondary school</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10iv It is an alternative to mainstream classes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10v It is a continuation of secondary education</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10vi It is only for academically weaker students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10vii It is for students who can't get into University</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10viii It is for those who want manual labour jobs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10ix Skills training for a job</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10x It provides more relevant job training</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above illustrates that students were able to relate different aspects of TVET. Highlighted above are Options 10ii and 10iii because they appear to have higher cross-tabulated choices. It is interesting to note that students who initially indicated a slight awareness about TVET were able to relate it to secondary education (n=50), skills training for jobs (n=39) and manual labour jobs (n=24). Respondents who identified TVET as part of secondary education were also able to relate TVET with skills training (n=42) and continuing secondary education (n=25).

### 6.4.2 Perceptions of TVET

The interpretation from the Table 6.6 above is that respondents had mixed perceptions about TVET. There are clear examples of this from the data presented in previous sections. Almost a quarter of respondents who acknowledged TVET were able to identify TVET with *skills training for jobs* (24.2%). 81% of those who answered this way had fathers who worked in technical, manual labour jobs. This suggests that choices made reflected familiar circumstances.

A minority identified TVET with *more relevant job training* (14.7%), perhaps implying fields such as hospitality, construction and agriculture. A further minority perception was that TVET is the continuation of secondary education (11.1%). Certainly post-secondary TVET courses is where one can get a certificate or diploma. An even smaller minority identified TVET as the *alternative to mainstream classes* (10.4%), perhaps implying it is there for those who fail national examinations in secondary school.
Further to this trend in perceptions, there was a small percentage who classified TVET as a stream suitable for academically weaker students (9.7%). Another negative minority perception was that TVET was for those who could not make it into university (9.7%). This provides some confirmation of the idea that TVET is considered unattractive and second-class education by a sizeable proportion of the Fiji population. These are the negative perceptions of TVET that respondents have articulated. The fact is that those who are failing in school are often encouraged to take vocational courses.

Accordingly, TVET is seen as second-rate alternative education taken up by school failures and academically weaker students. These are the historical precedents that students know about in their school years. TVET or vocational studies have been closely associated with blue-collar, labour-intensive, low-paid work.

The views expressed by respondents are not really mis-perceptions but understandings based on their lived experiences with adults in their communities. Some of these adults who could have come through TVET training into blue-collar work are their parents, relatives and neighbours. As shown in Figure 6.5 above just under a quarter of respondents, (24.6%) expressed an interest in TVET-oriented jobs.
6.4.3 Influences

Question 13 provided a scale for measuring how much students were likely to be influenced by key figures in their communities. These were: teachers, pastor, parents, chief, peers, movie stars, government leaders and God. Each of these figures represented compartments of a student’s life echoing Bronfenbrenner’s concept of microsystems (1979).

Teachers represented education, parents represented familial relations while the chief (traditional leader) represented one’s customary/traditional ties. Peers, on the other hand represented friends and companions. Movie and sports stars represented goals, ambitions, fascinations, hobbies and other interests. The pastor represented moral and religious values while God represented a divine entity.

Respondents were asked how much they were influenced by these sources. It was decided to use a Likert scale since the evaluation was one of time/strength of influence, not agreement or disagreement. Possible responses were Never, Occasionally, Sometimes, Most Times and Always. Calculations were made by allocating a numerical value to these options. Never had 1 as its value while Always had 5 (see Appendix 3).

The chart below represents the levels of influence for each source. The average scores beside each of the bars show the comparative influence that each source has.
It can be concluded that God (4.59) has a lot of influence in the lives of respondents. This is followed by parents (4.43) and teachers (4.04).

The data in the chart above reaffirms the cultural values of families in Fiji, both Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian. Religion and belief in God(s) play a central role in family and community life. Pastors or priests (4.02) are the agents that deliver religious teachings and are highly regarded in the community. According to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (2007) Fiji’s population is predominantly Christian (64.4%). This is followed by Hinduism (27.9%) and Islam (6%). Religion is so important in Fiji that key religious holidays are celebrated as public holidays such as *Eid* for Muslims, *Diwali* for Hindus and *Easter* for Christians.
represents faith, power, good morals and values. God is the entity that people look to for answers, for salvation and for protection. Many schools in Fiji have morning devotion and prayer as part of the daily school programme. God and religion have very strong attachments to school culture and values.

Parents ranked second with 4.43. Parents in Fiji have a lot of influence in the lives of children and this has a strong religious base. In Christianity, for instance, children are taught to respect and obey their parents. The strong influence of parents has to do with the enormous responsibility they play in the lives of children. From infancy parents are the source of comfort, protection and sustenance. Parents are the first faces of human socialisation and interaction that infants experience. This establishes and strengthens the bond and trust between parents and their children. In Fiji, the influence of parents usually extends beyond school years and into adulthood. They also make decisions about the education, career and marriage of their children.

Teachers are third in the ranking of influence with 4.04. This indicates that teachers also have a lot of influence in the lives of students. Teachers spend a lot of contact hours during school days with students. The bond that exists between parents and their children is replicated in school. Teachers provide sustenance for the cognitive, psychomotor and psychological development of children. They are responsible for the transfer of knowledge, values and character expected and prescribed by society. The bond between teachers and students also strengthens over time. Students learn to trust their teachers because they are the source of knowledge and skills. Teachers have a great
responsibility for shaping and moulding their students to become productive members of society.

An interesting point from the chart above is that Government leaders were least ranked with 2.79. The finding implies the low level of trust that people in Fiji have in their government leaders. It may be argued that students get their knowledge about government leaders from their exposure to the media and from commentaries of adults in their communities. As indicated in Chapter One the current government is an unelected government formed after the military coup in December 2006. Perhaps this is a factor in the response shown by respondents. On the other hand, people in Fiji may just be as suspicious about their government leaders as people in other countries of the world.

Peers (2.85) have a comparatively low ranking because the option points to the casual aspect of teenage life in school and the community. Peers in this sense refer to people of the same age group, school mates and friends. At junior secondary school level, peers do not seem to be regarded as trustworthy or believable compared to other sources perhaps because of the competition that exists among peers. This is often expressed in sports, exams and banter during recess time.

Movie and sports stars (3.07) had comparatively better rankings of trust than government leaders, perhaps because they represent special interests of students. These famous people possess qualities that are admired by young
people. For this reason many of these famous people become role models and are sources of motivation and inspiration.

In summary, God, religious leaders, parents and teachers were identified as the most trustworthy groups in terms of influence. This means that effective TVET awareness could be achieved if human sources of influence were targeted for TVET education and awareness. It also implies that religious leaders might be able to take a key role in changing attitudes.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings relevant to two of the research questions in this study:

i What are the perceptions and attitudes about TVET at junior secondary school level?

ii What factors contribute to the construction and formulation of these perceptions and attitudes?

Findings from the quantitative data show that perceptions and attitudes towards TVET are generally not favourable. The students were interested in professional and para-professional careers such as teaching, medicine and business management. The majority did not prefer TVET because it was associated with low income, low status, manual labour jobs. Key influential figures in the lives of students were parents, teachers and religious leaders. These sources play
significant roles in shaping and moulding perceptions, interests and attitudes of young people in a country where belief in God (or Gods) is strong.

This chapter also provided descriptive analyses of the family background of respondents. Family and cultural backgrounds are important because they strongly influence life choices of students such as education and career aspirations. The results in this chapter set the platform for exploring attitudes to TVET in Fiji in more depth through qualitative analyses in subsequent chapters.

The next chapter explores stakeholder perceptions about the capacity of TVET to facilitate and sustain economic growth in Fiji.
Chapter Seven: Stakeholder Perceptions about the Capacity of TVET to Facilitate and Sustain Economic Growth in Fiji

7.1 Introduction

This chapter uses interview data to look at stakeholder perceptions about whether TVET can be the trigger for sustained economic growth in Fiji. All of the stakeholders who are quoted in this chapter play an important role in the process of TVET education. They all held important positions in the Fijian education system. These included the Minister for Education, senior education officials and principals, teachers and students. Their accounts focus on two main topics: economic growth and educational reform.

7.1.1 Background

The following statement from the Bonn Declaration sets the scene for this chapter:

Since education is considered the key to effective development strategies, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) must be the master key that can alleviate poverty, promote peace, conserve the environment, improve the quality of life for all and help achieve sustainable development (UNESCO, 2004a, researcher emphasis).
In other words, the United Nations considers TVET important for small nation states like Fiji. Economic growth and social/political stability are symbiotic. In Fiji, economic growth depends largely on social/political stability. Conversely, stability is achieved and sustained through growth of key economic indicators. Employment and job creation are two indicators in the promotion of economic growth. Small island states like Fiji struggle to create enough jobs to cater for secondary school leavers and graduates from tertiary institutions. Fiji’s Millennium Development Goal Report released in 2010 revealed the increasing poverty in the country. Poverty is widely acknowledged as a catalyst for instability because it breeds discontentment, crime and violence. Fiji has had four military coups since 1987. Public discontentment on economic issues such as unemployment, poverty and high cost of living were used as justification for overthrowing governments. The 2010 MDG Report on Fiji explains that poverty exists because of unemployment.

Existing literature (see Chapter 3) suggests that TVET has the capacity to fill this void by providing jobs that are of high demand in Fiji. Tourism, manufacturing, construction and agriculture are examples of strategic fields. Another key economic factor for stability is investment. Fiji needs to attract investment by providing the necessary structures that would ensure viability and profitability. From the existing literature, we know that TVET can lead the way by producing trained workers for a variety for key industries. Employers are aware that performance, productivity and profit are determined by the availability of adequately trained personnel. At the moment in Fiji many technical areas lack relevantly qualified workers. However, it is imperative that people are made aware of this.
White collar employment in Fiji is limited. In 2009, the Fiji Government reduced the retirement age of the civil service from 60 to 55. In addition, it has repeatedly emphasised in the Fiji media its intention to reduce the civil service by 50%. These are indicators that popular white collar careers in government are scarce and becoming rarer. What are the logical alternatives for young people in Fiji? The reality is that career opportunities are available for young people in Fiji through TVET. The challenge however, is how to convince people that TVET can improve their lives.

7.1.2 Structure of this chapter

This chapter initiates discussion of the first theme that emerged from analysis of the qualitative data:

- Stakeholder perception of the capacity of TVET to facilitate and sustain economic growth in Fiji.

There was a broad consensus among all informants on the general value of TVET for the development of Fiji. There was no doubt that TVET has wide support in principle. This chapter has two main parts. The first showcases the wide support and acknowledgement for TVET as the key to Fiji’s economic growth. The second looks at the significant reforms and innovations in education that are facilitating TVET integration in schools, the community and national workforce.
7.2 Acknowledging TVET as a Key to Economic Growth

The major economic challenges facing Fiji were discussed in detail in earlier chapters. The challenges are complex because of the myriad of external and internal factors that dictate and affect the functions of local industries and enterprises. Four key factors are listed below.

7.2.1 Factors affecting enterprises in Fiji

i. Political instability
ii. Collapse of the sugar industry and booming tourism
iii. Out-migration of skilled labour
iv. Unemployment and poverty

With reference to these factors, there was widespread agreement about the important role of TVET in enabling Fiji to meet its socio-economic challenges through increasing the human capital value of entrants to the skilled labour market. It can be argued that if Fiji does succeed in meeting current socio-economic challenges, it should be able to achieve its Millennium Development Goals. However, the current national status as revealed in the 2010 MDG Report is concerning. The United Nations Resident Representative, Knut Otsby said that Fiji was highly unlikely to meet three of its eight MDGs by 2015. The three goals he was referring to were: eradication of poverty and hunger, the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and the improvement of maternal health (Panapasa, 2010). His reason for Fiji’s predicted failure to achieve the first goal - the eradication of poverty, was
primarily due to the continuing upward trend in poverty. He explained that the Fiji Government had introduced various forms of assistance for the destitute and the elderly. However, these were not effective in containing and eradicating poverty in the country. The report reiterated the need for Fiji to create employment and to attract more investment. This explanation is important for this research because it reaffirms the argument for TVET.

### 7.2.2 Different stakeholders – summary of views

In the interviews, stakeholders were asked to comment on the relationship between TVET and national development. All eight senior government officials as listed in Appendix 16, including Minister for Education Filipe Bole, identified TVET as having the potential to help relieve Fiji’s socio-economic problems. Moreover, more than two-thirds (67%) of all non-student participants in this study, a clear majority, concurred that TVET can provide solutions to economic problems, alleviate poverty and produce skilled workers for industries such as construction, agriculture and tourism. The remainder of non-student participants (33%) had other ideas and views. These included negative perceptions towards TVET; which will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Student participants, however, did not give comments that linked TVET to Fiji’s socio-economic future. It is probable that this is because of their lack of experience. They have limited awareness and knowledge about work, economic conditions and the future. Many were still trying to grasp what TVET was all about and were ignorant of its potential. It was apparent during interviews and discussions with students that many could not fathom or comprehend TVET’s
role and contribution to Fiji’s socio-economic development. However, non-student participants and senior officials were unanimous in their optimism regarding TVET.

7.2.3 An NGO perspective

Emily Hazelman, the Coordinator for PATVAT (Pacific Association of TVET) asserted that TVET is necessary in the South Pacific region because of the youthful population in Pacific island countries. She stated that ‘many Pacific island countries face the challenge of a bulging youth population, mostly unemployed, alienated and ill-prepared for productive employment’ (Hazelman, Suva, June 2009). By this she is referring to the high youth population in countries such as Fiji (31%), Vanuatu (34%), PNG (39%) and the Solomon Islands (42%). These high rates of youth unemployment were highlighted in the Pacific 2020 report (AUSAID, 2006). This report emphasised the strong connection between youth unemployment, and anti-social behaviour such as vandalism, theft, assault, drunk and disorderly behaviour. The general cycle of poverty also stems from unemployment and a sense of hopelessness.

Hazelman argued that in the Pacific there has been an increase of older students staying on at school because there was no work for them. They had to study academic curricula with little relevance to their environment and situation. This was especially marked for those who live in remote rural communities and islands. In short, school was not offering a productive or positive experience to such youth. She maintained young people were missing out on relevant education in the sense that curricula are mainly exam oriented and there is little
emphasis on skills training. Yet it is exactly the latter that is desperately needed to boost the employability of young people who are not academically-oriented.

Hazelman added that the reality in many Pacific islands is that the education system continues to produce students who are ill-prepared for available jobs in industries such as construction, manufacturing, agriculture and hospitality—primarily because students in secondary schools are explicitly trained for work in white collar professions. Yet many fail the exams, and there are few such jobs available locally. This mismatch between white collar education and the reality of local job opportunities was explored earlier in research by a team from FIT that included Hazelman (see Nilan et al., 2006; Cavu et al., 2009; Nilan et al., 2009).

In her new position as PATVET co-ordinator in 2009, Hazelman reflected on the difficulty of convincing parents and students of the value of TVET, when the tradition is towards white collar work aspirations. She stated, ‘a challenge for TVET and TVET advocates is how to convince people about TVET’. She argued that the best way forward for TVET is for governments to acknowledge the value of TVET, to be proactive in terms of TVET promotion and also to facilitate curricular changes that endorse TVET subjects. In terms of the theme of this chapter, Hazelman’s comments indicate the common perception among senior stakeholders that the government should initiate and facilitate changes in curriculum and give information to communities in order to alter people’s attitudes at community and village levels. In short, the implementation of TVET
to achieve economic growth and sustainability requires the concerted effort of the government.

7.2.4 The unemployment, poverty, crime cycle

A keen advocate and supporter of TVET is Paula Cavu, the former Director of the Ministry of Youth and currently a lecturer at Fiji National University. He asserted that TVET was Fiji’s only hope of solving the unemployment crisis. Cavu emphasized that TVET needed the concerted effort of major stakeholders if it was to succeed. He reiterated the argument that TVET has the potential to empower people with employable skills. This is especially in light of the high rate of educated unemployed produced by Fiji’s education system (Cavu et al., 2006). Cavu argued that ‘unemployment in Fiji is a crisis and is followed closely by poverty and crime’. He added that ‘these three are linked and if we solve one of them we may cut this link’ (Cavu, Suva, January 2010). Cavu echoed the views of Hazelman (2009) in maintaining that solving issues such as poverty and crime cannot be done in isolation without recognising and acknowledging the root source of the problem. While there are many known contributing factors to crime and poverty, there is none as direct and visible as unemployment.

Unemployment is a serious issue in Fiji. The unemployment rate rose further when the compulsory civil service retirement age was reduced to 55 in April 2009. There was false optimism that this compulsory retirement policy would provide employment opportunities to thousands of school leavers. This was not the case. The Public Service Commission subsequently announced the government’s intention to reduce overall civil servant numbers by 50% (Fiji
Government, 2009), thus reducing the number of vacancies. This is cause for concern because Fiji’s school system still produces 16,000 school leavers each year, while only 8,000 can be absorbed into tertiary education or employment (Fiji Government, 2008). The remaining 8,000 are left to fend for themselves. They lack the skills base to apply for technical positions.

As seen from results of the Fiji Institute of Technology Training Needs Assessment conducted in 60 villages in 2005, many students who had passed their secondary examination were left to loiter in towns and villages without employable skills (Cavu et al., 2006). Crime and poverty have devastated many lives in Fiji. Poverty has a residual effect in that it may last for two or more generations. If parents are living in poverty then there is a likelihood that their children and grandchildren will remain in such a condition.

Unemployed high school graduates are not unemployed by choice but because the system has failed them. They were ill-prepared by the schooling system for life in the real world. Unable to find a job, many return disappointed to their villages with little to do. For example, there is anecdotal evidence from community interviews with youth who had passed well in subjects like Biology, English and Geography that they had no knowledge of how to farm cassava and taro – two staple foods in Fiji. Parents and community elders have often questioned the relevance of academic school subjects for sustenance and survival in the community.
7.2.5 A view from the Department of Youth in Northern Fiji

The Northern Division is one of the four major divisions of Fiji. It covers the northern islands of Vuna Levu and Taveuni. It has a population of over 130,000 (about 16% of Fiji’s total population). The District Youth Officer for Northern Fiji, Emel Navunicagi, acknowledged that TVET had the potential to improve Fiji’s economic situation. While explaining the unemployment situation in the Northern Division, Navunicagi dwelt on two significant issues: employment and training. She echoed the arguments of Hazelman and Cavu that education and training needed to be ‘tailor-made to suit the current economic conditions’ (Navunicagi, Labasa, March 2009). She is referring here to the need for relevance in education and training at both secondary and tertiary levels. Navunicagi said that in her division they ‘have lots of youths who have passed Form 6 and even Form 7 [examinations] but are back in the village’. She added that ‘some [youth] said that they had applied for further training at tertiary institutions like USP, FSN, FCAE and LTC but because they were unsuccessful they had gone back to the village, and have basically lost hope’ (Navunicagi, Labasa, March 2009).

She was echoing the argument by Cavu that the system has failed to adequately prepare young people for the world of work. She is also referring here to educational wastage. For parents this is lost investment. Navunicagi admitted that in her position as Director of Youth, she was aware that some unemployed young people had resorted to criminal activities for their survival. These included prostitution, drug dealing and theft.
This point is relevant since it reiterates the connection between training and employment. Issues that have been brought up by Navunicagi such as crime, poverty and education cannot be discussed in isolation. As Cavu had previously explained, these issues are connected. Fiji’s 2010 MDG Report has already established a strong link between poverty and unemployment. The challenge though, as Cavu had indicated, is how to break this link.

The role of TVET in stimulating economic growth is a visible reality in Fiji. It is common knowledge in Fiji that youths with TVET qualifications as basic as just a Trade Certificate have been able to find employment because of booming industries such as hospitality and construction. University graduates on the other hand have been known to face long term difficulties finding suitable employment in Fiji. This is because of the annual influx of graduates in fields such as humanities, arts, law and sciences into the professional labour market which has few vacancies. The reality is that many of these graduates hoped to be absorbed into white collar professions such as teaching or other branches of the civil service. However, with the reduction of civil servant numbers, this is difficult. Cavu asserted that ‘it’s about time that people recognise and embrace TVET and the employment opportunities it provides’ (Cavu, Suva, January 2010).

It is crucial to recognize that at the end of the day, the primary concern for people at the grass-roots level is income generation and the ability to provide for one’s family. TVET is recognized to empower individuals with employable skills as well as entrepreneurial skills. Interviews revealed numerous success
stories of people who have made worthy contributions to their families, villages and communities through TVET programmes. However, TVET still suffers from a bad reputation. It is still regarded as a second rate programme suitable only for less academically oriented students (Sharma & Naisele, 2008). In addition, it is perceived that TVET graduates receive less pay than those who graduate from academic streams (Sharma, 2000). This is debatable because many TVET graduates in Fiji with Trade Certificate qualifications have found well-paid jobs locally or overseas.

For unemployed youth and school dropouts, there is hope yet. Navunicagi pointed out that ‘many youth have been able to contribute positively to their villages and settlements by learning new skills’ (Navunicagi, Labasa, March 2009). Navunicagi is specifically referring to initiatives such as the National Youth Service Scheme, the Fiji Institute of Technology bridging courses and the Tutu Agriculture Training. These are three successful initiatives in her division that enabled unemployed youths of all educational backgrounds to achieve employable or entrepreneurial skills. The FIT bridging courses are the same as the franchise courses that will be discussed later in this chapter.

The National Youth Service Scheme is a new initiative that provides basic life skills similar to the FIT franchise programme. The Tutu Agriculture programme is concentrated on farming of key cash crops such as taro and kava. Students from the Tutu programme are trained to become full-time farmers and entrepreneurs. Additional skills they learn in the programme included budgeting, time management and farm management. Anecdotal evidence from this study
reveals that many youth from the three programmes mentioned above have succeeded in turning their lives around and becoming productive members of their communities.

Navunicagi pointed out that ‘we [Department of Youth] are now part of the Ministry of Education and they rely on our training centres to deliver TVET training in rural areas’. This seems to be a productive consolidation by the government. The Department of Youth used to be a separate ministry but they were absorbed into the Ministry of Education in 2009. An advantage now is that TVET programmes and short training [non formal] course are strengthened. There is also a better utilisation of training centres and trainers in the delivery of TVET courses throughout Fiji. However, Navunicagi admitted that despite the availability of the programmes, there was still little awareness in surrounding villages and settlements regarding the programmes and their benefits. Once again, negative perceptions persist towards TVET programmes. Yet overall, Navunicagi concurs with Hazelman and Cavu that TVET will be the catalyst of Fiji’s economic growth in the near future, and a means of sustaining civil society through the alleviation of poverty.

7.2.6 Views from the secondary sector

Further support for the capacity of TVET to facilitate and sustain economic growth and civil society in Fiji was provided by the Principal of Lami High School Vilikesa Saumaka. Like many others interviewed he asserted that TVET would provide more employment opportunities for Fiji’s youth. Saumaka expressed that ‘a country like Fiji needs more people to pursue TVET because it has more
employment opportunities’. He added, ‘I would rather see students join TVET than dropping out early or staying at home’ (Saumaka, Suva, January 2010). Speaking from his experience as principal of an urban secondary school, Saumaka has witnessed numerous incidences of students who completed secondary education but were unsuccessful in finding places at tertiary institutions or suitable employment. The issue is quite sensitive for Saumaka because it affects the school community he leads. Lami High School is located near Lami Village, about three kilometres from the capital – Suva City. The school caters for students from nearby villages, settlements and squatter areas. Its student population is predominantly Indigenous Fijian with a handful of mixed race students. Lami High School is a committee-managed school. The principal admitted at the beginning of the interview that a majority of his students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Many parents struggle to provide the basic needs for their children. These same parents often faced difficulties with payment of school fees. It was for that reason that Saumaka pointed parents and students to the direction of TVET especially for less academically-oriented students. There was a higher chance of getting employed.

Saumaka explained that in his capacity as principal he had tried to persuade parents and students to pursue TVET programmes and careers. However, many were adamant and refused. Students were determined to pursue high status white-collar professions such as teaching, nursing, finance, law and so forth. He concluded that ‘at the end of the day people make decisions about their own future. Parents and students make their own choices but many do so without proper awareness and information about the future’ (Saumaka, Suva,
January 2010). Saumaka believes that if parents and students were more aware of the opportunities provided through TVET, they would make better-informed decisions.

Support for TVET and its capacity to sustain Fiji’s economic growth also came from Kaliote Mckenzie, Principal of All Saints Secondary School and Marika Uluinaceva, Principal of Nabua Secondary School. In both interviews these principals concurred that TVET was the way forward for Fiji. This was in reference to solving the high unemployment of school leavers in Fiji and improving Fiji’s economic activities. Both principals echoed the views of Saumaka that parents needed more awareness and education about TVET to be able to give good career advice to their children. Both their case study schools share a number of common features: they are run by conservative committees, students come from mostly lower working class families and both schools have medium to lower level academic attainment histories. However in terms of racial breakdown, All Saints Secondary School has a multiracial constitution of teachers and students. Nabua Secondary School has predominantly Indigenous Fijian students.

Uluinaceva (Suva, May 2009) pointed out that Nabua Secondary School was a FIT-TVET franchise school. He further emphasised that his school was the first school in Fiji to facilitate the *Matua* Programme for mature learners (see Chapter 2). This programme offered a second chance to school dropouts, adults and virtually anyone who had not completed their secondary education. Uluinaceva added that it was an achievement that the school was proud of.
McKenzie, on the other hand commented that her school was keen to be a FIT-TVET franchise school. She explained that the school had already applied for the programme and was awaiting approval from the Ministry of Education.

Franchising is a clear indicator that school administrators acknowledge the value of TVET for the future. In summary all three principals interviewed above attest to the credibility and capacity of TVET to sustain economic growth for Fiji.

7.2.7 A view from the public TVET sector

A complementary perspective was added by the former director of the Fiji Institute of Technology Kolinio Meo. He explained that ‘labour market capacity has always been a problem mainly due to skills labour attrition or brain drain’ (Meo, Suva, May 2009, see Appendix 17: Photo 5). Out-migration of skilled workers is a major problem for Fiji and amounts to a steady ‘brain-drain’. Since 1986 over 2000 people have migrated each year, rising to over 6000 in 2001 (Fiji National Planning Office, 2006). Since the beginning of military rule the pace of out-migration has further increased.

Sharp increases in migration have been noted in the months immediately after each military coup. This indicates that political instability has been a key cause of out-migration from Fiji. However, there are many other reasons for migration. It is common knowledge in Fiji that people migrate for better employment opportunities, better education for their children and for higher quality of life (Voigt-Graf, 2003). An example is that this researcher has many relatives now residing in Australia and New Zealand because of better career opportunities. It
is an unfortunate situation for Fiji’s economy that skilled workers from all fields have left Fiji: academics, medical professionals, teachers and an assortment of tradespeople. The irony is that the majority of these people were trained and educated in Fiji, only for their skills to be lost. Developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the United States gain the benefit. The point raised by Meo is quite relevant to this theme in the sense that out-migration of workers or ‘brain drain’ seriously jeopardises productivity and dampens economic activity and growth. Meo is implying that it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to work concertedly to find immediate solutions to this problem. He points the way towards TVET as the key to recouping lost skills.

7.2.8 Identifying the training gaps
Meo may be considered a visionary for his bold approach in using TVET to bring skills training to rural communities. Meo explained that while he was Director of FIT, he commissioned a Training Needs Analysis in 2005, which was conducted in 60 villages throughout Fiji (see Appendix 17: Photo 3). The results of this analysis were used for planning and implementation of new TVET programmes and community-based initiatives.

One such initiative was the Community Non-formal Training initiative which made use of TVET franchise centres and facilities in rural schools. These centres were used for community up-skilling. People from surrounding villages and settlements were invited to participate in the short course they were interested in (see Appendix 17: Photo 4). The training needs analyses (TNA) identified and confirmed the most relevant short courses chosen by villagers
and these courses were brought to the local training centres by qualified staff from the institute.

Meo argued that this initiative was ground-breaking because it brought relevant TVET training directly to the community for the first time. Short courses included carpentry, plumbing, outboard engine repair, welding, cooking, tailoring, flower arrangement and many more. He added that the difference between this approach and the approach conducted by government departments such as the Ministry of Women and the Ministry of Rural Development was that rural inhabitants chose the courses relevant to them, instead of having the courses chosen for them.

This example illustrates the potential of TVET to empower community members with skills necessary for their own development and improvement of standards of living. It also demonstrates the operation of TVET at the grassroots level. This non-formal training initiative in the community became a conduit for exposing the practicality and establishing the credibility of TVET. It also became a strategic first step to creating awareness in the community.

7.2.9 TVET is vitally important for economic growth

In summary, all of the stakeholders considered so far share the view that TVET is crucial for economic growth. The comments of some key stakeholders imply that families need to make well-informed decisions about the future participation of young people in the workforce if they are to improve their standards of living. Effective public awareness and counselling would enable parents and students
to make wise decisions about the future. TVET has been widely acknowledged as the key to economic growth for Fiji. Yet given the community bias, the question remains as to whether even committed key stakeholders can provide the platform and the mechanisms for TVET to produce the desired result. It is time to give consideration to existing TVET reforms in the Fijian education sector.

7.3 Paving the Way for TVET through Educational Reforms

There was general consensus among interviewees (listed in Appendix 16) that educational reform was necessary for TVET to shift from the periphery of the educational spectrum to its rightful place at the centre. Academics such as Associate Professor Akhilanand Sharma from the University of the South Pacific; Paula Cavu, Laisa Mailekai and Seveci Naisilisili from Fiji National University and Jone Usamate from Fiji Training Productivity Authority of Fiji concurred that educational reform was essential for TVET to get adequate coverage, leverage and status in Fiji.

7.3.1 Linking Fiji’s education system and employment

Interview participants were asked to comment on the link between Fiji’s education system and employment. The overwhelming response was that the existing link was not good. In his interview Associate Professor Akhilanand Sharma of the University of the South Pacific argued that the current school curriculum was ‘too academic’ (Sharma, Suva, May 2009). He was referring here to the overly academic nature of subjects taught in schools. There is a lot
of theory but much less emphasis on practical learning. Sharma asserted that educational reform was essential for Fiji because ‘there is no clear link between education and employment’. He indicated that the education system needs diversification in order that Fiji meets its labour force needs.

A TVET lecturer from Fiji National University, Seveci Naisilisili, supports the view by Sharma. He pointed out that ‘there should be more relevance between subjects students learn in school and the job markets available’ (Naisilisili, Suva, June 2009). He added that ‘course contents needed regular revision to meet market needs’. Naisilisili is talking here about the need to have a dynamic education system; one that evolves with time and is adaptive to new technologies in the work place. Sharma added another dimension to this discussion with the notion of being ‘underemployed’ in Fiji. This is the situation where people are employed but are not as productive as they should be because their qualifications and skills do not match the requirements of the job. Previous research by Nilan et al. (2006), Cavu et al. (2006), Nilan et al. (2009) and Cavu et al. (2009) confirm that there is a mismatch between the curriculum and skills needed for current employment opportunities in Fiji.

A slightly contrasting view, however, was expressed by Jone Usamate, the former Director General of TPAF and Chairman of the Ministry of Education TVET Advisory Council. He argued that ‘a link exists between education and employment’ in Fiji. However, he emphasised that ‘it [the link] is not as strong as it should be’ (Usamate, Suva, May 2009). He explained that the role of the Advisory Council was to liaise with representatives from industry on their output
expectations of the school system. Usamate, however, admitted that there is a ‘flaw in that arrangement’. He pointed out that,

In many cases people from industry are not able to articulate exactly what it is that they require from the education system. People in industry will often complain that the education system is not providing what they need, but when asked to specify what exactly is needed and what changes they think should happen – they [employers] are not able to provide good answers (Usamate, Suva, May 2009).

These comments suggest an element of confusion that exists in the system. There is a mechanism in place to evaluate and provide input on the curriculum however, there seems to be no clear communication of feedback. Usamate talked about the need to provide a balance in the curriculum.

Students as stakeholders unanimously voiced their perception that there was a clear link between education and employment. It is arguable that they may not be as educated or well-informed as non-student participants. But it was quite clear from the qualitative data that students shared a common vision about education.

The majority were optimistic that school would get them a job. That was the vision they all shared. And they had an abundance of role models in society to talk about to support this view. Each student was able to talk about a relative or neighbour who had a white-collar or blue-collar job. The perception of a direct
link between academic schooling and paid work stems from Fiji’s colonial inheritance (see Chapter 4).

7.3.2 TVET initiatives from the Fiji Institute of Technology

Kolinio Meo explained that while he was Director of the Fiji Institute of Technology he initiated the promotion of TVET to rural communities in Fiji. This was conducted through FIT franchise programmes in secondary schools. He argued that an objective of that initiative was to establish a visible link between TVET and TVET career opportunities at community secondary school level (see Figure 7.1 below).

The FIT franchise programme involved the establishment of secondary-school based FIT course centres. These centres offered a variety of TVET courses that bridged into programs offered by the Fiji Institute of Technology (now part of Fiji National University).

Figure 7.1 below illustrates the career direction that students could pursue if they enrolled at the Fiji Institute of Technology. The pathways displayed below were promoted to students at secondary and primary school levels. The diagram provides an optimistic view of the future. Individuals with different situational/ educational circumstances are catered for.
Figure 7.1: TVET Career Pathways and Opportunities

(Source: Fiji Institute of Technology, 2007)
The first pathway from the left is provided for early school leavers whose educational attainment is at primary to junior secondary level. It shows how a TVET bridging programme at FIT can enable such a person to move up the educational ladder and eventually achieve a university degree.

The second pathway illustrates the journey through secondary school based on vocational courses. It also shows that students can eventually achieve a university degree qualification by following through whatever TVET courses they choose.

The third pathway is for students who are determined to pursue mainstream academic courses. Taking a positive view, the diagram helps to perpetuate the idea that both TVET and mainstream academic are equal in value and stature. However, all pathways illustrated lead to a degree qualification, which simply will not be possible for the majority of secondary school students. Nevertheless, it is a bold initiative and visibly one of the most progressive moves towards achieving parity between TVET and mainstream academic courses.

The FIT franchise programme was a partnership between selected secondary schools and the Fiji Institute of Technology. There were thirty eight franchise centres in 2008. The objective was to make a variety of FIT trade certificate TVET courses accessible throughout Fiji. Courses offered in each franchise school varied depending on available facilities. Courses offered were:
1. Trade Certificate in Agro Engineering
2. Trade Certificate in Commercial Baking
3. Trade Certificate in Cookery
4. Certificate in House Keeping
5. Trade Certificate in Food Service
6. Trade Certificate in Welding Fabrication
7. Trade Certificate in Carpentry & Joinery or Class 3 Trade Certificate
8. Trade Certificate in Automotive Engineering
9. Certificate in Applied Wood Technology (Forestry Products for Value Adding)

A positive impact of the programme was that all students in the franchise schools were made aware of the value of TVET as a post-secondary qualification and the job prospects available to graduates at the end of their programme (see Appendix 17: Photos 1 & 2). The program is still running under the auspices of the Fiji National University. Meo believed that the added weight of a tertiary qualification pathway in the TVET franchise programmes makes TVET attractive in secondary schools. However, he was disappointed that while many schools had applied for franchise programmes, the Ministry of Education reported continued low interest, signalled by low overall enrolments in TVET courses (Fiji Islands Ministry of Education Annual Report, 2007).

Meo’s concern was shared by Sharma, who pointed out the overwhelming numerical disparity between large numbers of students enrolled in mainstream
academic fields such as arts, science and commerce compared to smaller numbers enrolled in technical fields such as technology, agriculture and vocational courses. Sharma made the observation that students with higher academic grades rarely enrol in TVET courses. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

7.3.3 The mismatch between the curriculum and labour force needs

The Fiji mismatch between curriculum and labour force needs has been highlighted previously by researchers such as Nilan et al. (2006), Cavu et al. (2006), Nilan et al. (2009) and Cavu et al. (2009). Seveci Naisilisili, TVET lecturer at FNU, argued that this mismatch could be overcome with strategic educational reforms. He proposed that to begin with ‘there should be more relevance between the subjects learnt in school and the job markets available’. He was reiterating the concerns previously expressed by Hazelman (2009), Cavu (2009), and Navunicagi (2009).

School leavers and dropouts indicate the truth of what happens as a result of this mismatch. Students who pass their exams but are unable to get a job often experience difficulties adjusting and adapting to the necessity to engage in manual labour back in their communities. They also have to adjust to disappointment and the embarrassment of not meeting the expectations of their relatives, who anticipated they would get a high status white collar job. This is especially so if they pass their secondary examination but are unable to find a suitable job. When they go home they have to adapt to life as common villagers.
For the handful of unemployed youths interviewed for this research, those who had actually done well at school felt depressed and miserable about their situation of unemployment.

Saumaka referred to this as the wastage of the school system. ‘I think it’s a waste that we have all these students who have done well at senior level but will end up with no jobs’ (Saumaka, Suva, January 2010). He was referring to the wastage of resources that are invested in school when many students face an uncertain future at the end of the process. He added that, ‘if they [students] can’t get a job then at least they should be able to survive by themselves and not be a burden to their relatives’ He was referring to the problem highlighted earlier by Meo (2009) and Cavu et al. (2006) of unemployed youths loitering idly in towns and villages.

Sharma argued that the education system in Fiji has failed these young people. He believes that the system has deviated from its primary purpose. In his view education is supposed to provide ‘intellectual development, vocational preparation and citizenship’ (Sharma, Suva, May 2009). Sharma talked about the need to have a system that provides holistic education where no student is left behind. His ideal system is one where there are no failures because every learner is able to achieve something in the end and every learner is able to contribute to their community.

At the moment Fiji has what some call the ‘diploma disease’ (Sharma, 2009). This refers to the situation where there is an influx of graduates in popular fields
such as arts, education, science and law who cannot find jobs in their preferred sector of the labour market. They are over-qualified or inadequately skilled to take other jobs. The tragedy of the situation is that Fiji has many such ‘educated unemployed’. Sharma is referring here to the many graduates who are unable to get a job after graduation because ‘they were trained for a specific kind of job’ that is rarely available as a vacancy. He argued that the curriculum does not provide diversity and students are not exposed to alternative skills that would enable them to enter sections of the labour market where there are job vacancies. However, Sharma does not blame the students. He blames the system because it does not ‘teach them a wide variety of activities’ (Sharma, Suva, May 2009).

The curriculum that Sharma advocates is one where learners acquire multiple skills. They are not restricted into one discipline or stream. An example he gave is where a teacher can also become a plumber, or where a lawyer can also be a mechanic. This is the kind of diversity in skill and knowledge that the current system fails to provide. He argued that students needed to be exposed to as many fields as possible up to senior secondary level. This would provide a back up plan in case students do not achieve their primary career goals. His logic is that they will always have some other useful employable skills to fall back upon.

7.3.4 The view of the Minister for Education

The most senior official interviewed - Fiji Minister for Education Filipe Bole - expressed government support and recognition for TVET as the way forward for Fiji in terms of providing employable skills for young people. However, he
explained that the first major challenge for TVET was to overcome the stigma and negative perceptions that people still have towards it. He suggested that TVET be renamed as Vocational Education because ‘TVET is too long’. Minister Bole is proposing that a change of name may change the perception of people towards it. However, there is no clear indication from the minister as to whether this change will actually take place. He added though that ‘the stigma has been reinforced because TVET is optional to academic education in the past. That is why we don’t want vocational as an option at lower levels but as part of the academic curriculum’ (Bole, Suva, February 2010). This was the first initiative in trying to change perceptions towards TVET. By making TVET subjects compulsory at junior level, it was hoped that the idea would become ingrained in students that all subjects are of equal value.

Bole pointed out that TVET remained optional at junior secondary schools until 2001. Between 2001 and 2006 the new Internal Assessment (IA) programme was piloted. It made TVET a compulsory component of the curriculum. From 2007, TVET has been mandatory for both sexes in the curriculum in all secondary schools. The TVET subjects are agriculture, home economics, woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing. The purpose is to expose students at junior secondary level to a wide variety of learning. Bole asserted that ‘TVET is good and something we must develop, and ideas about careers can be picked up from courses from Form 3 level’. By this he means that it was ideal to inculcate TVET values and interests at Form 3 level. However, he does not think that it is worthwhile to be talking yet about careers at that level. The reason is because he believes that at junior secondary level students are too
distant from the world of work. Hence they are unable to grasp any sense or meaning of future careers. Rather, he stated, ‘I think Form 6 is the right level to determine which vocational direction they wish to pursue’. Bole explained that at Form 6 or higher, students were more mature. They were more likely to take career talks seriously because they were on the verge of leaving the school system.

Another initiative geared towards formalising TVET into mainstream academia was the formation of a TVET-oriented university. Minister Bole was referring here to the merger of six tertiary institutions into the Fiji National University. The previous Fiji Institute of Technology was amalgamated into FNU. This strategy was designed to change the technical-image of the Fiji Institute of Technology into something more academic, inclusive and new.

### 7.3.5 A contradictory view from the students

However, Minister Bole’s argument about the need for maturity in career choice was contradicted by findings from the students themselves. Students at junior secondary level who participated in this study were not as ignorant as the minister perhaps imagined. Many students were able to identify their chosen careers and were also able to explain their interests in those careers. Some were even able to explain the relevant tertiary courses they needed to pursue to get their dream jobs. This confirms that some assumptions at senior ministry level about students may be outdated and erroneous. Students in all parts of Fiji have access to television, computers and the internet. This means that they have access to much more information than their parents had, at the same age.
It also reveals differing perceptions about students and their decision-making capabilities, implying different perceptions of TVET and its applicability to school pupils.

The notion of maturity is debatable because awareness and decision-making capacity is not necessarily determined by age. In the fieldwork, this researcher spoke with students from Forms 3 to 7 in the four case study schools. Some senior students (in Forms 5, 6 and 7) were still undecided about their career directions. On the other hand the majority of students at Form 3 and 4 levels had a basic idea of what they wanted to do in the future. The survey of 422 junior secondary students from the four case study schools revealed that an overwhelming majority 99.3% (419 out of 422 respondents) had a clear idea which career path they intended to pursue. They were also able to identify their second and third career preferences. This finding confirms that students as young as junior secondary level are more adequately exposed, socialised and sensitised to the world of work than their elders perhaps imagine. Social factors that shaped student attitudes and perceptions are explored in the next two chapters.

7.3.6 The initiative of removing examinations

In his interview, Minister Bole talked about the positive effect on TVET of the government initiative of taking away exams at lower secondary level. He argued that with the removal of examinations, students, teachers and parents could focus more on subject content. Hence they would be likely to place equal value on all subjects taken in school. Bole explained that a junior secondary
curriculum which has exams is distracting and misleading in that teachers, students, parents and school administrators tend to focus on marks and pass rates. These do not necessarily generate quality learning for a productive society. He stated his commitment to the idea that a mixed academic and vocational curriculum should be taken by all pupils up to Form Six.

Bole emphasised that he would like all students to study this mixed curriculum ‘before they take up engineering, medicine etc’ (Bole, Suva, February 2010). In making this link to the professions, he is referring to degree courses that are offered by the new Fiji National University (FNU), which has been in operation since January 2010. Bole’s comment implies that technology subjects offered as part of the compulsory TVET programme in secondary schools will be useful not only for pupils who exit the school system at Form Four and move into the technical and vocational workforce, but for those who proceed through to take degrees at FNU that emphasise science and technology.

It was notable that the Minister quickly moved from talking about secondary school subjects like agriculture and woodwork to degree-level studies in science and technology. His comment above is reflective of the vision that he has for TVET in Fiji. It was his initiative that the Fiji National University be formed. He pointed out that ‘we need to have FNU so that there is more appeal because it is a university’. By this he meant that in order to change perceptions of people towards TVET it was essential that a TVET-oriented university be established. FNU’s appeal is that it amalgamates premier tertiary institutions such as Fiji School of Medicine, Fiji School of Nursing, Fiji Institute of Technology, Fiji
College of Agriculture, Lautoka Teachers College and Fiji College of Advanced Education. Bole asserted that by combining all these institutions into one, the distinction between TVET and mainstream academic courses is blurred. A TVET university can offer a variety of technical diplomas and certificates as well as degrees other than those in the liberal arts, humanities and social sciences such as medicine, engineering, education and music. Under Bole’s second term as Minister in the Bainimarama Government Fiji has seen the rapid expansion and promotion of TVET to university level.

7.3.7 Evaluating comments about TVET and economic growth

Most of the comments cited in this chapter support the view that TVET is the future for Fiji and the government must work hard to realise its potential for Fiji. Key advocates commenting in this chapter represent reputable organisations and hold key positions in education and training. In section 7.2.3 Hazelman talks about the pressure of increasing youth population and youth unemployment. She then made the point about increasing poverty and youth crime in Pacific island countries. These, she argues, have a profound impact on the economic growth and stability in countries like Fiji. Her views were shared by Cavu (7.2.4) and Navunicagi (7.2.5) who also talked at length about the economic crisis facing Fiji. They were focussing their attention particularly on the poverty, unemployment and crime cycle. This they argue was the main barrier to Fiji’s economic growth and stability. All participants mentioned above concurred that one solution for alleviating poverty and creating employment was TVET.
In Section 7.2.6, secondary school principals Saumaka, Mckenzie and Uluinaceva talked about the stresses that they had to deal with in their schools. This was particularly in the area of student career choices and direction. While they all advocated TVET, they all conceded that parents and students had the ultimate decisions to make. However, they pointed out that the key to making sound career choices lay in effective awareness strategies. All principals agree that TVET has the potential to improve Fiji’s economy.

Meo proceeded a step further in Section 7.2.7 and pointed out that ‘brain drain’ or the out-migration of skilled labour to countries such as Australia and New Zealand was disastrous for Fiji’s economic growth. The situations discussed by Meo and Hazelman are very closely connected. Meo focussed on the vacuum left behind by migrating skilled workers. Hazelman however pointed out the lack of effective successive planning in Fiji. She was referring primarily to the inability of employers to fill vacancies because of skills shortage. There were many vacancies but there were not enough qualified people available for the jobs. The reality on the ground is that many employers have been forced to employ unqualified or under-qualified workers for the purpose of continuing their economic activities. This results in reduced quality of performance and productivity. This supported the findings of previous research projects on TVET lead by Nilan and Cavu respectively. However, the challenge for government and its key agencies is how to educate people about TVET viability and desirability.
Section 7.2.8 showcased some research and programme initiatives from FIT that targeted skills training needs of rural communities. These programmes were also able to promote TVET in various communities and schools. This included non-formal training for rural communities and TVET franchise programmes in secondary schools. A benefit of this for the people is that many were directly exposed to the practicality of TVET skills.

7.3.8 Evaluating comments about TVET and educational reform

It is clear that educational reform is necessary for TVET to be effectively integrated in Fiji. This process is rather complex because there are numerous stumbling blocks to be overcome. The first is vision. The second is interpretation, and the third is commitment. It is argued in this thesis that in order for educational reform to be effective in favour of TVET, these three factors need to be fulfilled. Stakeholders need to share the same vision, and similar perceptions of the long-term value of TVET education.

In section 7.3.2, Meo admitted that overall community attitudes to TVET had not improved. He was reflecting on structural conditions such as the education system, government policies and community support. Like other senior stakeholders, he was not satisfied with the education system. Meo proposed that ‘it needs to be more accommodating of TVET’. His main concern was the perception of people towards TVET as second class education. This he agreed was a major obstacle to TVET in Fiji. Section 7.3.3 shows the TVET career pathway advocated by FIT (FNU). It shows students from any academic level the direction that they could take to achieve the highest qualification possible in
their field of interest. This goes to show that there are training opportunities and avenues available in Fiji for unemployed youth to pursue in order to get jobs. Also highlighted is the FIT franchise courses which students could pursue from strategic locations in secondary schools throughout Fiji.

Section 7.3.5 revealed significant policy changes had been implemented by the Minister for Education. These were key initiatives such as formation of a TVET-oriented university, the removal of examinations and the curriculum change that makes TVET subjects compulsory up to junior secondary school level (Form 4). These initiatives show vision. Minister Bole is the only Minister for Education who has succeeded in integrating TVET so swiftly. Perhaps this is because of the undemocratic nature of leadership in the Bainimarama government. Nevertheless, he has succeeded where others have failed. An interesting insight in Section 7.3.5 was that junior secondary students contradicted Minister Bole on the issue of their maturity in career decision-making. Qualitative data from this research challenged his assertion that Form 3-4 students were unable to articulate their career choices.

The diversity of views and comments represented in this chapter reveal the depth of disparity in perceptions of TVET even on the part of those who promote it, from community outreach organisations offering short courses in villagers to government-sponsored tertiary-level TVET education. This difference may be problematic in terms of the future implementation of TVET initiatives across the variety of sectors. Tension in the meanings around TVET imply that awareness programmes could be ineffective because the information
messages are confusing for the general public. The Minister and his officials talk about TVET by linking their reform ideas to a variety of high-level professional career directions. In contrast, at the grass-roots level, when people are making life decisions about TVET, images of labour-intensive, low-paid work still seem to be in their minds.

7.4 Conclusion

Qualitative data from this research has revealed that TVET is widely acknowledged and perceived by senior stakeholders as the key to sustainable economic growth for Fiji. All acknowledged the validity of the premise that TVET can help stimulate Fiji’s economic growth. There were however, contradictions and conflicting views on what TVET meant. The diversity of views on issues such as education, employment, poverty and the economy signifies great disparity. These disparities will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Communication and effective dissemination of information are clearly lacking in the system. There is a lack of filtration of information from government stakeholders at the top down to schools and to students at the bottom.

The next chapter examines the diverse discourses of TVET in Fiji.
Chapter EIGHT: TVET Discourse in Fiji

8.1 Introduction

It was evident in the previous chapter that TVET is defined and understood differently by different stakeholders. This gives an intriguing insight into possible reasons why there has been no consistent support for, and implementation of, TVET in Fiji. If stakeholders have different ideas about what TVET is, and the benefits of implementing TVET programs, then we cannot expect a concentrated and united effort. This chapter is structured to deliver an examination of discourses that were evident in qualitative responses from participants. The diverse and often conflicting interpretations of TVET among participants see different discourses expressed at different levels. These levels are hierarchical in nature and warrant a discourse analysis to examine the diverse constructions of knowledge and perceptions about TVET.

From a social science perspective, discourse can be defined as a set of ideas, concepts and beliefs that have become established as knowledge, an accepted way of understanding a particular phenomenon. Discourses do not just reflect aspects of the social world, they actively construct it. Orders or levels of discourse are shaped by power relations in key social institutions and in the society as a whole. Michel Foucault’s work has been a major source for discourse analysis in the social sciences, ‘the term discourse can be defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation; thus I shall be able to speak of clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of
natural history, psychiatric discourse’ (Foucault, 2002, p. 121). Thus power relations in any given set of institutions cannot be established, sustained, resisted or mobilised into material form, without the mediation of discourse. For Foucault, knowledge and truth are produced by struggles both between and within institutions. Using a model of educational discourses, Ball (1990) maintains that change in any part of the education system provided by the State is driven by trends and shifts in the political field.

The discourse analysis in this chapter follows the work of Fairclough and Wodak (1997), who consider discourse as ‘a form as social practice’ (p. 258), accordingly discourse analysis can be used to explain social problems. This claim is supported by Rogers (2004, p. 1) who pointed out that ‘a critical discourse analysis can describe, interpret, and explain the relationships among language and important educational issues’. TVET is such an issue with its diverse interpretations, and discourses. Language is a key component because it determines the effective delivery of information in the communities / villages and especially in the transfer of TVET knowledge into local vernacular languages. The purpose of the discourse analysis below is to provide structure, organisation and clarity in understanding the diverse qualitative responses regarding TVET in Fiji.

This chapter presents and discusses the levels of TVET discourses. Different levels represent different groups of stakeholders. There are four levels but only three will be discussed in this chapter. Level 4 discourse is discussed separately in the next chapter because it differs so substantially from the other
three levels of discourse. While discourse Levels 1-3 are primarily positive, Level 4 discourse is mainly negative.

### 8.2 Diversity of TVET Discourses in Fiji

As indicated previously there are diverse discourses of TVET in Fiji. This diversity was demonstrated in personal interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders (see Appendix 16 for full list). There was a lack of uniformity in perceptions and understanding of TVET. At the heart of the problem are consistent differences in visions of TVET, including definitions of TVET and expectations about what TVET could or would deliver. Figure 8.2 below illustrates the four levels of discourse about TVET derived from the qualitative data. Each level is associated with, or aligned in a hierarchical fashion with, a different group of stakeholders. In the process of interpreting the different levels of discourse, the researcher took into account two specific considerations. The first is the relevant status of participants within the Fiji education system. The second is their actual responses regarding TVET. That is, ‘the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation’ (Foucault, 2002, p. 21) in regard to TVET.

The social or community status of participants is an important factor because it represents a level of authority and influence. In keeping with Foucault's point above about the relationship of discourse to power and knowledge, this was the main factor in determining the hierarchy of levels. Therefore the most politically powerful stakeholders, the Minister for Education and his senior officials, form
the first level of the hierarchy because they have the greatest amount of power and influence. This was followed by two levels consisting of officials and educators, who have less power and influence. Levels 2 and 3 are split groups due to contradictory responses between participants of the same status and rank. These contradictions were not necessarily a problem. Rather, they highlight and emphasise the diversity of thought that existed between stakeholders of similar rank, who were further away from the centre of political influence and power.

**Figure 8.1: The Four Levels of TVET Discourses in Fiji**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1 - Minister for Education / Senior officials:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Students decide TVET career at Form 6 level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- TVET includes high level professions such as medicine and engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2 – Government officials / teachers / academics / tertiary training providers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Career decision begins after junior secondary level (Form 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- TVET includes mainly technical skills professions such as carpentry, machine repair, catering, agriculture etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3 – Government officials / teachers / academics / tertiary training providers:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- TVET career decision begins from primary school level or at home and students should have decided by Form 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- TVET includes lower level technical trades such as carpentry, machine repair, catering, agriculture etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 4 – Parents, Students, General public:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Students and teachers to decide career path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- TVET is second rate education. End result is low wages, manual labour-intensive jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- TVET training for community/village self sufficiency Provided by NGOs, Government ministries etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The objective of the researcher in developing this structured interpretation through discourse analysis was to highlight the similarities and differences in perceptions that existed between different hierarchies of participants. It also took into account the contradictory views of participants who are at the same level. A further feature of this interpretation is flexibility. An individual participant may share similar views to those expressed by people at other levels. This fluid nature will be discussed in detail. There are elements of negative discourse of TVET filtering through all three levels of hierarchy. However, negative discourse *per se* is discussed separately in Chapter 9.

### 8.3 Transformative-Elitist Discourse: Level 1

Figure 8.1 above shows that at the top end of the hierarchy is the vision of the Minister of Education Filipe Bole, who is chief representative of government and primary policy maker. His discourse of TVET is centred on senior secondary and post-secondary skills training. His statements in interview construct TVET as training towards higher level professional careers such as medicine and engineering. TVET training at this level involves diplomas, degrees and post graduate qualifications. Earning potentials of TVET graduates here are higher than the average civil servant. Careers associated with this level include mechanical, civil, marine and aeronautic engineers, doctors, nurses, architects, chefs, teachers and so on. This is the vision that resulted in the formation of the new Fiji National University in 2010. The university is dedicated to the promotion of TVET as a professional career path in Fiji. Minister Bole emphasised in an interview that ‘TVET is important and I want to make TVET
important because students can get into tertiary institutions. TVET is academic and practical’ (Bole, Suva, February 2010). Bole is constructing a powerful discourse of knowledge about TVET when he associates it with high paying / high qualification professions. He argues that TVET is important for the future of Fiji in terms of addressing human resource needs for the future. That is the reason he is adamant about the infusion and integration of TVET into the school system, as preparation for tertiary education. Bole added that ‘TVET is everything after secondary school. They can get into nursing, medicine, engineering, technology (…) and all those come under TVET. That is why we want to begin our own university’ (Bole, Suva, February 2010).

Minister Bole is producing an influential discourse here regarding his interpretation of TVET. He is asserting that TVET extends well beyond secondary education into tertiary level. It involves graduate and postgraduate programmes. Ball (1990, p. 3) talks about this in terms of education policy changes as the “authoritative allocation of values” based on control and power. This suggests that Bole is using his position of power to transform values and knowledge about TVET. Bole’s emphasis on specific high-status careers such as nursing, medicine and engineering establishes a whole new horizon for TVET in Fiji, a new field of knowledge that carries the promise of earning power. As these assertions originate directly from the Minister for Education, they represent a new policy direction for education in Fiji.

There has been an assertive promotion for TVET in the period of time since the Bainimarama regime took control of government in December 2006, illustrating
once again the argument of Ball (1990) that change in any part of the education system provided by the State is driven by trends and shifts in the political field.

A senior academic at Fiji National University and former Director at the Ministry of Youth, Paula Cavu, shares the discourse of Minister Bole. He emphasised in interview that the ‘lack of political will is an obstacle to TVET’ (Cavu, Suva, December 2009). He acknowledges that the efforts by the current regime in the promotion of TVET have been unprecedented. Previous governments have not been able to do what the Bainimarama regime has achieved under the ministership of Filipe Bole.

There have been significant changes to government policy regarding TVET. This is best illustrated by the new Fiji National University. Cavu argues that this demonstrates political will. He added, ‘I believe in TVET. This is especially in higher level secondary and tertiary and in the search for jobs. This is because the end of the road for everyone is to find work’ (Cavu, Suva, December 2009). Here Cavu is producing an instrumentalist discourse of TVET as knowledge that will get someone a job – of any kind. Yet his statements also echo the views of Minister Bole about TVET being actively engaged in senior secondary and tertiary programmes and training. He made reference to the need for serious determination to link training with guided career aspirations.

Cavu stated that people have not realised yet that TVET provides respectable careers such as engineering, architecture, teaching and so on. Here he is talking about the reality in Fiji that many ordinary people are oblivious to the
career opportunities provided through TVET. Cavu mentioned the example of teachers in secondary school. Teachers who teach technical subjects, agriculture and vocational are all TVET trained people. Other high-status careers in Fiji such as aeronautic, computer, building and automotive engineers have traditionally been TVET trained through the Fiji Institute of Technology (FNU). These are facts that people in the rural regions, outlying islands and small villages in Fiji are not aware of. Cavu is revealing a knowledge set that would be empowering to ordinary people if they were aware of it. If such information was well known to people in the community, there would be more acceptance of TVET by parents and they might guide their children accordingly.

Another academic at the Fiji National University, Seveci Naisilisili, who lectures in the Bachelor of Education (TVET) programme, supports the transformative discourse of Minister Bole. He argues that ‘TVET people are no longer your typical carpenter or mechanic but they are professionals such as teachers, doctors and scientists’ (Naisilisili, Suva, June 2009). Here he is reiterating the new place of TVET through the formation of FNU. FNU is now the biggest teacher-training institution in Fiji. The merger of the Fiji School of Medicine and Fiji School of Nursing with FNU, means that future doctors, nurses will also be officially TVET-trained at tertiary level. FNU as an institution has been established, and will be sustained, through the mediation of this new ‘professional’ discourse of TVET strongly promoted by the current government.

I am hoping that the new university will develop TVET programmes up to degree and post graduate level. At the moment the only way
you can get recognition or respect on TVET is if you demonstrate what you know or you get your certificate awarded by a university so we decided to grab the bull by the horns and start it here. For example we have the diploma in nursing awarded by the College of Nursing but it doesn't have the same effect as being awarded by a university. Six institutions are now merged to form this new university. I'm sure that this new university will change public perceptions to TVET because the certificates from these institutions carry the weight of a university certificate (Bole, Suva, February 2010).

Above, Bole argues that accreditation by a university is seen as more valuable than accreditation by a tertiary training college because the knowledge and qualification are recognized as belonging to a professional elite. Bole described his disappointment with the long-established University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva for not adequately catering for Fiji's human resource needs. This is especially in technical areas, agriculture and engineering. USP teaches a traditional university range of programmes with emphasis on liberal arts and sciences. It has many campuses in the South Pacific.

As indicated previously, this first level of TVET discourse implies that only Form Six students are mature enough to make informed decisions about their future. Minister Bole explained that,
Students now have 12 years of general education and by that time they have some idea of what they want to do. Courses up to Form 6 should be general academic subjects, with elements of both practical and academic. General education is very necessary up to Form 6 so that students are exposed to all possibilities before they take up engineering, medicine etc (Bole, Suva, February 2010).

He implies that the twelve formative years they have gone through up to Form 6 would have enabled students to grow in knowledge, maturity, and social experience so they were ready for important decision-making such as deciding career directions. However, while this may be true for some students, others may not have reached this level of maturity.

Minister Bole then became more specific when he said that ‘I think Form 6 is the right level to determine which vocational direction they wish to pursue. At Form 6 students can think clearly, they are more mature. Students should choose after Form 6’ (Bole, Suva, February 2010). His argument is based on the assumption that as they broaden their intellect in school, they also get to face new experiences in their environments. He said that ‘contact with people of different professions especially for students in their formative years influence the type of career direction they may take’ (Bole, Suva, February 2010). Bole asserts that socialisation is an important component, implying that if students learn, observe and emulate role-models in their environments, they will be able to make sound career decisions.
Minister Bole asserts firmly that students in lower level classes such as Forms 3 and 4 cannot have realistic career aspirations. In this sense his discourse is rule-like in its formation. He added as a concession, ‘we can talk about careers with Form 6 and 7 but it’s difficult to talk about these things with primary school students. At some lower levels this is too abstract’. However, he almost contradicts himself when he adds that ‘ideas about careers can be picked up from subjects from Form 3 level’. He falls short of admitting that students in junior secondary level and even primary levels can have career aspirations. A contradictory point which was raised in the previous chapter was that this researcher, while talking with Form 3 and 4 participants for this study, found that many junior students were articulate about their career aspirations. Some were quite knowledgeable about the relevant courses they needed to take to achieve those careers. Some also were also able to talk about some of their role models in the community such as relatives and neighbours.

In summary, Level 1 discourse of TVET emphasises professional university education and careers, and decision-making by pupils at senior secondary level. TVET in the curriculum at lower educational levels is constructed by Minister Bole as only something that younger pupils should be exposed to so they can make career choices much later on, at the end of their time at school. Significantly, this discourse assumes a certain socio-economic advantage for aspiring students. In Fiji most pupils from very poor backgrounds leave school by Form 3 or 4 (ILO, 2010; Walsh, 2001) and do not reach the designated career decision point identified by Minister Bole. It seems then that the minister’s discourse implicitly refers to pupils from homes with sufficient income
to stay on at school, to make an open career choice in senior secondary school, and to enter university.

8.4 Instrumentalist Discourse: Level 2

The second level of discourse was expressed by a group of more junior government officials, and also some academics and teachers. In keeping with Foucault’s point about the relationship of discourse to power and knowledge, none of these stakeholders in Level 2 are close to the centre of power and influence represented by the Minister, and their views are rather varied. The consensus of meaning at this level seems to be that TVET involves technical skills training to produce tradespeople such as carpenters, tailors, electricians, mechanics, hairdressers, machinists and so on. This difference in anticipated career separates it from the first level of TVET discourse, not least because of different assumptions about the socio-economic background of pupils.

This brings to mind the concepts of habitus and cultural capital developed by Bourdieu to explain the ways in which relationships of social inequality are reproduced by the education system (Bourdieu, 1984). As explained earlier in the thesis, cultural capital means forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which give them a higher status in society. Parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed, or not, in the education system. Schools reward pupils with the right kind of cultural capital, those who come from privileged backgrounds. Pupils without the right kind of cultural capital,
especially those from poor families, struggle to achieve school success and often drop out. They might move into jobs in the poorly-paid sectors of the labour market or enter the ranks of the long-term unemployed.

Habitus describes the sense of who you are and where you belong in the social order. It is derived from a person’s family background and the socio-cultural environment in which that person grew up. Habitus manifests as ways of understanding and responding to the world, especially ‘generative dispositions’ (Bourdieu 1984) of how to act and what to do, in the education system for example. Cultural capital is closely related to a pupil’s habitus. Students who participated in this research implied that reluctance to make innovative choices is grounded in their social reality – their habitus. Most have dreams of a white collar career however, their social reality and their habitus dictates that they should find fast employment to support their families. This then tends to reinforce the stereotypical association between TVET at school and the technical and manual labour jobs mentioned above.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that class reproduction takes place through education as privileged students are well-positioned to succeed through their cultural capital and habitus. Poor and working class pupils on the other hand, are at a disadvantage because their knowledge and sense of self is at odds with the meritocratic academic curriculum and they are much less likely to succeed. In a study of senior students at three very different Australian secondary schools, Threadgold & Nilan (2008) noted a tendency for students to be reluctant to venture outside the safe confines of their class habitus. They
wanted to stay with what they knew and this was greatly influenced by their class background.

For Fiji high school pupils, the formation of habitus through life experiences is aptly demonstrated by their decision-making and life choices as reflected in pathways through education. They make choices that reflect their immediate concerns according to their habitus. In relating this further to the Fiji context, one can argue that inequalities in terms of career opportunities and aspirations are reproduced by the education system for children from large, poor families, and those who live with relatives. There is a high likelihood that children from poorer families will leave school and resort to low-paid casual jobs for fast income. It would be better for pupils in this pressured situation to learn trade skills, and this is what Level 2 TVET discourse is targeting.

At level 2 discourse, TVET advocates are therefore talking about a quite different set of knowledges to those referred to by advocates of TVET at Level 1 discourse. Level 2 TVET discourse addresses blue-collar, labour-intensive, technical, manufacturing and service trades. Tradespeople are expected to have formal TVET training in secondary and post-secondary institutions. Qualifications are a Trade Certificate or Diploma. In terms of earning potential, they earn less than the average civil servant in Fiji, but there are many more job vacancies, with opportunity for well-paid overtime. Moreover, in overseas countries such as Australia and New Zealand tradespeople earn a lot more than they do in Fiji should someone decide to emigrate. The discourse here is closer to actual labour force needs and transferability of technical skills and experience.
than Level 1 discourse, which focuses on professional careers and relatively late career decision-making by pupils.

In Level 2 discourse, the consensus is that career choice can be made after junior secondary level, at the start of Form 5. In an interview, the Principal Education Officer TVET at the Fiji Ministry of Education, Adi Alumeci Tuisawau, talked about the broad-based curriculum at junior secondary level (Forms 3-4). She pointed out that there were more compulsory technical subjects in the new curriculum so students have the opportunity to learn these basic TVET skills before making up their minds about careers. The logic is that by the time students complete Form 4, they would have been adequately exposed to both technical and academic oriented subjects. Then they are thought to be in an ideal position to decide the career pathway they wish to pursue from Form 5.

Among teachers in secondary school who participated in focus group discussions there were many statements made, arguments expressed and ideas articulated that belonged within Level 2 discourse. Significantly, there was consensus about the end of Form 4 as the decision-making time for students. A male participant said ‘the subject combination that they choose from Form 5 is very important. It will determine the kind of job they want in future’ (Group 2 Participant 5, Labasa, March 2009). This was a common idea among teachers regarding future careers. Many agreed that students should choose subject combinations based on their already-formed career aspirations so they had a clear path and direction to follow regarding their future.
Another teacher added that ‘students should choose subjects which are in line with the job market’ (Group 4 Participant 1, Suva, May 2009). This was another key aspect that focus group teacher-participants agreed upon. It was clear from the focus groups that teachers were conscious of the limited employment opportunities available in Fiji. The focus group discussion took place around the same period (April 2009) that the Fiji government decided to change Fiji’s compulsory retirement age down from 60 to 55. The ripple effect and media hype created by the abrupt retirement of thousands of public servants was the highlight of discussions among teachers, many of whom had colleagues or relatives affected by this policy.

Students who would not normally be aware of the job market, were probably more informed about the changing labour force during this period. Teachers in the focus group admitted that they do not always have accurate information to give to their students about careers. Many used whatever information they could get from the news media to formulate career projections for their students. It can be assumed that this career advice is adjusted to the known socio-economic backgrounds of pupils. If the student is from a poor family then there will be parental pressure to earn income as soon as possible.

One teacher said, ‘I tell them to follow what their hearts want and not follow their friends. They need to look at their capabilities and set their goals right’ (Group 3 Participant 1, Nadi, April 2009). This comment sums up what many teachers have been advising. They tell their students to follow their areas of interest and to work hard towards achieving their career aspirations. Another aspect
mentioned by the participant above is that students needed to be realistic about their potential. This means that students should choose careers that they are more likely to achieve with their academic capabilities. After Form 4, students are able to determine where their capabilities lie based on their Fiji Junior Examination results. For example, students who do well in science are more likely to achieve careers in medicine, whereas those who do well in mathematics and commerce are more likely to follow careers in finance. Once the Form 4 results are finalised, students are assumed to be in a better position to re-adjust their career aspirations. This is the core of Level 2 discourse in relation to when pupils should make career choices.

Participants in the teacher-focus groups were asked a question regarding their opinions about TVET in secondary school. Positive responses came from many, especially TVET teachers. One participant said ‘I am a TVET person and I believe that TVET is the way forward since Fiji needs this. There should be more emphasis by government to encourage students to take up TVET courses’ (Group 1 Participant 2, Nausori, February 2009). Another participant added that ‘TVET careers are more practical and skills oriented. People have first-hand experience on the job’ (Group 1 Participant 6, Nausori, February 2009). This is a common perception regarding the value of TVET. People get to learn employable skills which are in demand in Fiji in fields such as hospitality, construction and manufacturing.

A participant asserted when talking about the advantage of TVET that ‘skilled work is different from talent because one can adapt to any situation of work
whereas talent is confined to one area of work only. A TVET person is well equipped to adjust to any industrial related work and that they are in demand’ (Group 3 Participant 2, Nadi, April 2009). This participant is talking about the adaptability of TVET skills to demands that exist in the job market. In Fiji, students with university qualifications often have difficulties finding employment that matches their knowledge-base. In contrast, TVET graduates are seen to be more adaptable because of the practical nature of their skills.

In summary the responses from teachers and ministry officials at this level reflect an instrumentalist form of discourse. The ultimate objective for students from less privileged backgrounds is to get a job. TVET is a means to an end and there is a very strong association between subject choices and career aspirations. The obvious lack of white collar jobs in Fiji has been the catalyst for greater promotion of technical skills and trades as articulated by teachers at this discourse level. Change at this level however, is rather slow because stakeholders at this level are not in the position of power and influence compared to those in Level 1. Teachers and officials at this level of discourse merely carry out the policy decisions and ideas of powerful stakeholders in Level 1.

### 8.5 Instrumentalist Discourse: Level 3

Level 3 discourse was advanced by a different group made up of similar stakeholders: minor government officials, academics and teachers. It resembles Level 2 discourse because it is also an instrumentalist discourse with emphasis
on gaining useful skills for employment. However, the views of stakeholders mentioned above differ in an important way from that of stakeholders who constructed Level 3 discourse about TVET. Level 3 discourse centred on the premise that TVET work interest should be developed and nurtured at primary school level. The view was that basic skills such as gardening, cooking, art, sport and drawing are best introduced at primary school. Students should then be able to develop an interest in a particular field by the time they reach junior secondary level (Form 4). The argument is that if students are able to establish a keen interest in technical skills at primary school level then it is probable that they may pursue those fields in later years. The career spectrum identified was similar to the discourse of Level 2, including carpenter, tailor, mechanic, electrician, machinist, hairdresser and so on. TVET qualifications targeted here are the secondary school certificate, Trade Certificate and Diploma.

One of the key supporters of this discourse was contributor to the Fiji Islands Education Commission Report (FIEC 2000) Associate Professor Akhilanand Sharma, the Head of the Department of Education at the University of the South Pacific. In an interview he said that,

Vocational education should begin from as early as home. Parents should teach children these basic skills and once they get to school and develop that interest they can proceed to secondary and tertiary. I suggested in the Fiji Islands Education Commission Report 2000 that vocational education should begin with a broad base in primary
school and we must pick the relevant skills only because we cannot teach everything (Sharma, Suva, May 2009).

Sharma is saying that TVET should begin from a very early age. He not only talks about primary school but suggests pre-school by referring to the home. In that sense, Level 3 discourse takes greater account of the habitus and cultural capital of pupils. It attempts to influence and shape knowledge and the sense of what is possible at a very young age, when children are malleable to all kinds of new ideas and skills. Sharma pointed out the key role of parents in moulding and developing the interest of children. Sharma seems also to be alluding to the development of motor skills in early childhood as an opportune time to develop basic skills. This means that the environments of play in pre-school are important learning opportunities that parents can take advantage of. At this stage parents may introduce skills such as gardening, building, art and craft and so forth.

Daycare facilities and pre-schools are known for inculcating and integrating these basic skills in their play sessions. These are some subtle ways of promoting interests in technical skills which would eventually evolve into TVET interests in primary and secondary school. Given the nature of the pre-school TVET-oriented skills he used as examples, it may well be that Sharma is implicitly referring to children growing up in families that live in villages and rural areas. That is, families on low incomes. The approach he advocates is in keeping with what Bourdieu has established about social reproduction and
schooling. It is an attempt to alter habitus and create specific cultural capital at an early age.

In contrast to stakeholders who constructed Level 1 and Level 2 discourses of TVET as incorporating a broad-based TVET curriculum at secondary school, Sharma talked about a broad-based curriculum for primary school that would foster TVET skills early on so that students would have adequate time to develop their potential. This is not the current direction of government TVET policy. A broad-based, TVET-inclusive curriculum is being introduced by the Ministry of Education at junior secondary level, just two years before most students leave secondary school, allowing a relatively short time for pupils to develop their interests and capacities. It is not so likely that the habitus of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds will be swayed at this late stage. Level 3 TVET discourse takes greater account of the reluctance of such pupils to make innovative choices past a certain developmental age.

TVET offerings at junior secondary level are included as possible subjects in a curriculum where students must take seven compulsory examinable subjects, including TVET subjects. Sharma pointed out that unlike the primary syllabus, the junior secondary curriculum is still strongly influenced by examination, including for TVET subjects. This means that there is tendency for students and teachers to focus on passing examination, rather than developing skills and interests.
Level 3 discourse was also articulated by Kolinio Meo, the former Director of Fiji Institute of Technology. He argued that ‘an early introduction of TVET in primary schools and making them compulsory for each students throughout schooling will have a great impact on the quality of workers entering the labour market’ (Meo, Suva, May 2009). Meo echoes the views of Sharma that TVET should be introduced at primary school level so that there is ample growth of interest and potential before the pressure of examination. In addition, Meo was quite direct in pointing out that TVET needed to be made compulsory at all levels of schooling, which is quite a different claim again. Here he is implying that government and policy makers need to be more proactive in terms of elevating TVET to the status it deserves in the realm of education and training in Fiji, given current labour market needs. Meo and Sharma both acknowledged that there is wide unemployment. The suggestion by Meo that TVET should be compulsory at all levels dovetails neatly with the Sharma’s argument for diversity in the curriculum to develop a multi-skilled approach to work. Sharma gave the example of a teacher who also happens to be a skilled carpenter. The logic is that students will be better equipped to meet the challenges that life throws at them, especially in terms of finding employment. Once again, the less privileged pupil is implicitly referenced in this logic.

Teacher-participants of the focus group who subscribe to Level 3 discourse talked about the need for students to focus on their potentials and to match those potentials to career opportunities that are in demand. One participant talked about the need for students to ‘enterprise products they have learnt in school’ (Group 1 Participant 4, Nausori, February 2009), that is, using their skills
and creativity to adapt in the community. TVET advocates claim that this adaptability is a quality outcome of TVET skills training.

There was unanimous recognition in Level 3 discourse that students have different capabilities. Teachers in the focus groups know very well from their own experience that there are students who are strong academically and those that are not. One teacher-participant said ‘each child is unique and has different capabilities. Not everyone can get a white collar job and all fields of learning are important’ (Group 2 Participant 1, Labasa, March 2009). Another added that people needed to ‘wise up and face the real world. There’s a lot of opportunities and money in more hands-on jobs like building, plumbing, designing and waitressing’ (Group 4 Participant 3, Suva, March 2009). Yet this experiential knowledge of teachers has not been translated effectively to guide career aspirations of students, most of whom still aspire to traditional white-collar professions. In one way or another, all the levels of discourse discussed so far recognise this as a problem and have ideas about how it can be challenged and resolved.

8.6 Conclusion

The transformative discourse in Level 1 advocated by Minister for Education Filipe Bole and senior officials has produced significant changes to the educational landscape of Fiji. The establishment of FNU and the removal of several national examinations are testament to the political will and determination of the current regime to elevate the status of TVET. Bole
acknowledged in interview that there is a general negative perception towards TVET in Fiji. The formation of FNU by merging high-status tertiary institutions such as Fiji School of Medicine, Fiji School of Nursing as well as teacher training institutions may be interpreted as an attempt to de-construct prevailing negative public understandings of TVET. The Fiji National University with its new name, new programmes and university accreditation, is intended as the platform for re-constructing knowledge, perception and attitude about TVET in Fiji. The new image of TVET is that of equal value and status to any other educational programme. The new TVET is associated with high status jobs such as engineering, medicine, commerce and teaching.

The transformative-elitist nature of discourse Level 1 rests primarily on the close proximity of its stakeholders such as Minister Bole to positions of power, authority and influence in Fiji. It is evident that recent political regime change is driving a new order of change in TVET at ministerial level. Using this framework of understanding, this chapter has revealed the top three levels of TVET discourse in Fiji, looking at how certain truths about TVET are constructed by specific stakeholders with differing relationships to power and authority in the education system. There are only a handful of elite individuals who occupy Level 1. More participants such as educators and teachers occupy Levels 2 and 3. The majority of the population is represented by Level 4.

Differences between all the discourse levels are demarcated firstly by the status, and position of power of stakeholders. Levels 2 and 3 are instrumentalist discourses offered by junior officials and teachers. The second demarcation is
in prescribed age of career decision-making. Level 1 proposes career decision-making at Form 6. Level 2 proposes entry to Form 5 as the ideal time to decide on career pathway. Stakeholders at Level 3 view primary school as the most logical time to instil interest in technical skills and guide later subject choice.

Level 4, which is primarily a deficit discourse, is discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter NINE: Negative Discourse of TVET

9.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the discussion of diverse discourses of TVET in Fiji. It extends from the previous chapter but the emphasis has changed substantially. Here the discourse is primarily negative towards TVET. This chapter examines Level 4 discourse which represents the majority of population (and participants) such as parents, students and the general public. This level represents stakeholders occupying the most distant position from government corridors of power in which policy decisions are made about TVET and education. As such, they do not rely on highly specialised or scientific knowledge sets to understand the phenomena in their world, or political interests, but on their own local and inherited knowledge sets. Even more so than teachers, their ideas, concepts and beliefs about TVET are shaped by personal experience and time-honored expectations about causes and outcomes. Their views and ideas have a great deal to tell us about the habitus of pupils who have to make decisions about the future during their secondary schooling, since habitus is forged in families and communities.

TVET policies and initiatives may change rapidly in the Ministry of Education as the political field shifts about. However, in the lives of ordinary people in Fiji who are distant from such shifts, perceptions and attitudes, deriving as they do from habitus, change much more slowly. It comes as no surprise therefore, to find
that Level 4 discourse is quite distinct from the other three levels of TVET discourse discussed so far. The negative TVET discourse was expressed primarily by parents and students in this study, but it also represents the view of the general public. These perceptions are not intentionally negative, but stem from the common perception, based on the past, that TVET is second rate education. For many ordinary people it is just there as a back-up if students fail in mainstream academic education.

9.2 A Wary Perception of TVET

Level 4 discourse expresses a wary and doubtful attitude towards TVET. TVET is constructed in this discourse as preparation for low-status manual labour, suitable only for academically weaker students. It is a discourse of deficit which views TVET as a remedial or stopgap programme in the education system. It is believed that TVET programmes lead to unattractive, low-wage, blue collar jobs. This is a common view of TVET among parents and students alike, indicating little awareness of the potential of TVET, presumably due to lack of information and knowledge about contemporary labour force trends and needs.

The problem was acknowledged by Principal Saumaka of Lami High School, who pointed out that ‘at the end of the day people make decisions about their own future. Parents and students make their own choices but many do so without proper awareness and information about the future’ (Saumaka, Suva, December 2010). Here he was talking about parents and students aspiring to careers and choosing school subjects without proper advice and consultation.
The point raised by Saumaka was also articulated by a Fijian parent-participant in a focus group interview who conceded that,

_E so na gauna na noda lecaika na itubutubu e vakaleqa na nodra toso vinaka na noda gone. E daumaka me da dau kere ivakasala vei ira na qasenivuli, kei ira era cakacaka vinaka ena noda koro se itikotiko vakavalagi._ Translation: Sometimes it is our ignorance (lack of awareness and lack of education) as parents that affect the educational progress and success of our children. Perhaps it is wise for us to consult teachers or other successful people in our villages or neighbourhood on these matters (Parents Group 1, Participant 2, Nausori February 2009).

However, people in villages may be hesitant about consulting more knowledgeable people in the community. This lack of desire for consultation may be construed as a cultural barrier because it is not culturally appropriate to talk openly about family issues and problems. This is especially so if one has to share personal details with relative strangers such as teachers. There is also the language barrier that exists if dealing with people of other races. However, another parent in the same focus group added that, 'Na toso vinaka ni nodra vuli na luveda e vakatau saraga ena noda qarava vinaka na noda itavi na itubutubu._ Translation: The success of our children’s education depends on our concerted effort as parents in carrying out our responsibilities' (Parents Group 1, Participant 1, Nausori, February 2009). It is clear from the comment above that parents are aware of the responsibility they have and that they ought to
overcome cultural barriers for the benefit of their children. However, the socio-cultural parameters of habitus may make it difficult for them to do this.

Another aspect of Level 4 TVET discourse is that it often reflects local knowledge about basic TVET skills training conducted in communities and villages by NGOs and different government departments. These up-skilling programmes are essentially to provide locals with practical self-help skills and are not expected to lead to formal sector jobs without going on to gain a qualification. Examples of these grass-roots TVET programmes are farming techniques, sewing, cooking, small machine repair, plumbing and so forth. At the micro level, these skills contribute to self-sufficiency of individuals and improvement of standard of living, whether people live in rural villages or in urban settlements. Yet skills gained through such basic TVET training may drive initiation into entrepreneurship. Some people, especially women, have used skills in cooking and sewing to start small businesses. In major towns and cities such as Suva, Lautoka, Nadi, Nausori and Labasa, small canteens and repair shops built on such basic skills offer a variety of cheap services.

The Divisional Youth Officer for the Northern region, Emele Navunicagi, pointed out that through basic TVET skills programmes ‘many youth had been able to contribute positively to their villages and settlements by learning new skills’ (Navunicagi, Labasa, March 2009). She made special emphasis on agriculture – a skill area which has a lot of potential because of the abundance of fertile land. Unfortunately, as she admitted, many youth in villages and urban centres are not keen to utilise this valuable resource. However, some young people that
have gone through the agricultural skills training provided by Department of Youth or other providers have been able to become successful farmers in northern Fiji.

The two focus groups for parents provided valuable insights into Level 4 TVET discourse. On the question of career guidance, parent-participants unanimously voiced that they all had white collar aspirations for their children. They also admitted that they (parents) often had high expectations for their children. However, a female parent-participant said that she would be happy if her child could just get a job – any job at all. This is perhaps a sign of desperation and anxiety that many parents feel about their children. Parents in both focus groups agreed that they relied on teachers to advise their children on career directions. Only three of the fifteen participants from both focus groups mentioned that they had talked about careers with their children. The other twelve admitted that it had not crossed their minds at all to talk about careers with their children. They assumed that there were others such as relatives, neighbours and kinsmen in their communities/villages that their children could emulate and talk to.

On the question of TVET, all of the parents said that they had heard about vocational training but were not so sure what it was about. Some associated TVET with basic training like that described above. Some referred to carpentry, plumbing and other manual labour jobs. Others said that it was part of secondary education. A male parent-participant said he had given his children the freedom to pursue whatever career direction they wanted and that he was prepared to support them, even up to university level. But then he admitted he
was rather hoping they would study teaching or medicine. On the question of whether parents would encourage their children towards TVET, all parent-participants agreed, but only if their children failed to succeed in academic subjects at school. In other words TVET was a second option. They believed high status and high wages to be solely associated with professional white-collar jobs, as opposed to the low wages and status traditionally associated with TVET jobs. It was clear that they understood TVET to be something quite different to the new set of professional/technical knowledges championed by the Minister for Education, or the broad-based school curriculum explained by minor officials and teachers.

Participants in the parent focus groups all agreed that more community and public awareness about TVET was needed in rural communities so that more people, especially parents, were made aware of opportunities provided through TVET. Discussions with parents showed a wariness about TVET. And many expressed negative perceptions. In short, there is disconnection between the various hierarchical strata of the education system from policy makers at the top to parents and pupils at the bottom.

The levels represented in the previous chapter show the discursive differences that exist in the hierarchy. However, one aspect which strongly permeated Level 4 discourse was the negative view of TVET, far more than for any of the other levels.
This negative discourse of TVET is aptly demonstrated by a father who stated in Fijian vernacular in a focus group that,

\[
Ap vakabauta me da solia vei ira na luveda na galala me ra digitaka na cakacaka era gadreva, ia me da kua ni vakawelewele na itubutubu ka me da vukei ira ena nodra sasaga. E bibi me da vakamacalataka vei ira na gone ni kevaka era ulu malumalumu e tu tale eso na tabana ni vuli me vakana TVET e rawa ni ra rawaka kina
\]

Translation: I believe that our children should be given the freedom to decide and to choose the career of their choice. But as parents, we should not falter in our efforts to provide all the support they need. It is also important that we advise our academically weaker children that there are other avenues such as TVET where they are more likely to succeed (Parents Group 1, Participant 4, Nausori, February 2009).

This comment by a concerned father illustrates the common attitude prevalent in Fiji about TVET and exemplifies the mismatch between TVET discourse at the highest and the lowest levels of the hierarchy. While the Minister advances a discourse of TVET as the best course of action for Fiji, parents believe it to be a regrettable outcome for their children who fail at school. Taking TVET subjects is regarded as suited to academically weaker students. As PATVET Coordinator Emily Hazleman observed, ‘TVET is viewed as a second class cousin of education, academia being the first’ (Hazelman, Suva, June 2009).
The father’s comments above are representative of the attitudes that comprise Level 4 discourse of TVET. As responsible parents they are committed to their children’s education. Parents in the focus groups talked about their primary role as providers in the family. This means that their total support is essential. They acknowledged that the success of their children depended on their sacrifice as parents. There was consensus about the importance of education for the future well-being of the family. Parents talked about their dreams for their children such as having a good job, owning a house and a car.

At the same time, most parents subscribed to the notion of freedom that children ought to be given when deciding their careers. They conceded that putting pressure on their children about career choice was counterproductive. The consensus was that teachers were the best people to advise on suitable career choices for their children. They acknowledged that some of their children were not as academically-inclined as others, so they acknowledged TVET as an option, but with little enthusiasm.

9.4 Negative Discourse based on TVET Legacy

Negative perceptions of TVET centre on associations with examination failure and dropping out of school. This deficit discourse is the culmination of generational, socially constructed knowledge about TVET. Parents and pupils manifest it according to the different kinds of habitus associated with different kinds of class and socio-cultural backgrounds. Their understandings and
attitudes reflect the post-colonial historical legacy of TVET in Fiji that saw the formation of multi-craft and later vocational education.

Minister Bole admitted about TVET in interview that ‘we came up with this to cater for those who failed’ (Bole, Suva, February 2010). This comment by Bole aptly sums up the root source of the stigma associated with TVET. Apparently Bole was Minister for Education in the Alliance government in the early 80s during the introduction of the multi-craft initiative. This shows that during his tenure as government minister he has wielded his power and authority to affect significant changes in the infusion of TVET in Fiji’s education system. TVET in Fiji has been so saturated with these historical negativities that it is difficult to erase them. There is such a strong association with failure that whenever TVET is mentioned, lack of success at school is all people think about. One Fijian parent said in a focus group that,

_\textit{Na cakacaka e vakatau saraga vei ira na gone ena nodra sasaga.}
\textit{Kevaka era ulu kaukauwa era na rawa ni cakacaka vinaka me vaka na qasenivuli, nasi, vuniwai se loya. Ia ke sega e dodonu me ra saga tale eso na ka me vaka na vuli matai. O keda ga na itubutubu me tu vakarau me da qarava na nodra sasaga na luveda.}\ Translation: The type of career that any child can get mainly depends on their own effort in school. If they are smart and work hard, they may get a good job such as being a teacher, nurse, doctor or lawyer. If they are weak then they might have to try something else such as carpentry and joinery (Parents Group2, Participant 3, Labasa, 2009).
The remark above succinctly expresses the unfavourable perceptions that exist towards TVET. The mention of a good job in reference to teaching, nursing and law as opposed to carpentry and sewing conveys a great deal about the negative discourse of TVET in the eyes of the general public. The parents are either unaware, or prefer not to think about, the fact that there is now serious lack of employment opportunities in the Fiji public service, the employer to which they are implicitly referring in this historically-validated list of professional jobs. Conversely, as any reading of job advertisements in Fiji would show, there are many lucrative work opportunities for skilled tradespeople in the private sector. In short, the perception that TVET jobs involve hard manual labour, low wages and dirty conditions is common at the grassroots level. It is assumed that there are sufficient pleasant and attractive jobs for all who graduate and that getting a job is simply a matter of free choice.

9.5 Negative Discourse from Teachers

Some teachers in secondary school shared similar negative perceptions to parents. The focus group for teachers provided an avenue for them to express their pragmatic views about TVET and its place in Fiji. Teachers made comments based on their classroom experiences with a variety of students who succeeded or failed in examinations. Such experiences are repeated over and over through the years. When teachers represent an association between weak students and TVET, they implicitly make a historical link to the early years of vocational training and its purpose. As Minister Bole stated, vocational training
in the form of multi-craft was initially designed for school dropouts and examination failures. That is the history and legacy of vocational education and training in Fiji. The system that is in place today still carries that legacy of failure and remedial measures, which affects the way TVET is viewed.

A teacher-participant commenting about the value of TVET in his school claimed that 'our students are not very intelligent. Many are below average and with the help of TVET they will be able to become something and earn a living' (Group 4 Participant 4, Suva, May 2009). This comment demonstrates how teachers measure students' abilities and capabilities in the school system. Intelligence in this case is measured by examination scores. Their competencies and practical skills are not considered. Another teacher stated that 'not all students can be doctors, lawyers or teachers so those with average IQ should pursue TVET jobs' (Group 3 Participant 4, Nadi, April 2009). There seems to be a consistent belief that people who end up with TVET jobs have less intelligence than others. Yet many technical jobs today require specialised training, skills and, often, tertiary qualifications.

If teachers have these negative views then there is the likelihood that they will express them in their classrooms. Another teacher added about TVET that 'I think it is a really important subject because lots of our Fijian students can earn their living through its training' (Group 4 Participant 3, Suva, May 2009). While this comment may have a slight positive connotation in reference to employment, there is a rather negative race-based notion being expressed. The teacher is referring to Indigenous Fijian pupils, who are more likely to fail their

It is common knowledge that Indo-Fijian students have consistently performed better than Indigenous Fijian students in national examinations and continue to do so. Puamau (2002, p. 67-68) argues that ‘Fijian under-achievement in schooling can be attributed in large part to the inherited structures from our colonial past’ (pp. 67–68). Formal education was introduced into Fiji as a key part of the colonising efforts of both the occupying British forces, and Christian missionaries. The early model of education for Fijian children was one that would ‘prepare a workforce that would occupy subordinate positions in factories and offices’ (Tuinamuana, 2007, p. 116) – one that indicated low academic expectations and looked towards the later introduction of vocational programmes for Indigenous Fijian pupils. Many Indigenous Fijian families today, especially in rural areas, still hold resentful views of TVET as a second class education option created for the natives within the latter period of the British colonial regime.

9.6 Negative Discourse at Community Level

Within Level 4 discourse, parents, teachers, community leaders and peers tend to perpetuate negative perceptions about TVET at community/village levels. The historical association of TVET with school failure is exacerbated by lack of awareness and information about contemporary TVET initiatives and career paths. This lack of awareness is a major problem in the community. At the same
time, tertiary institutions, government departments and NGOs have been facilitating skills training in rural communities under the label of TVET. These influences and trends combine to form the negative discourse about TVET at community level which can obstruct young people from taking up training opportunities when they are offered. For example, some young people are aware of skills training in their community but feel that they do not want to participate. Emele Navunicagi pointed out the example of agriculture training that was offered to youth in Northern Fiji,

The problem is that youths here are not really interested in agriculture. Some villagers including parents query why they need to attend skills training in agriculture when they are already doing subsistence agriculture on a daily basis. This is the attitude they have towards agriculture training. They don’t realize that our agriculture training involves more than they think. We teach additional things such as time management and budgeting that can help them become more productive. Our training also provides tools, seeds and fertiliser for all participants (Navunicagi, Labasa, March 2009).

Navunicagi talked about the provision of free farming tools, seeds and fertilisers for trainees, which are an incentive for attending the programme. She also talked about pride and ego. Some Indigenous Fijians in villages will not take advice from outsiders. For example, Navunicagi has been talking to Indigenous Fijian farmers in the northern region about changing their crops. The reason she gives is that ‘Indians plant vegetables which give them faster return whereas
Fijians farm *dalo*¹ (taro) and *yaqona*² (kava) which take longer’ (Navunicagi, Labasa, March 2009). She claimed that villagers who attended these training programmes were reaping the benefits.

In contrast those who insisted on farming only taro and kava had problems finding suitable markets and continued to get slow returns. It is the influence of habitus that makes it difficult for them to make this decision about changing crops. Vegetable farming has always been the traditional farming area of Indo-Fijians. But Indigenous Fijians have always remained with taro and kava farming because it is linked to their culture and society.

Navunicagi added that many Indigenous Fijians in rural communities and villages continue to think that TVET is only for those who drop out of school at junior secondary level. They do not realize that TVET has categories and steps which can lead to graduate and even postgraduate qualifications. People still cling to aspirations of white-collar jobs in government departments rather than opening up their thinking towards opportunities for TVET graduates in Fiji.

9.7 Negative Discourse from Students

There were four categories of focus group conducted for students in the case study schools (see methodology chapter for details). The first was with students in junior secondary school (Forms 3-4), followed by those at senior secondary

---
¹Dalo is a corm root crop that is a premier staple food in Fiji and some Asia and Pacific island countries.
²Yaqona is the Fijian name for Kava (Piper methysticum), the traditional national drink in Fiji.
level (Forms 5-7). The third was with students taking vocational courses and then those taking the *Matua*³ programme.

The table below represents the numbers in the focus groups for students in each school. The Suva school was the only one able to accommodate all four levels because of the availability of diverse programmes in the school. Each group is discussed separately below.

**Table 9.1: Focus Groups of Student-Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level /Category</th>
<th>SCHOOL 1 (Nausori)</th>
<th>SCHOOL 2 (Labasa)</th>
<th>SCHOOL 3 (Nadi)</th>
<th>SCHOOL 4 (Suva)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JUNIOR (Forms 3 - 4)</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=42</td>
<td>n=34</td>
<td>n=44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENIOR (Forms 5 - 7)</td>
<td>n=15</td>
<td>n=16</td>
<td>n=64</td>
<td>n=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOCATIONAL</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n=12</td>
<td>n=10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATUA (Forms 6 - 7)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n=60⁴</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**9.7.1 Junior secondary level (Forms 3 and 4)**

The focus groups at junior secondary level (Forms 3 – 4) were organised in the form of class discussions. Group numbers were bigger than a normal focus group but this was because it involved a whole class of students. The discussions happened on occasions where the researcher had to supervise

³*Matua* Programme is offered to adults in the community who wish to complete their secondary level education. This programme is conducted in only one of the case study schools of this research.

⁴ This figure represents two levels of *Matua*. Thirty Form 6 level students and thirty Form 7 level students
classes when teachers were absent. Participants were asked to talk about their career aspirations and what they would do to achieve their goals.

A few participants were reluctant to share their aspirations openly in class, yet overall, in the four case study schools over 85% of participants (139 out of 163) at junior secondary level were able to clearly articulate their career aspirations. This challenges to some extent the comment by Minister Bole that students below Form 6 were incapable of making sound career judgments because they lacked maturity. A clear majority of students at this level (n=147 or at least 90%) talked about aspiring to become doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, managers and so forth. They were also able to talk about their reasons for these choices. The question remains though as to whether these were sound choices, given the nature of the labour market and the difficulty of gaining competitive university entry grades.

A very small number (n=16) deviated from this trend and talked about technical labour-intensive jobs such as farming, carpentry tailoring and self-employment. For this handful of individuals it was mainly because they came from families that were commercially successful as farmers, contractors or owners of small businesses. One participant wanted to continue her mother's money-lending business, while another was already in a small business venture selling cooked food at the Suva market on weekends. For many participants, justification for their chosen career directions revolved around: improving their community status, earning higher incomes and meeting the expectations of their parents. One participant illustrated this when she said,
My goal is to become a nurse so I can go overseas and earn a lot of money...like my aunty who is a nurse in Dubai. I don't like science much but I have to study hard to get into nursing school (Female junior student, 14 years old, School 2, February 2009).

The comment above shows two things about career decision-making among children in Fiji. The first is that children learn from and emulate adults in their community, an illustration of social reproduction process (see Chapter 4). In this case the girl has learned about success from her aunt, who is a nurse overseas, and is attempting to follow her footsteps. She is obviously her role model and one whom she admires as the epitome of success and education. This knowledge learned in the family provides motivation for the girl to study science, despite not being too keen about it.

The second part of the comment above suggests that the student is determined to become a nurse in the future because of the high income nurses earn overseas. It is common knowledge in Fiji that nurses earn substantially greater salaries overseas in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East. The Fiji Nurses Association General Secretary Kuini Lutua reported that there were more Fiji nurses working overseas than in Fiji (FNA, 2010). That explains the popularity of nursing as a career direction among women in Fiji. That is also the reason why a private organisation in Fiji established the second nursing school in the country, the Sangam School of Nursing, in 2004.
Another student-participant sharing his career aspiration in the focus group said that,

I want to become a policeman when I grow up because my father is a policeman. My mother is a primary school teacher. They’re both working. They want me to be a policeman so that I can help people. I think it’s a good job for me because I’m tough and smart (Male junior student, 13 years old, School 1, January 2009).

The aspirational comment once again shows the prevalence of social learning and emulation of close adult role models. In this case the boy’s choice of career replicates the habitus of the family milieu where he grew up. The boy aspires to become a policeman because his father is one. His reasoning has to do with his perception that law enforcement is a tough job and requires physically tough people. His self-image is that he is tough and therefore suited for this kind of job. His certainty about the suitability of this career is grounded in his habitus, which involves the unconscious conditioning and socialisation that he gets from his family and relatives. It appears from the comment that the student has been habituated to believe that he ought to be a policeman like his father. A policeman is considered a high status career in Fiji like teaching and nursing.

Another aspect of the comment above is that the student mentioned his mother was a primary school teacher. He emphasised that both his parents worked. It is therefore logical that the dual career parents of this student may be attempting to protect their family status and reputation by insisting that he pursue the same guaranteed career direction as his father.
This supports the notion of how cultural capital is developed and passed on within families. It seems that many parents are concerned that their children may not get the best value out of the cultural capital inherited from the family if they venture outside normalised career expectations. A trusted career in the police force would gain the boy the respect of his relatives and community. Career, status and respect go hand-in-hand. Hence, parents are more likely to insist that their children maintain mainstream education instead of TVET because TVET is not associated with career, status and respect, but with a job at the level of day-today survival.

A female participant said in the class focus group interview that,

In the future I would like to be a bank officer because I like to handle money. I think it’s a good job for me because I am good in commerce subject. I also like the uniform that they (bank officers) wear. I want to work in a bank because it is air conditioned (Female junior student, 14 years old, School 3, April 2009).

Her comments reflect the prestige and comfort attached to working in a bank as a white collar career. It is highly likely she is acquainted with someone who works in a bank, or has some reason to go there often and observe the female bank tellers. The mention of the tailored uniforms that bank officers wear and the comfort of the air conditioned work environment show that this is very appealing for young women.
The girl added that she would need to get a university degree in commerce to strengthen her chances. This indicates that the student is aware of the academic expectations of her career aspiration and she is prepared to strive for it. This was the case throughout the focus group sessions with junior students. Many were quite clear about jobs they aspired to, and they had a reasonable idea about the qualification needed for that job. A male student-participant shared his interest in aircraft engineering saying that,

When I grow up I want to be an aircraft engineer because they have good pay. I like aeroplanes a lot and I’m good in Technical Drawing, Basic Science and Maths. My uncle works at Nausori Airport and he advised me about this job (Male junior student, 14 years old, School 1, February 2009).

Notably, the boy has learned about the career from an adult family member. Aircraft engineering is a field of high demand in Fiji’s aviation industry. Yet many people (including students) are unaware that it is part of TVET, broadly defined, because of its high academic requirements and high social status in the community. Many are not even aware that there is only one aircraft engineering course in Fiji and that is provided by the Fiji Institute of Technology (now FNU), an identified post-secondary TVET institution. In other words, this boy has selected an advanced technical career that matches Minister Bole’s new (Level 1) discourse of TVET professionalism in Fiji, but he is probably unaware of it, and so is his family.
The boy later clarified that his uncle is a taxi driver based at Nausori Airport, which is not a high-status job, and the boy does not seek to emulate his uncle. The uncle’s advice does make sense though in terms of matching the academic strengths of the student nephew with aircraft engineering. It may be deduced from this that the uncle’s interactions with workers at the airport has provided him with valuable information, which he has used to advise his nephew towards a proven career that is valid within the habitus inculcated from the family.

Three of the student-participants quoted above talked about the subjects they needed to take to achieve their career goals, while the fourth talked about the physique and strength needed for a police job. One of them said that she was good in commerce. She was referring to Accounting and Economics which has been merged into Commerce, a compulsory subject at junior secondary level in Fiji. The student who wanted to be a nurse was able to relate science subjects with entry to nursing. All four junior secondary students were aware of some requirements needed for their career aspirations. This implies that junior secondary students are capable of making projections and plans about their future, and can match some of their interests in school with possible career directions.

A generational change in access to technology means that young people in Fiji have access to much more information than their parents did at that age. They are more exposed to ideas and knowledgeable about how to succeed because they have the internet and television. Even schools in remote locations of Fiji
such as Nadarivatu\(^5\) and Kadavu Island\(^6\) now have internet access. Students can interact not only with local peers and friends, but with acquaintances from all over the world via social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. They also have access to mobile phones. This researcher for instance asked about phones in Form 3 and 4 classes and found that in all case study schools at least 50% of students in each class had mobile phones. This is a marked generational change and demonstrates the information technology that is now available for young people in Fiji to help them communicate and make important decisions. The next section examines focus group responses from senior secondary students.

9.7.2 **Focus group of senior secondary students (Forms 5, 6 and 7)**

The full-class focus groups for senior students began with the distribution of handouts which contained questions for the class discussion (see Appendix 10). After a brief overview and introduction from the researcher, each student-participant was asked to share with the class their career aspirations, their subject combinations and if they had a back-up plan for the future. At the end they were asked to say what they knew about TVET. Form 5 is the level claimed by many teachers to be point of no return because students are supposed to have selected subjects that are geared towards a career goal. Form 6 and 7 is the stage advocated by Minister Bole as the most appropriate for students to make career plans and decisions.

\(^5\)Nadarivatu Secondary School is located in the mountainous interior of Fiji’s main island VitiLevu.

\(^6\)Kadavu Island is about 100km south of Suva. Schools visited by this researcher that had internet access were Kadavu Provincial School and Vunisea Secondary School.
108 out of 114 senior students (94.7%) were determined to achieve high status, well-paid careers. Popular choices were: teacher, doctor, accountant, nurse, flight attendant and engineer. Nursing was a very popular choice among female participants while engineering was a popular choice with male participants. These male students identified computer engineering, civil engineering, aircraft engineering and electronics, once again apparently without awareness that engineering is part of the new professional TVET emphasis promoted by Minister Bole. It seems the Level 1 transformative discourse about TVET has not yet penetrated to the level of student career decision-making at the senior secondary stage. It can be argued that school pupils are the most distant from the position of power symbolised by the minister and appear to be rather well insulated from discursive change in the curriculum and career guidance. Until the dynamics of information exchange from the top to the bottom levels of TVET (and vice versa) improve, changes in attitudes and perceptions in Level 4 discourse will likely remain slow.

This finding of more or less traditional professional and para-professional career aspirations of senior students supports the findings of an earlier study conducted in Fiji by Nilan et al (2006). There a majority of senior secondary school students were found to have similar career aspirations. Five years later little has changed. This seems to suggest that negative attitudes towards TVET had not changed much in the preceding five years despite the development of a transformative professional discourse of TVET at the core of government.
Another important finding from the focus group was that the majority of senior students were unaware of TVET and could not articulate what it was. Only 8 out of 114 students knew something about TVET. They referred to manual skill courses suitable for school dropouts and failures. 106 out of 114 expressed no awareness or knowledge of TVET. A common response was ‘I don’t know anything about TVET’ (Male senior student, 17 years, School 2, February 2009). This goes to show that TVET integration into the school system has not very successful or effective so far. Tellingly, even the majority of focus group students in the two case study schools which have strong TVET franchise programmes claimed to know nothing about TVET. This suggests that a wide gap still exists between mainstream academic and TVET study in the Fiji school system. Most senior students could not explain what TVET was about, yet these students are in the process of making career plans and decisions.

The majority of senior students (over 90%) reported choosing subject combinations to match their career aspirations and interests. This showed that many senior students have a reasonable conception (or grasp) regarding the expectations and relevant qualifications needed for their desired careers. Many were able to articulate which institutions they would attend and the qualifications needed such as a diploma or degree. However, they did not seem to have much information about the likelihood of achieving entry to those institutions.

They were asked whether they had any back-up plans in the case of not achieving a first career choice. One simply said ‘no back-up plan’ (Female senior student, 17 years, School 3, March 2009) to express the fact that she
had not thought about it at all. Another participant said that ‘I would go back to
the village and plant yaqona’ (Male senior student, 17 years, School 4, May
2009), which is viable considering that yaqona is a lucrative crop in Fiji.
However, many responded by mentioning a second high status career as their
back-up plan.

One male participant said that he would like to become an electrical engineer.
For back-up he said, ‘If I don’t achieve my career goal I would be a policeman’
(Male senior student, 16 years, School 2, February 2009). This is
understandable, but it also implies the extent to which certain career aspirations
have become so culturally embedded that they restrict the imagination of
students, who are unable to see beyond them. Their habitus, absorbed and
learned from the distinctive social and cultural relations of their families and
communities, means they think about and imagine careers within the confines
of certain trusted comfort zones shared with the adults in their environment.

Senior students were asked what advice they would offer their peers who failed
the examination. Many talked about advising their friends to re-sit the
examination and to keep trying. Only 9 out of 114 mentioned alternative
pathways such as TVET through FIT or TPAF. One participant said, ‘don’t give
up easily…the best thing to do is to repeat or go to vocational or other tertiary’
(Female senior student, 18 years, School 3, March 2009). She articulates three
viable options. The first is to repeat the final year of senior secondary school.
The second is to join a vocational programme. The third has to do with a tertiary
level programme that is a TVET franchise. This student was quite
knowledgeable compared to her peers, yet she shared the common perception that vocational education serves as an alternative for students who fail their final examination.

In summary, senior secondary participants demonstrated in the focus groups an awareness of their career aspirations and the training they needed to achieve them. Findings reaffirmed findings from a similar study conducted in Fiji by Nilan et al. (2006), which showed senior students were more inclined to aspire to white collar jobs and the professions than TVET jobs. Responses also demonstrated the disparity and gap that still exists between TVET study and mainstream academic study in the secondary school system. While Minister Bole is keen on bridging this disparity, not much change seems to be taking place at the lowest level of TVET discourse (Level 4). Comments from senior students show that there is still an element of suspicion and negativity regarding TVET in the community. It is still considered a second rate programme suited for school failures and dropouts. The next section examines the focus group responses from TVET student-participants in the case study schools.

9.7.3 Focus group of vocational (TVET) students

Focus groups with vocational students were conducted in two case study schools because they had active TVET franchise programmes. Ten students participated in Suva, while twelve participated in Nadi. The objective of the discussion was to gain some insight into the decision-making process and circumstances that led students towards TVET.
The researcher began by asking participants to share with the rest of the group their reasons for choosing TVET. 16 out of 22 students stated that TVET was their only alternative if they wanted to get a job because they failed the Form 6 examination. One student said, ‘I wanted to repeat Form 6 but my Home Economics teacher advised me to join vocational because I could do better in a catering course’ (Female vocational student, 18 years, School 3, March 2009). She added, ‘this programme will help me get a job at a hotel here in Nadi’. Her comment reflects one of the key points raised in the focus groups; that vocational training was specific and tailor-made for areas of high demand such as hospitality, manufacturing and construction. That is the leverage TVET teachers use to promote TVET study in secondary schools. Another participant stated that,

The only reason I’m in vocational is because I don’t want to go back to the village and be a farmer. I’m doing Trade Certificate in Carpentry and Joinery so that I can be a qualified builder and join a big company (Male vocational student, 17 years, School 4, May 2009).

The student was aware of big construction companies and of major projects taking place in Suva and was keen to join them after he graduates. These are opportunities for income that academic students would not even consider because of the negative perceptions attached to TVET. Students in the focus groups were excited by the opportunities presented for them through TVET. One student said that, ‘I’m doing a Trade Certificate in Automotive Engineering
so that I can start my own garage one day’ (Male vocational student, 18 years, School 4, May 2009). He added in the discussion that he worked part-time in a garage on weekends and earned money. This student is talking about a mechanical repair shop for motor vehicles. He hopes that the knowledge and qualification he gets from the TVET course will enable him to start his own business.

Six of the participants said that they passed their Form 6 examinations but had decided to join TVET because they it was a logical choice. Even though they passed their Form 6 examinations, the marks were too low for them to enter Form 7, which leads on through university study to the professions. Therefore they decided to take the next best step which was studying TVET. All the students admitted they would still opt for white-collar careers if their circumstances were different. They also agreed it took a while to adjust to the programme. Many said that it felt different to be a vocational student because of the stigma attached to it.

I felt low when I joined vocational because I used to think only smart students go to Form 7. Some students look down on us because we’re vocational (Female vocational student, 18 years, School 4, May 2009).

The sentiments expressed by the student above succinctly express the common feeling many students have about TVET. The stigma is so strong that

---

7 Most schools require a pass mark of more than 250/400 to enter Form 7. There are variations in different schools.
Minister Bole even suggested during interview that there should be a name-change for TVET in Fiji. He maintained the term ‘vocational’ has become overly synonymous with failure. It is this association with failure that repels many students from choosing TVET. This is an area of challenge that will be explored further in the next chapter.

Participants in the vocational student focus groups described varying levels of support from parents. Some of them admitted that their parents were reluctant about the programmes but eventually agreed. Some parents saw it as an opportunity for employment which should be pursued. There were also those who did not know what to do and just let their children decide, for example,

My parents live in my village in Vanua Levu. They expected me to do well in school but I failed Form 6. They don’t have much money and told me to come back to the village. My aunty is paying my fees now. This is my last chance. (Female vocational student, 17 years, School 3, March 2009).

The student above describes the expectations that her parents had for her and how disappointed they were when she failed. She is fortunate to have a relative who was willing to pay her $800 TVET course fee. Apparently her aunt was a school teacher who supported TVET. This girl is one of the lucky few who have been given a second chance after examination failure to achieve something for themselves. There are many anecdotes from local communities in Fiji about young people who failed the national examination and were left to fend for
themselves. This researcher had the privilege of talking with many youth in rural as well as urban communities during fieldwork for this project. The story is the same in many cases. The student goes to school, fails and returns to the village or just stays at home. They are not adequately prepared by the school system for work force participation. Sharma expressed it well when he said that ‘these students did not fail, it is the system that failed them’ (Sharma, Suva, May 2009). This implies that TVET integration in the school system has not been effective. None of the TVET student participants had imagined ever being a vocational student. But things have changed for them and they all agreed that they seemed to be better off because they are on their way to achieving a Trade Certificate qualification. A few of them were considering taking it a step further and getting a diploma or even a degree.

There were incidences of a conflict of interest between parents and children in regard to TVET study. A TVET catering teacher in a case study school gave this example,

A student enrolled in my Hospitality Catering class was pulled out of the programme by her mother. The girl wanted to work in the hotel industry but her mother wanted her to do science and become a nurse. The mother said that she was not paying her school fees for her to get a menial job (Tatatau, Suva, April 2009).

The example above demonstrates that parents fear the future ramifications of the choices that their children make. Parents naturally have good intentions for
their children, to be the best they can be. In the case of the student above, the parent was not happy with the choice of her daughter because it is beneath her expectation as a mother. She wants her daughter to pursue nursing, which is highly regarded in the Fijian community, even though her daughter had different job ambitions.

In summary the TVET focus groups illustrate the traditional perception that TVET is a second rate option. All students would rather have remained in mainstream academia and pursued white collar aspirations if they had passed their Form 6 examinations with good marks. Surprisingly for them, TVET has provided an opportunity for them to reassess their options and capabilities. While it has been difficult coping with the stigma associated with TVET, there is a silver lining in the fact that they will graduate with tertiary level qualifications at the end of their programmes. The example of the mother rejecting TVET for her daughter shows the extent to which Level 4 negative discourse about TVET can dictate the direction of people’s lives.

There is emphasis on respectability in terms of job choices. The assumption for many was that TVET leads to low status jobs. Yet in Fiji today TVET can lead to economic capital that will then generate a different kind of respect. The new TVET in Fiji now offers higher qualifications and career opportunities overseas, as well as better financial rewards. People in Fiji seem to imagine that academic cultural capital will somehow automatically generate economic capital later on, but current labour market evidence contradicts this for all but a few elite professions. The truth is that many TVET graduates from Fiji have managed to
land good jobs locally as well as overseas where their specific skills are in demand. The next section looks at the focus group interview with Matua programme students.

### 9.7.4 Focus group with Matua students

This researcher was fortunate to have been given opportunities to talk with Matua programme students in the Suva case study school. There were two classes. Thirty students were in the Form 6 class and thirty students were in the Form 7, all of whom were Indigenous Fijians. These were all adult learners and their ages ranged from late teens to late thirties. Participants were given handouts containing questions and volunteers were asked to share their stories with the class. At the end of each session the handouts were collected with their responses (see Appendix 10).

The first question posed to students had to do with their reason for joining the Matua programme. All 60 participants said that they wanted to complete their secondary education. Many of them had dropped out of school for personal or family reasons and this was an opportunity for them. One participant said that,

> I left school when I was fifteen years old so I went back to the village. I found that life was hard, so I enrolled in this programme to get a better life (Matua female student, 23 years, School 4 May 2009).

This element of regret was common to many participants in the Matua programme. Many said that they were complacent and lazy during their school
days and that caused them to fail their examinations. Some said that they saw no use in schooling and decided to skip school. Lack of discipline was highlighted by participants as the main cause of their failure in school. Peer socialising, cigarette smoking, glue sniffing, playing pool and bus riding were some favoured alternatives to attending school. However, leaving school and facing hardships gave them the opportunity to reassess their lives and direction. Many had been ill-prepared to cope with pressures of everyday adult life. They eventually realised that education was essential for a better life,

When I was schooling I don’t think about anything because my parents looked after me. Now that I’m an adult I have to think of everything – food, clothes, rent, bills and my children. I’m a casual labourer and the money is no good. I want to finish my Form 6 and do something better (Matua male student, 26 years, School 4 May 2009).

The participant above is talking about the changes that have taken place in his life since he left school. His responsibilities as a husband and father have given him a new perspective in life. He has come to the realisation that education is very important. That is why he is doing night classes in the Matua programme to complete his Form 6 education. He intends to proceed into Form 7 if he gets a good result.

There were also those who attributed their situations to forces beyond their control. Some talked about the lack of support they got from parents while
others talked about illnesses and family circumstances as their cause of dropout. One participant shared that,

I was in Form 5 when my father died so my mother told me to leave school and look after my younger brothers and sisters. Now I’m married with three children. I want to finish my Form 6 and maybe do Form 7 (Matua female student, 33 years, School 4 May 2009).

The participant above added that once all her children started attending primary school she decided that she owed it to herself to complete her education. When asked, she said that she had always wanted to be a teacher.

On the question of career aspirations, 47 out of 60 participants aspired to traditional white-collar jobs while 13 opted for technical / TVET careers. The popular choice for females was once again nursing while males demonstrated a wider range of choices.

A significant finding was that Matua students were just as ignorant about TVET as senior secondary students. A clear majority of 51 said that they had no knowledge of TVET. Only 9 had a reasonably accurate grasp of TVET. It seems even at this remedial level, there is still little awareness about TVET. Here we have a group of people who have been a given a second chance through the Matua programme, only to possibly end up as another unemployable product of the school system. As it stands these mature-age
Matua students may end up in the same pool of unemployed or underemployed workers in the future as young senior secondary school graduates.

In summary the introduction of the Matua programme is refreshing in the sense that it offers hope to many adults who wish to complete their secondary education. However, even here there is still a serious lack of awareness and interest in TVET. This finding demonstrates that across the board in Level 4 discourse there has been little change in the mindset and attitude of people about TVET. They either know nothing about it or regard it warily and with suspicion as second rate education that leads to low status jobs.

9.8 Conclusion

This chapter has continued to critically discuss diverse discourses of TVET from the centre to the periphery. Level 4 discourse has been found to be primarily negative, yet it is widely shared by teachers, parents and students. The poor regard for TVET indicated by data from interviews and focus groups illustrates the unequal opportunities and outcomes perpetuated by Fiji’s education system, outcomes that do not currently give the greatest benefit to the nation. While Minister Bole has been instrumental in promoting a new transformational professional discourse of TVET aimed at junior secondary level, there seems to be little change in entrenched negativity towards TVET at the grassroots level, articulated so clearly in Level 4 discourse. Changes are rapid at the top and reflect political will for change. However, this is not being effectively filtered down to those at lower levels, especially parents, students and communities.
The next chapter (Chapter 10) synthesises the findings from previous chapters and proposes a new discourse of TVET for Fiji. The new discourse advocates a positive vision of TVET. It attempts to encapsulate and blend together the interests and concerns of the major stakeholders into a unifying system. The new discourse has a new name and is likely to clarify the link between education and employment in Fiji.
Chapter TEN: Advancing TVET in Fiji

10.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a synthesis of the descriptive quantitative results in Chapter 6 with qualitative findings in Chapters 7, 8, and 9. The initial discussions in this chapter weave together the key themes to achieve a productive representation of the findings of this study. The chapter concludes by providing visual illustrations (mind maps) and models to showcase new ideas that have emerged from the findings. The primary objective of this chapter is to provide closure to the investigations driven by the research aims provided at the beginning of this thesis. In addition it attempts to construct a new identity for the future of TVET in Fiji.

10.1.1 Structure of the chapter

This chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part revisits the concept of influence. It reiterates the significance of key influential figures in the habitus of students and their contributions to the choices that students make. The second part of this chapter re-examines the previously identified TVET discourse levels. This is followed by an analysis of the connections between environmental influences and TVET discourses in the lives of students in Fiji. The third part of the chapter assesses the themes from Chapter 7 about the responses from major stakeholders on the key role of TVET in addressing Fiji’s major socio-economic needs. These stakeholder responses are essential for establishing a
clearer perspective about the wider role of TVET in the economic endeavours of Fiji. The argument about the usefulness of TVET in Fiji hinges on clarifying what major stakeholders in government, the private sector and the wider community perceive about TVET. The final part of this chapter integrates the concepts of influence and discourse about TVET in the context of Fiji’s education system and in terms of Fiji’s socio-economic capability and growth.

10.2 Influences in the Habitus of Students in Fiji

The results of the survey showed that there are key influential sources in the lives of students in Fiji. These sources are aligned with the main sites of socialisation such as home, school and peers / media that were discussed earlier. These elements are what Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to as microsystems in a child’s world. The older a young person becomes the wider the social interactions (microsystems) he or she becomes engaged in. In that sense toddlers have a smaller microsystem or interaction in the form of family, whereas teenagers have their peers, teachers and the wider community as their larger microsystem.

The first significant microsystem is parents / guardians who wield a lot of control and power in Fiji because of family and kinship ties. Parents and guardians are powerful because they provide sustenance, comfort and protection. They pay for health care, education, entertainment and simultaneously provide advice, encouragement and discipline for their children. Parents / guardians provide
these necessities because it is their responsibility. They do this with the hope that their children will grow into strong productive adults.

The second significant microsystem is teachers / school. Teachers represent the school system including tertiary institutions. They replicate the role of parents in the classroom because they provide a similar array of services to that of parents. Teachers actively socialise their pupils through their interactions in school. Teachers also determine the success of the curriculum because they are responsible for the delivery of lessons in the classroom.

Results from the survey showed that students in junior secondary school have a generally positive outlook about school. They indicated that they liked school because it taught them many useful things. The students also associated school with preparations for adulthood and for employment. These positive responses may be attributed to the success of teachers in imparting these values and ideas in the classroom. On the other hand, there were those who identified bullying, boring subjects and vindictive teachers. These are the negative aspects of school that are difficult to ignore. These contrasting images suggest the dynamic nature of school culture and experience. Teachers have a lot of responsibility because they are the adults and leaders in the classroom. They initiate and facilitate learning. As such they wield a lot of power and influence over the lives of their students. Therefore teachers would be in the ideal position to promote TVET to their pupils.
However, the lack of interest in TVET as indicated in this study suggests that teachers are not actively engaging in the promotion of TVET in school. The qualitative results show that while there is some acknowledgement about TVET there may still be a sense of reluctance about promoting it as a career direction. Many teachers and parents give students the freedom to pursue their career aspirations and perhaps do not encourage them to make decisions based on sound labour market advice.

The only source indicated in the quantitative data analyses to be a more powerful influence than teachers and parents was God. Religion and the belief in God have a central place in the lives of families in Fiji. The survey indicated that church leaders were a more influential source than government leaders, traditional leaders, peers and famous people.

However, responses from interviews with major stakeholders indicated an opposing view of influence, implying that the government is very powerful and influential in terms of policy making, programmes, initiatives and vision. The current government is in a unique position to make drastic policy changes and prompt implementations because of the lack of political opposition under the military dictatorship. This is aptly demonstrated by the new direction in favour of tertiary TVET that has been initiated by current Minister for Education Filipe Bole.

The media is another influential source to be reckoned with. It is represented in the survey by famous people, media personalities, sports stars and movie stars.
The media is a powerful and influential tool because of the messages that it can deliver through various mediums. However, the student survey showed that the media influence rating was comparatively low. This implies that teenage participants in the survey are not as naïve in absorbing media messages as some might have assumed. It seems that these young people knew the difference between entertainment and reality as indicated by their choices and ratings. They were able to distinguish what was important in their lives such as God, parents and teachers and less credible entities such as peers, famous people and government leaders.

10.2.1 The Web of Influence Model

The qualitative results reiterate the power of these influential sources in the lives of students. The synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings has resulted in the formation of a model to illustrate the nexus of factors that influence choices and interests of junior secondary school students. The Web of Influence (TWI) model demonstrates the key social actors and factors that are believed to shape perceptions and attitudes towards TVET in Fiji. This model expresses similar ideas to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model (1979) which describes four layers of influence which are the microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems. In The Web of Influence model these layers are represented as sources. The model has six main entities revolving in a 3-dimensional motion around the centre (student). These six entities are the main environmental factors that have emerged from data in the results chapters. Figure 10.1 shows that the key factors interconnect like a web and may explain the construction of values, knowledge and interests of students.
in junior secondary school. Since students also socialise intensely with each other, it is assumed that these influences are strengthened by peer influence.

---

**Figure 10.1: The Web of Influence (TWI)**

The model above suggests that students are exposed both intentionally and unintentionally to the influences of these sources in their environments. The decisions and choices they make are likely to be predicated upon the effects of these influences on them.
The model shows six main social influences in the lives of students. They are:

i. Government - policies, initiatives, programmes and funding
ii. Family – nuclear, extended and relatives
iii. Private sector- employers, tertiary education trainers
iv. School – policies, programmes and implementation
v. Media- TV, radio, newspapers and the internet
vi. Local community and religion – village, neighbourhood and church

The choices that students make can be argued as reflecting the effects of these influences. An example of this is that three quarters of survey respondents (75.4%) indicated that they were interested in white collar (professional, para professional, public servant and private sector) work as opposed to blue collar TVET careers (see Figure 6.5 in Chapter 6). The views expressed by respondents are not really mis-perceptions but real understandings based on their experiences that manifest in their habitus. This is because some of the adults with TVET training and blue-collar work are parents, relatives and neighbours of these respondents.

This data indicates that the content of influence has been consistent regardless of source. Moreover, despite coming from diverse backgrounds, the students were making similar career choices, which suggests that their exposure to the factors illustrated in the model above were the same. The overarching interpretation from both the quantitative and the qualitative data is that there is a lack of interest in TVET and TVET careers.
10.3 TVET Discourse in Fiji

The qualitative findings revealed a hierarchical structure in discourses of TVET in Fiji. Diverse and conflicting discourses emerged from the interview responses of stakeholders such as the education minister, senior government officials, school administrators, teachers, parents and students.

10.3.1 TVET discourse hierarchy

The discourse hierarchy reflected the positions of power of the different groups of stakeholders. At the top of the hierarchy (Level 1) is the Minister for Education Filipe Bole who portrays a transformative discourse. His vision and perception of TVET blurs the boundary between white collar and blue collar jobs, as they are traditionally understood in Fiji. Bole associates TVET with high paying, high qualification professions such as doctor, engineer, architect, nurse, and teacher. His innovative discourse is strengthened by his position of power and influence which he has wielded to make necessary policy changes to pave the way for the fulfilment of his vision for TVET in Fiji. His biggest achievement so far has been the creation of a TVET university in the form of the Fiji National University in 2010.

The next two positions in the hierarchy are Levels 2 and 3. Stakeholders here advocate an instrumentalist discourse of TVET with pathways leading to employment. They are senior and less senior government officials who share similar perceptions about TVET career pathways.
The difference between the two is that stakeholders in Level 2 believe that students should make decisions about their career in Form 5, whereas those in Level 3 indicate that decisions should start to be formed in primary school. The final level of the hierarchy (Level 4) is primarily a deficit discourse. It contains the majority of participants in this study: teachers, parents and students. These are people who are quite distant from any position of power and who are mere recipients of government policies and initiatives. Stakeholders in Level 4 have a suspicious outlook about TVET and changes in perception at this level are slow. Parents, students and some teachers perceive TVET as second class education suited for academically weaker students. Jobs associated with TVET at this level are low wage, labour intensive, blue collar occupations.

10.3.2 The TVET Discourse Model

As a result of the analysis of diverse conflicting discourses about TVET in Fiji, a model has been created to illustrate the hierarchies that exist but also the new opportunity that the discourses reveal. The TVET Discourse Model represents the complexity of intersecting and contrasting stakeholder views surrounding the issue of TVET. It provides a visual representation of the diverse nexus of factors that dictate discourses of TVET in Fiji and helps to provide a clearer perspective on such diversity. It also depicts the size of the stakeholder constituency for each level.
The model shows clearly that TVET has different interpretations for different groups of stakeholders in terms of proximity to, or distance from, the central point of policy decision-making. This model provides a vertical as well a lateral dimension of TVET perceptions. This is reflective of the fluid nature of responses from stakeholders as revealed in personal interviews. It also draws upon the insights yielded by analysis of the survey results.

The model above has a vertical pyramid shape which represents the four hierarchical categories of participants. The base of the model (Level 4) has a pentagon shape representing five factors. These are key factors shaping perceptions of TVET for the general public. They have been identified from
analysis of qualitative and quantitative responses. Each factor is not singular but multi-faceted. These Realms of Factors shape the lateral dimension of TVET discourse.

These realms of factors are:

F1 – Family, values, culture, attitude (roots)
F2 - Aspirations, goals, vision, motivation (abstractions)
F3 - Status, image, self-worth, pride (ego)
F4 - Rewards, jobs, career growth, money, opportunities (expected outcomes)
F5 - Social reality, education, potentials, circumstances (matching status quo)

Factor 1 (F1) refers to family background, race, religion, and the collective, cultural values and attitudes that come from these roots. These roots reflect the habitus of families and students and help shape identity.

Factor 2 (F2) refers to abstractions, sets of ideas, which may be held collectively or individually. They come from a variety of sources. F2 encompasses spirituality, aspirations, goals, dreams, visions and emotions. These sets of ideas are powerful in that they may be catalysts for motivation, drive and ambition.

Factor 3 (F3) refers specifically to how individuals perceive themselves. F3 refers to personal status, ego, self-image, self-worth, confidence and self-esteem.
Factor 4 (F4) refers to expectations of outcomes of goals and aspirations. F4 refers to financial rewards, jobs, promotions, wealth and social capital.

Factor 5 (F5) refers to social reality – the actual material conditions that prevail in people’s lives. F5 includes living circumstances, education, capabilities, resources and opportunities.

The vertical dimension of the model refers to the four hierarchical levels. There are clear demarcations between the four discourse levels as discussed earlier.

However, at the same time it was evident in the interviews that few stakeholders express consistent perceptions of TVET. They frequently moved between different kinds of discourse about TVET in their interviews. For example, while Minister for Education Filipe Bole strongly advocates a transformative discourse (Level 1), some of his comments could be interpreted as fluctuating between Levels 1 and 4. This suggests that there are mixed perceptions about TVET among stakeholders. While some may have clear positions about TVET, these are not necessarily fixed as illustrated by the minister’s comments. This fluidity and shifting position was also noticeable with other interview respondents such as Meo, Cavu, Hazelman, teachers and parents. These shifts were observed as follows: when respondents began their discussion about TVET they articulated a particular discourse level but then gradually proceeded to make comments that could be identified as matching other levels of discourse about TVET.
The shifts reflect the intertwining and perhaps overlapping meanings distributed throughout all levels of the discursive hierarchy. This was especially evident when participants expressed a negative discourse of TVET. For example, government officials who advocated the instrumentalist discourse in Levels 2 and 3 at times represented some negative stereotypes of TVET students, which was similar to views expressed at Level 4. This highlights a major obstacle for TVET reform and implementation because if such negativity permeates through all levels of discourse then it may well support the suspicion and incremental pace of change that characterises Level 4 discourse. An example of flexibility between discourse levels is the comment from Minister Bole about the career decisions that students make. He said that,

For most people, contact with people of different professions, especially for students in their formative years, influences the type of career direction they may take (Bole, Suva, February 2010).

Here Bole demonstrates the flexibility of his discourse. While he has been emphatic about career decisions being formally made at Form 6 level, he also acknowledges the possibility of influences at various levels of primary and secondary education. This suggests the possibility that aspirations and determination about career directions may have already been sown before Form 6.

Another example of fluctuating discourse is expressed by a teacher-participant (see Chapter 8.4) who was advocating the instrumentalist discourse (Level 2).
He said that, ‘a TVET person is well equipped to adjust to any industrial related work and … they are in demand’ (Teacher Group 3 Participant 2, Nadi, April 2009). While the comment expresses an advantage of TVET in terms of employment opportunities, it indirectly advocates the deficit discourse (Level 4) by its emphasis on industrial work. The implication of the comment is that TVET is associated with industrial labour but not with professional careers.

10.4 Discourses and Value of TVET in Fiji

Arguments in favour of TVET depended upon the perceptions of stakeholders about the value and place of TVET in Fiji. The qualitative responses in Chapter 7 revealed that reputable stakeholders in positions of leadership such as Minister for Education Filipe Bole, former Director of Fiji Institute of Technology Kolinio Meo and the Head of School of Education at USP Associate Professor Akhilanand Sharma all expressed strong convictions that TVET was crucial for economic growth in Fiji. They emphasised the role of TVET in meeting human resource needs of Fiji, the employability of TVET graduates, the diverse range of skills and qualifications on offer through TVET, and the inclusiveness of TVET programmes.

A popular view that emerged at Levels 1-3 was that educational reform was necessary for TVET to be effectively integrated in Fiji’s education system. To overcome numerous stumbling blocks in the community, two qualities can be identified as necessary. The first is vision and the second is commitment. For example, Minister Bole has been instrumental in paving the way for TVET in Fiji.
His term as Minister for Education has resulted in numerous policy changes that have directly resulted in the shift of TVET from the periphery of education to become part of mainstream academia. He has overseen the establishment of a TVET university that offers graduate and post-graduate qualifications for a variety of TVET courses. But his ultimate achievement for TVET is the generation of a transformative discourse where he has blurred the divide between TVET jobs and white collar jobs. He advances a powerful discourse where TVET jobs are promoted as highly qualified, including high paid careers such as medicine, engineering, and education. This demonstrates vision and commitment.

The strength of this promotion by Minister Bole rests on his position of power and influence. One could only speculate what would happen if there was a change of leadership in the Ministry of Education. Beyond Bole’s influence there is a need for continuity and shared vision. If stakeholders at Levels, 2, 3 and 4 were to share the minister’s vision, commitment and interpretation of TVET, there would no doubt be better integration and value of TVET in Fiji. However, as the last two chapters have shown, this is not the case at present. Parents, teachers and students need to be educated about the potential of TVET so that they can make sound decisions about the future that better match the new paradigm of TVET in Fiji.

The rest of this chapter draws upon the findings of this study to map out a new direction for TVET in Fiji that engages with transforming the perceptions of the general public and minor government officials.
10.5 The Problem of Awareness of TVET in Fiji

A review of the status of awareness of TVET is necessary to put into perspective the new ideas synthesised in this chapter. This review is crucial because awareness represents degrees of knowledge and understanding about TVET in the community. This review is based on the results of responses of this study. Awareness about TVET may be attributed to the habitus and cultural capital of stakeholders such as teachers, students and parents. A significant point that emerged from Chapter 6 was that 81% of survey respondents who identified TVET with skills training had fathers with manual labour jobs. This suggests that choices made by students reflected familiar circumstances, reiterating the concept of habitus. This review progresses from the family and extends to school, the village/neighbourhood and community. In addition, there is discussion about TVET awareness strategies in three strata: family, village/neighbourhood (including schools) and the wider community. That is, the micro, median and macro levels of Fijian society.

10.5.1 School awareness

The Minister for Education Filipe Bole stated unequivocally that ‘Education officers are supposed to talk to schools about TVET’ (Bole, Suva, February 2009). This assertion was supported by senior education officials interviewed in this research such as Tuisawau (Suva, January 2009) and Kaisau (Suva, January 2009) who echoed the remarks of the minister. Unfortunately, the feedback from teachers in the focus groups does not support this. Teachers
revealed that they had never been briefed by education officials regarding TVET awareness. A majority had never come across a seminar or workshop on TVET. Teachers who teach TVET subjects such as Industrial Arts and Office Technology said that they attended workshops but the focus was on lesson topics and practical matters. There was little emphasis on the wider role of TVET in Fiji. The above revelation about teacher awareness implies that a problem exists in the implementation of policy at school level. On one hand the minister is saying that teachers are supposed to be briefed by education officers, however there seems to be little progress on the ground. There is a ripple effect when such policies are not implemented. It creates a wider gap between decision makers and grassroots people at the lowest end of the spectrum. That is why the emphasis in earlier sections of this chapter was on the importance of shared vision and commitment.

Logic suggests that if teachers have limited knowledge of TVET, there is limited possibility for their students to know about it. This implies that there is a possible fault in the filtration of information and subsequently the delegation of tasks from ministry to school levels. There is also the possibility that new initiatives by government are still in the process of being implemented. Either way, the only form of TVET exposure so far in schools is compulsory TVET subjects in junior secondary level and the optional TVET subjects at senior level, including the franchising endeavour.

According to observations at the four case study schools, at school level the career advice given is varied and lacks consistency. The unfortunate result of
this inconsistency is that students get different and sometimes inaccurate advice. The advice given is primarily dependent on the knowledge of teachers and career advisors. Teachers in the focus groups expressed that they attempted to give the best advice to their students. However, there were instances where they felt that they do not have adequate knowledge, foresight or experience to deliver accurate advice. Non-TVET teachers were more likely to encourage their students towards white collar career aspirations. TVET teachers as indicated in the focus groups actively encouraged their students to pursue skills training where employment was available. TVET teachers and careers advisors were identified as the main advocates of TVET in school. They were the only ones who were proactive in promoting TVET as a career direction.

Many teachers in this study admitted that they were not aware of any projected human resource needs of Fiji. Many admitted that they tried to make intelligent guesses depending on visible developments and activities in Fiji – such as increased tourist arrivals, construction boom and expiring land leases. All teachers indicated they had not received any human resource data on future labour force trends from the Ministry of Education or other relevant organisations. However, they all conceded that the careers recruitment expo by tertiary institutions such as USP, FNU, TPAF and FSM was informative for students in terms of showcasing opportunities. However, there were no concrete data on projected job availability that they could use to advise students in the classroom.
While teachers unanimously agreed that students should be encouraged to pursue careers of their dreams, they did not seem prepared to confront students and their parents with the reality that dream jobs were scarce. Some felt that they had no choice but to motivate students towards whatever career aspirations they and their parents had formulated, irrespective of the probability of it being achieved or not. Others felt that teachers needed to confront parents with the reality of their children’s academic abilities and should consider alternative (realistic) career pathways, rather than facing disappointment and unemployment. In considering the role of TVET as an alternative career direction, most teachers felt that students should be allowed to pursue their career aspirations, but if they failed in subjects needed for a white collar career, then TVET was the next best option. However, another group of teachers implied that TVET employment opportunities as well as human resource needs for the future should be made clear to students from the outset. If these were available then students would be in a better position to decide their career pathways.

10.5.2 Community and family awareness
‘Community education will enlighten parents’ (Cavu, Suva, December 2009). Cavu reiterated the need to educate parents about TVET because parents have a lot of influence in the family, in the lives of their children and in the community. This reaffirms the discussion in Section 10.2. Cavu pointed out that the key to changing the perceptions of young people is through their parents. He said that once parents are convinced about the merits of TVET then there is likelihood that children would follow suit.
Cavu pointed out the important role of NGOs in facilitating awareness programmes about TVET in the community. However, awareness about community TVET programmes is still limited. Many young people especially those in rural Fiji are oblivious to the fact that there are opportunities for them to learn new skills. This is especially true for girls or young women who have left school and are staying at home or in the village. Many young girls especially those in remote rural areas are denied opportunities for further training and employment simply because of the lack of awareness about TVET. The next section (10.5.3) looks at awareness strategies that may provide adequate exposure about TVET to a wide cross section of the community in Fiji.

10.5.3 Awareness strategies for the future

In considering the strategies that are needed to enhance the image and awareness of TVET in the community, a top-down approach will be considered first. A top-down approach refers to the strategy of affecting change through policy changes and political will. For example Minister Bole was very clear about his intentions for creating a TVET university. He talked about the appeal of a university and he figured that if he could change Fiji Institute of Technology into a university, he would achieve two objectives at once. Firstly, the change of name from FIT to Fiji National University gets rid of the former image of TVET. Secondly, a new, more professional image of TVET comes with a new name for the institution and more importantly a new label.
Another top-down strategy initiated by the Ministry of Education is the introduction of broad-based curriculum in junior secondary level. This offers compulsory TVET subjects for all. The effect of this programme is that all junior secondary school students are exposed to TVET skills by the time they complete Form 4. The idea was to encourage an interest in TVET which they could choose to pursue in senior secondary level. These are both existing top-down strategies which have the potential for success. There are however, other top-down strategies which could be pursued.

Other strategies formulated from this study include the following:

i. Community education for parents. Parents needed to be made aware of TVET and TVET career opportunities. Venues for community education could be local schools, community halls and churches. This also includes rural and remote villages and settlements.

ii. Public advertisements of TVET through media outlets. This should include television, newspapers and talkback radio.

iii. Awareness workshops for teachers so that they have adequate knowledge about TVET, TVET courses and careers.

iv. The Ministry of Education should ensure that teachers have access to updated labour market projections so that teachers are able to provide accurate advice about future career opportunities to their students.
10.6 Major Challenges for TVET

The final section of this chapter examines the key challenges to innovative TVET implementation that have emerged from this research project. It re-examines issues such as infrastructure, curriculum, teacher qualifications and wages. These are issues which pose challenges for the successful implementation and integration of TVET in Fiji’s education system.

10.6.1 School infrastructure

Relevant infrastructure must be provided if TVET is to be effectively delivered in schools. The approach taken must be able to convince students that TVET is not a cut-price educational option. Infrastructure refers to suitable classrooms, tools, teaching aids and demonstration rooms. For courses such as automotive engineering, agriculture and catering, special workshops and spaces are essential. This also includes the availability and provision of proper uniform/overall/apron and safety gear. Schools that offer the TVET franchise programmes with Fiji National University are expected to meet all these requirements. If the new TVET discourse were to be implemented in Fiji, infrastructure improvement would be the first major requirement.

10.6.2 Curricular reforms

In terms of curriculum, significant changes have been introduced in favour of TVET over the last ten years. This includes the broad based curriculum at primary school, the compulsory TVET subjects at junior secondary level and the removal of external examinations in primary school. Former Director of FIT
Kolinio Meo pointed out in his interview that effective integration of TVET would only be achieved if there is complete review of the school curriculum so that there is a match between subjects taught in school and the expectations of employers. Meo was echoing the views of other Fiji national University academics such as Naisilisili (Suva, June 2009), Mailekai (Suva, June 2009) and Prasad (Suva, June 2009). One initiative that attempts to match programmes and work is the TVET franchise programme in secondary schools. This supplements the existing curriculum offerings.

10.6.3 Implementation at junior secondary level

In discussing the need for educational reform to pave the way for TVET, Sharma (Suva, May 2009) asserted that the curriculum itself was not the problem. It is the implementation that causes problems at school level. Most important of all is the need to have qualified innovative TVET teachers on the ground. Teachers are on the frontline in the delivery of learning and inculcation of TVET values. They play a key role in shaping perceptions and attitudes. Findings from this research show that junior secondary school students from the four case study schools believed in their teachers. This indicates the high degree of trust that students have towards teachers. If TVET is to be successfully integrated as part of mainstream education at junior secondary level then it needs the full support and commendation of teachers on the ground. The Internal Assessment (IA) programme in junior secondary school is a good introduction for TVET because it is compulsory and part of mainstream academia. However, results from this study show that this is not enough to
convince students to pursue TVET careers. New directions and strategies need to be created to achieve this agenda.

10.6.4 Teacher qualification and role

According to the Ministry of Education Annual Report (2010), there were n=1139 TVET teachers in secondary school. Of these there were n=145 (12.7%) that were untrained or had no formal qualifications at all. A majority of teachers n=640 (56%) had diploma qualifications. Only n=274 (24%) of these TVET teachers had degree qualifications. This is in comparison to n=2240 (52%) graduate teachers that teach mainstream subjects.

USP academic Associate Professor Akhilanand Sharma talked about the quality of teachers being produced by Fiji’s education system. He argued that ‘an innovative teacher could achieve maximum results from a poorly designed curriculum’. In contrast he also talked about a good curriculum being destroyed by a dull, ill-prepared teacher. Here he is talking about the quality of teachers in terms of innovation and resourcefulness. This is where training is crucial. Good teaching technique, effective use of teaching aids and the teacher’s ability to motivate students all determine the successful outcome of a lesson. Teacher effectiveness is especially important for both TVET teaching and effective career advice.

Qualitative responses from teachers revealed that teachers viewed their profession as a calling. They view their role as not restricted to the delivery of knowledge but extend to the development of morals, values and religious faith.
Interview responses show that in the major ethnic groups in Fiji, teachers were positioned at a higher social status and were considered community leaders and advisors. Their status as role models and facilitators of learning extend beyond school boundaries into villages, neighbourhoods and churches. Teachers could be seen providing contributions in community clubs and organisations where they actively participated as leaders and organisers.

Most Christian teachers in this study said that they were also Sunday school teachers in their churches. Some teachers also provided advice to parents and children on education-related issues such as: study, time management, sports, as well as careers. Teachers in this sense were knowledgeable about the intricacies of society and well-grounded in the realities of life that their students faced on a daily basis. This is one reason that teachers are in a good position to guide students towards relevant and realistic TVET career pathways.

**10.6.5 Wages associated with TVET**

Wage disparity was identified over 10 years ago in the Fiji Islands Education Commission Report (2000) as the main reason that TVET lacked appeal as a career direction. This continues to be a contentious issue for many young people today. This perception is likely to change though in light of the proactive efforts of government in aligning TVET as part of mainstream education. TVET jobs offer a lot of incentives and overtime opportunities. This is especially true for those who work in hospitality and construction. Their skills also offer them a lot of private jobs in the community where they can earn extra money. On the other hand TVET graduates who decide to emigrate overseas to countries such
as Australia and New Zealand would get much higher wages compared to what they earned in Fiji.

10.7 A New Direction for TVET in Fiji

The web of influence and the discourse hierarchy discussed earlier in this chapter imply the significance of key social actors in shaping existing discourses of TVET. These social actors and stakeholders will also influence the direction that TVET will take in the future.

10.7.1 Fostering a new discourse of TVET

The TVET discourse model in Section 10.2 above indicates hope for the future of TVET in Fiji. The wide base of the pyramid structure reflects the majority of participants who are at the lowest hierarchy while the top of the three dimensional pyramid is thinner because there are only a handful of powerful individuals like Minister Bole who articulate Level 1 discourse. The arrows that indicate the fluctuation of discourse between Level 4 and higher levels eventually reach an apex. The apex in this pyramid structure suggests a blending and fusion of ideas. The findings of this study lead to the suggestion that there is a possibility for a new discourse of TVET. This new discourse would incorporate and blend together the interests of all levels of the hierarchy.

The new term Career Training and Placement (CTP) is suggested to replace the acronym TVET in the Fiji education system. CTP does not carry the implied outcome of low-paid, blue-collar work. Rather it implies training for a career that
aligns with future job opportunities in Fiji. CTP encourages the positioning of students in subjects, streams and fields that reflect students’ well-informed career directions. The idea for a name change to TVET was floated by two key stakeholders, Minister Bole and Associate Professor Akhilanand Sharma during interviews because of the negative stereotype attached to TVET in Fiji. They suggested that a name change may encourage a change in people’s perceptions about vocational/technical/professional training. Figure 10.3 illustrates the pinnacle of the model where fusion of the discourse hierarchies takes place resulting in the formation of a new discourse of TVET in Fiji.

Figure 10.3: Career Training and Placement (CTP)

Examining the possible creation of a new discourse requires a brief review of the evolution of TVET in Fiji. This is necessary to establish how the new discourse might be infused into the contemporary system of TVET while accommodating the interests of major stakeholders in Fiji.

The evolution of TVET in Fiji is well documented. The diagram below illustrates the evolution of TVET in Fiji and the proposed place of the new discourse (CTP) in Fiji.
Figure 10.4: Evolution of TVET in Fiji
Multi-Craft was replaced by a new version (Phase 2) which was called Ministry of Education Vocational Education. This programme catered for students with junior secondary level qualifications. Programmes were wider and included automotive and electrical engineering as well as carpentry and joinery. These were basic skills programmes which were introduced to prepare students before enrolling for a full-time Trade Certificate course at Fiji Institute of Technology.

The third phase provided a proactive promotion of TVET. This involved the franchising of tertiary level vocational training in secondary schools. The idea was to use existing secondary schools in different parts of Fiji to deliver Trade Certificate courses. Schools that were franchised under this arrangement had to fulfil certain infrastructural requirements such as proper classrooms, teaching aids and qualified teachers. Students enrolled in franchise programmes were expected to have at least completed Form 6. This is the stage of TVET evolution that prevails at present.

Phase 4 represents the new discourse of TVET which proposes the integration of career training and placement in a broad range of school subjects. The current school system in Fiji today barely deals with the issue of career apart from talks that students have with their career advisors. School subjects appear distant from the world of work and some parents and students have expressed their concern about the relevance of some school subjects to the world of work. TVET is perhaps the only stream in secondary school that has a direct link with careers. TVET is advantageous because it advocates apprenticeship whereby
students get to experience the jobs firsthand. This is the kind of learning that
**Career Training and Placement (CTP)** proposes for all subjects in the school
system. This new discourse intends to revolutionise the way subjects are taught
in school. Each subject would have a *theory component*, a *practical component*
and a *career component*.

### 10.7.2 Implications of the new CTP discourse – A Dual Curriculum

The practical and career components of the new CTP discourse would help
students imagine themselves in career paths that are relevant for each of the
subjects they take in school. In this way students would be made aware of the
career options available for them. There would be a sense of direction between
learning and the future. The current school system lacks this sense of
connection. While it is logical that the purpose of all school subjects is to
provide basic knowledge and skills, the problem is that students are left without
a choice.

All subjects are examinable in secondary school and progression into high
levels is dependent upon success in examinations. Many students complete
their secondary education and are left wondering how useful some of their
school subjects were. In the CTP approach however, if students are taking
Mathematics for example, the practical aspect of CTP shows them how to
integrate their knowledge of mathematics in practical problem-solving situations.
Students would be advised by their math teachers of the career directions that
mathematics offers them. The emphasis for this new discourse is career
direction. Students are shown clear linkages between the subjects they take and relevant careers.

This thesis proposes a Dual Curriculum model that is similar to that used in developed countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and Norway. This is because their system of TVET combines school-based and work-based training into the formal education structure (OECD, 2007; UNESCO, 2010). This is the same idea proposed in this study. Fiji needs a dual curriculum to limit school wastage and to provide clearer career directions and opportunities.

Associate Professor Akhilanand Sharma proposed the idea of a dual curriculum whereby students would not be subjected to the same difficulty level for each subject (Sharma, 2000). This would mean that there were levels of achievement within each subject and students would only take the relevant level of achievement that suited the career direction they aspired for. For example a student aspiring to become a nurse would not take the sophisticated mathematics course taken by someone intending to be an aeronautics engineer. Similarly, someone who aspires to be a carpenter would not take the high level English course taken by someone aspiring to be a journalist. If a similar principle was adopted within the new CTP model, it could be benchmarked against the success of the VET system in Australia, where there is a clearer progression from school to work.

In summary, the implication of the new TVET discourse proposed by this study – CTP - would see a streamlining and review of school subjects to directly
address the career directions of students. This would help alleviate the high turnover rate in secondary schools today where approximately 8000 school leavers each year are left without jobs or any clear direction for the future.

10.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has synthesised key themes and ideas that have emerged from the results chapters of this study. It has examined the mechanisms that are needed to facilitate full acceptance and integration of TVET in Fiji’s education system. A key revelation from this research is that stakeholders have mixed views about TVET. Yet at times in their interviews stakeholders moved back and forth between the four levels of discourse, indicating a lack of coherence in perceptions about TVET.

The discourse levels derived from the results chapters resulted in the construction of a model to illustrate the shifting discourse of TVET in Fiji. Negative discourse traverses across all discourse levels indicating that there are consistent negative perceptions in all levels of the hierarchy. Nevertheless there is hope that these conflicting discourses could be fused into one new TVET discourse. This study has identified the possibility of creating a new discourse that merges and accommodates major concerns of stakeholders in Fiji. The new name is Career Training and Placement (CTP) and its emphasis is on aligning school subjects with career pathways.
Chapter ELEVEN: Conclusion

11.1 Overview

This is the final chapter of this thesis and it has two main parts. The first contains a summary of the findings of this study, while the second discusses the implications and recommendations for Fiji and the new place of vocational training in its education system.

This thesis examined TVET in Fiji, looking at attitudes, perceptions and discourses at various levels of society. Important data came from junior secondary school students (Forms 3 and 4) from four case study schools in different parts of Fiji. The idea of targeting students at this level of secondary education in Fiji is because of the general consensus among teachers in secondary school that this is the point of ‘no return’ in terms of determining one’s career path. Once students enter senior secondary (Form 5) and choose their subject stream (whether it is Science, Arts, Commerce or TVET) they are on the roll towards a career pathway. Many students at this level are oblivious of the implications of their choice for their future career path. It seems they do not get proper advice from their teachers and parents. Those students who later decide to change directions often have to repeat Form 5 and take on new subject streams that do match their career aspirations.
11.1.1 Restating the purpose and objectives of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions, attitudes and discourses about TVET, especially at junior secondary level, but also among key education stakeholders.

The first objective was to identify how perceptions and attitudes towards TVET are developed and nurtured through the school, family, and community of junior secondary students. The second objective was to identify and categorise the discourses of TVET in the community. This included key stakeholders such as senior government officials, teachers, students and parents. The third objective was to propose strategies for changing community attitudes and perceptions at local and national levels in Fiji. These objectives were derived from the student researcher’s personal and professional experience of TVET in the Fiji school system and tertiary education sector.

As the study progressed, it became clear that it was important to highlight how negative community attitudes and perceptions about TVET were developed and nurtured through the school, family, and community, in other words, the conditions that gave rise to this habitus. To illuminate this process, the theoretical frameworks of sociology of knowledge, post-colonial theory, social reproduction and constructivism were employed to better understand the different levels of discourse about TVET in Fiji.
To engage the objectives above, information was sought not only from secondary schools but from key stakeholders such as senior government officials, school administrators, teachers, students and parents. It was important for the study to consider the values that these stakeholders place on TVET in light of Fiji’s major socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty and sustainable development.

The third specific objective of the study was to identify means of improving community awareness and participation about TVET in Fiji. This was one of the major interests of the researcher from the beginning of his PhD candidature. Strategies for improving TVET awareness and participation in Fiji will be discussed later in this chapter.

11.1.2 Limitations of the study

There were a number of notable limitations. The first had to do with real constraints in the field due to significant events and changes taking place in Fiji in 2009. These significant events included the abrogation of Fiji’s Constitution, the suspension of Fiji from the Commonwealth and the forced retirement of hundreds of civil servants who were over 55 years. These events caused a lot of delays and confusion in government departments as reshuffles were taking place. Many of my planned interviews were either cancelled or declined as a result.

Another limitation in the fieldwork had to do with cultural traits where women were rather reluctant to share their views openly in focus groups or would let
men speak first during discussions. Such cultural barriers probably limited the full participation of women. The same was true of children, and it was sometimes difficult to obtain information from junior secondary school pupils because some were shy to speak, even though the researcher is himself Fijian. The third limitation of this study lies in the methodological choices and sampling that were used. Case studies of only four secondary schools were conducted, which limits the generalisability of findings. Among stakeholders, strongly influential figures in the community such as village and religious leaders were not interviewed due to constraints of time. Nevertheless, the sample was relevant and quite large, and the methodology was sufficiently robust to yield findings that are useful for enriching our understanding of the current state of play in TVET in Fiji, and how the situation might be improved.

11.2 Summary of Findings of the Study

Findings of this study are the result of analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected over a total period of about 12 months in Fiji. The major findings are summarised below under the following sub-headings:

i. Mismatch between growth-oriented labour force needs and skilled capacities gained through education.

ii. Negative attitudes and perceptions about TVET.

iii. Role of TVET in Fiji’s socio-economic development.

iv. Differing discourses of TVET in Fiji.
11.2.1 Mismatch between growth-oriented labour force needs and skilled capacities gained through education

Secondary data and relevant studies reveal that one of the biggest challenges to Fiji’s development is the lack of skilled people needed in various key sectors such as hospitality, construction, engineering, manufacturing and agriculture. This is worsened by the mismatch between career aspirations and job opportunities available in the country. This is a concern for the government especially in its endeavours to meet its Millennium Development Goals, as well as achieving national development priorities.

Figures that reflect the ‘mismatch’ problem have been repeated for emphasis throughout this thesis. Schools churn out around thousands of school leavers each year, however, there are relatively few new white collar jobs and tertiary education places available in the country. For example, it seems less than a quarter of 2011 teacher graduates had found jobs by January 2012. Such figures not only suggest a mismatch, but a radical disconnection and lack of communication between different government ministries and between school staff and pupils who are future employees of the national labour force. Changes to the secondary school curriculum have gone some way towards addressing the mismatch problem through mainstreaming TVET subjects, but there is still a long way to go.

The major regional stakeholder, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) maintains that TVET should be considered an essential and integral part of Pacific education and training. However, in most parts of the Pacific that goal is
failing to be realised at present. This is apparently due to lack of political will on the part of governments, regional organisations and donor organisations to make what might seem unpopular education policy decisions in the short term. The focus remains on academic education, despite the acknowledged fact that TVET is the key to social and economic development in the region.

In Fiji, TVET programmes and initiatives have been largely ineffective because there is inadequate awareness and information available in the community at grassroots level. The bottom line is that people are not convinced about the value of TVET for their children and for the prosperity of the nation because they have not been adequately informed about contemporary TVET potential.

11.2.2 Negative attitudes and perceptions about TVET

Findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses reveal that perceptions and attitudes towards TVET in Fiji are generally unfavorable. TVET is considered as second-class education and suitable for academically weaker students. Student participants at junior secondary level were interested in high status careers such as teaching, medicine and business management. They associated TVET with low income, low qualification, manual labour jobs. These perceptions and attitudes are the results of socialisation and interaction that students experience in the development of their habitus. Evidence of this socialisation is reflected in the similarities of the negative attitudes expressed by both students and parents, suggesting reproduction of this same attitude down through the generations.
Parents and teachers who participated in interviews and focus groups reiterated and mirrored the quantitative responses from students. They shared similar negative ideas that TVET was for school dropouts and school failures. Jobs they associated with TVET were manual labour jobs, in stark contrast to the desired white-collar career aspirations they had for their favoured pupils and their own children.

The quantitative data also identified key influential sources in the lives of students: parents, teachers and church leaders. These groups play significant roles in shaping perceptions, interests and attitudes of young people in the community. This reaffirms the point made earlier about the powerful socialisation of children in their habitus.

### 11.2.3 Role of TVET in Fiji’s socio-economic development

Findings from this study show that TVET is widely acknowledged and perceived as the key to sustainable economic growth for Fiji. Key stakeholders from reputable regional and national organisations such as PATVET, FNU, TPAF and USP provided this study with a consistent credible source of information about the potential value of TVET in Fiji. They all acknowledged that TVET can help stimulate Fiji’s economic growth and help Fiji meet its Millennium Development Goals. These sources also concurred that TVET would provide the solution to some of Fiji’s social challenges such as unemployment, underemployment, poverty and even youth crime.
Another important finding of this study is that political will in Fiji has resulted in some positive alignment of the education system to cater for important national development challenges. This alignment has resulted in significant curricula changes in favour of TVET in Fiji’s school system. TVET has been elevated in school and has become compulsory and part of mainstream academia at junior secondary level. TVET subjects continue to be optional at senior secondary level. Minister Filipe Bole emphasised that innovations in favour of TVET are part of the larger objective to help Fiji along the path to sustainable development.

This thesis highlights the reform contributions of Minister Bole because they are significant and unprecedented in Fiji’s education history. Bole’s vision and commitment promises to revolutionise the way TVET is perceived in Fiji. His position of power - and perhaps lack of opposition in the current political climate - have enabled him to succeed in implementing his ideas where others before him have failed. His most notable success is the formation of Fiji National University, a TVET-focused institution.

11.2.4 Differing discourses of TVET in Fiji

It was evident that there are some widely varying discourses about TVET prevailing in Fiji at the present time, which may be proving detrimental to productive reform and implementation in the education sector. This thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge about TVET in Fiji by classifying these different discourses and arranging them in a discourse hierarchy model that acknowledges both relative power, and distance from the centre of
Minister Bole is at the top of the hierarchy (Level 1) with his transformative / elitist discourse. He wields his position of power to transform values and knowledge about TVET and this is demonstrated by his constant emphasis on high-status careers such as nursing, medicine and engineering. Government officials, educators, teachers and employers express their views about TVET at Levels 2 and 3, embodying an instrumentalist discourse. The majority of the population is represented by Level 4 which is the discourse of deficit.

The significance of these hierarchies of discourse is that they demonstrate divisions according to rank and status in society. This means that if programmes are to be effectively implemented on the ground then all stakeholders need to share a common platform and common vision, which is not the case at present. At the moment those in Level 4 in Fiji have a rather suspicious attitude about TVET compared to the progressive attitude of leaders in Level 1. The model indicates the extent of effort that needs to be applied to change the negative discourse of the majority. This model of a discourse hierarchy could potentially be applied when debating other contentious social issues in Fijian society.

The Career Training and Placement (CTP) programme is a response to these differing / divisive discourses about TVET. This thesis proposes that the name TVET be replaced by CTP so that the old identity and divisive discourses are removed from the minds of stakeholders. The new name, CTP carries a new identity and a unifying discourse of vocational education and training in Fiji. CTP
achieves this by reconstructing the perceptions of stakeholders with its new name and by aligning common interests of all groups of stakeholders.

### 11.3 Implications for Further Research

There are opportunities for further research on the topic of this thesis using wider sample numbers and different selection criteria. There are also opportunities to extend this research using other methodologies such as Action research or a longitudinal study approach. This researcher favours Action Research because of its practical result-oriented nature. It would be interesting to see strategies designed from an Action Research study that would actually achieve visible / behavioural changes in the community in favour of TVET. Another possibility would be to conduct a comparative longitudinal study of students in their habitus and to gather feedback about their perceptions of TVET as they transit from primary into secondary school.

It would also be interesting to see research on this topic in other Pacific island countries or other parts of the world where TVET is being confronted in the same way. One valuable programme discussed in this thesis is the *Matua* Programme, which provides second-chance secondary education for adults in the community. This is an area that could be researched productively because the programme addresses issues to do with education, life choices and circumstances. Research could also be done to improve other programmes that cater for mature learners and school dropouts.
Through efforts to work effectively with ‘grass-roots’ Indigenous Fijian community members this study developed a new culturally appropriate methodology of veivosaki-yaga during the focus group interviews. This was an appropriate approach because it blended the customary activity of sitting together in guided dialogue with that of focus group. This blending of methodology resulted in the smooth exchange of ideas and information between participants and the researcher. This methodology has the potential to be adapted and used in other communities and cultural settings around the world. However, the challenge would be for researchers to be aware of cultural traits, languages and idioms of the participants so that they are not easily misled or misinformed.

11.4 Implications of the Study

11.4.1 Contribution to available body of knowledge of TVET

Findings from this study will contribute significantly to the available body of knowledge on the development of attitudes and perceptions about TVET in the fields of sociology and education. From a sociological perspective, readers of this thesis will be able to grasp the findings of this research in terms of the nexus of social factors and pressures regarding school-to-work transition. Educationists on the other hand will be informed about the significant role of the community and education system in addressing the disparities and misconceptions that exist about TVET in the community.
Education in the Pacific islands is changing and adapting to stresses of globalisation and in response to socio-economic challenges in the region. Vocational education can and does play a major role in helping these island states such as Fiji meet their MDGs. However, there is concern about the continuing emphasis on academic education and there is fear that vocational education may not be effectively attuned to the needs of island communities because of it. This thesis offers an innovative investigation of the situation in Fiji that could be applied to other Pacific island states.

11.4.2 Improving TVET awareness and participation

This study will create awareness for major stakeholders such as government officials, school administrators, parents, teachers, students and employers about the differing perceptions and attitudes that currently exist in Fiji about TVET. This knowledge and awareness is necessary for these stakeholders especially those at policy-making level to be able to make sound judgments and decisions about the future of vocational education and training in Fiji. Indicators from this study show that this awareness is seriously lacking among top officials. This is worsened when these decision-makers do not share the same vision of TVET as revealed in this study.

Findings from this study can pave the way for more effective awareness programs about vocational education in the Fijian community. Strategies can be developed to improve community understanding and participation in vocational education at school, village / community levels in Fiji and the Pacific. Religious and Non-Government organisations can be utilised to deliver the message
about vocational education to the grassroots, especially to those in remote rural locations.

This study reveals that the most influential people in the community are parents, teachers and church leaders. These are the groups of people that need to be mobilised to facilitate awareness programmes about vocational education in the community. The reason is because these are the people who have positions of authority and respect in the home, village and community. They are reliable sources of knowledge and community wisdom. Therefore to affect change at grass-roots level in favour of vocational education will require their concerted effort and cooperation.

Finally there is a more inclusive alternative for TVET or vocational education that is promoted in this study and that is Career Training and Placement (CTP). This new programme has the potential to break the old colonially-derived barriers that normally existed against TVET. This programme comes with a new name, a new identity and a new territory.

11.4.3 Enhancement of Fiji’s human resource planning capability
An outcome of this research will be its contribution to human resource planning capability of Fiji. Findings emphasise the necessity for key stakeholders to provide accurate information on human resource needs to the Ministry of Education and to the public in general so that parents, teachers and students have the opportunity to discuss their options and interests before venturing into decision making about young people’s education and careers. It is hoped that
through this process, Fiji will be able to strategically reduce its overproduction of graduates in certain fields of academic study, while simultaneously achieving the appropriate number of CTP graduates needed for a sustainable workforce.

This is the outcome that the new CTP programme could achieve for Fiji. Subjects taught in secondary school will become more relevant and aligned to careers because of its dual curriculum model. Students will not be intimidated by difficult and irrelevant subjects any more. They only take subjects with the appropriate difficulty level that their career orientation requires. There will be less threat of failure because of this. Another advantage of CTP would be that students are in school are encouraged to early awareness of their primary career pathway and options.

11.5 Recommendations of the Study

The recommendation of this study is that old understandings and notions of TVET be eliminated and replaced by a inclusive and revolutionary system under a new name and programme which facilitates smoother transition between school and work. TVET is not a suitable title to describe the evolution and new direction of vocational training and education in Fiji as the country seeks to maximise its engagement on the world stage through sustainable economic growth. The name ‘TVET’ has played its part for Fiji’s education system and it must be left in history together with its old identity and understanding. What is needed is a new name, a new identity that adequately captures the vision, innovation and inclusiveness of the new discourse about vocational training and
education in Fiji. Career Training and Placement (CTP) is proposed as that new approach.

11.5.1 Recommendation 1: Adoption of CTP dual curriculum

It is the recommendation of this study that Career Training and Placement (CTP) be used as the new name and new programme in place of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) so that the old image and negative stereotypical identity are completely eliminated. Even Minister Bole admitted that the initial purpose of TVET in Fiji was to cater for school failures and dropouts. Unfortunately that image and identity are still attached to the name TVET and TVET is unattractive in schools even today because of these stereotypes. A new identity is needed. The adoption of CTP would encapsulate the transformative discourse perpetuated by Minister Bole.

CTP heralds a new age for school to work transition especially with the establishment of a new university in Fiji (FNU). A dual curriculum is recommended, modelled on the successful dual curriculum models in Europe such as those pioneered in Germany, Switzerland and Norway. An advantage of CTP dual curriculum would be that it is geared towards career outcomes for all students, and completing secondary school would no longer seen as an end in itself. Through this new initiative, subjects and courses will be accurately aligned towards career paths and students will have better career advice. Another advantage of CTP would be to reduce school wastage. There would be reduced unnecessary failure or dropout as students take the appropriate subject difficulty levels in Mathematics for example, that match their career aspirations.
CTP would not be discriminatory because all students in the secondary school system would be part of the same programme.

Finally, the Curriculum Development Unit at Fiji’s Ministry of Education should be tasked with amalgamating this CTP programme into all school subjects from early primary level to senior secondary level (Forms 5, 6 and 7). At the lower secondary and primary school levels, the CTP programme would systematically provide career information and awareness so that students and their families can make informed decisions by the time they reached Form 5. CTP also has the potential to be extended to tertiary programmes so that courses are aligned with demands in the job market.

11.5.2 Recommendation 2: Improving community awareness

The second recommendation of this study is that there needs to be effective community and school awareness about the new CTP programme. This should be transformed into awareness booklets and translated into Fijian and Hindi vernacular languages for wide distribution at community and school levels. The primary objective of the communication strategy is to explain in layman’s terms the current employment situations in the country and to lay out the significant role of the CTP programme in providing employable skills as well as entrepreneurial skills. The booklet would also provide career advice for students and parents, with special emphasis on making realistic goals and ambitions, as well as strategies for achieving them. Influential institutions in the community such as school and church ought to be used to promote educational concepts and programmes. This study has revealed that parents, teachers and church
leaders are considered very credible sources of advice and community wisdom by young people. A public education campaign through television and radio could supplement the CTP communication strategy.

11.5.3 Recommendation 3: Improving the filtration of information

The third recommendation involves the dissemination of labour force information in Fiji. This study as well as previous research in Fiji has shown that updated accurate information about human resource projections are not effectively transferred laterally between ministries nor vertically through various strata of the community. This communication and exchange of information needs to be improved so that decision makers such as Ministry of Education officials, teachers, parents and students make accurate projections about the future. In addition there needs to be more collaboration and communication between government officials and employers. Effective planning and management is essential so that courses in secondary and tertiary institutions are accurately aligned through the CTP programme to address the needs and expectations of the private sector, where the most growth is occurring. These collaborations should also cater for in-service and up-skilling programmes so that workers in Fiji are kept abreast of changing technology, knowledge and skills in the workplace.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) maintains that TVET should be considered an essential and integral part of Pacific education and training so that small Pacific Island nations such as Fiji are able to cope with the pressures of globalisation and enjoy sustainable economic growth. This is in line with The
Bonn Declaration which described TVET as the master key to reducing poverty and improving the quality of life of people all over the world.

Finally as this study was based on Fiji, this thesis leaves a challenge for Fiji to consider a new version of this master key in the form of Career Training and Placement, because CTP has the potential to remove all the negativities associated with traditional TVET, create a common unifying discourse and address school to work uncertainties of students in Fiji.
References:


Dakuidreketi, M. (1995). *Factors Contributing to Academic Under-Achievement of First Year Native Fijian Students in Science Courses at the University*


Devey, R., & Møller, V. (2003). Closing the Gap Between Rich and Poor in South Africa. Trends in Objective and Subjective Indicators of Quality of


Fijilive News. (2009, September 24). PM orders halt to civil service layoff plan: PSC


360


Howell, S., Williams, P., & Lindsay, N. (2003). Thirty-two Trends Affecting Distance Education: An Informed Foundation for Strategic Planning, State University of West Georgia, Distance Education Centre, *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, Volume VI, Number III, Fall*.


International Monetary Fund. (2011). World Economic Outlook Database-September. IMF.


366


Practices and Advocacy Materials. UNESCO Office for Pacific Island States and USP, Lautoka.


Matau, R. (April 15, 2009). *Island Business Magazine*


Palmer, T. (2002). *Globalization is Great*. Cato Institute, Fall Volume 1, Number 2.


QSR. (2010). Nvivo (Version 9.0) [Software Package]. Melbourne: QSR.


Ramos, A., Nangit, G., Ranga, A., & Triñona, J. (2007). *ICT-Enabled Distance Education in Community Development in the Philippines* in Distance Education Vol. 28, Iss. 2.


Rossi, A. (2008). The Impact of Migration on Children in Developing Countries. Youth Migration Conference April 24-26, Bellagio, Italy.


The Fiji Times. (2007, January 29). *Why a lower retirement age is good?*


APPENDIX 1: Information Statement

Information Statement for the Research Project:

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TVET –
A STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FIJI
[Conducted by Pam Nilan, Don Adams & Isimeli Tagicakiverata]
Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Australia

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Associate Professor Pam Nilan, Dr Don Adams and Isimeli Tagicakiverata from the Faculty of Education and Arts at the University of Newcastle. The research is part of Isimeli Tagicakiverata’s PhD studies at the University of Newcastle.

Why is the research being done?

The purpose of the research is to investigate how basic perceptions and attitudes towards TVET develop through the school, family, and the community in Fiji. This research initiative will focus on junior secondary school level because it is at this level that young people in Fiji’s current school system choose which career pathway they intend to pursue and the appropriate combination of subjects they must take before entering senior secondary level (Form 5). In other words, junior secondary level is decision-making level for students in Fiji.

People in Fiji are now gradually beginning to see the value and significance of TVET in the light of high unemployment of university graduates and high demand for skilled people in construction, hospitality and other industries. This project aims to contribute to that growing awareness. Findings from this research will provide stakeholders with the basis for taking initiatives in developing programs, campaigns and policy changes to bring about more positive attitudes towards TVET.

Who can participate in the research?

Secondary school students, teachers, parents, principals and key stakeholders in Fiji can participate in this research. Participation is entirely voluntary. Schools, students, Principals, parents and community leaders will not be identified in accounts and reports of the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you in any way and will not affect your situation in your school, workplace or community. Junior secondary students will be asked to complete an anonymous survey, which should not exceed 30 minutes. Some students, teachers, Principals and community leaders will be approached to participate in focus groups and interviews.
Venues and times will be arranged to the convenience of participants. The student researcher Isimeli Tagicakiverata will conduct interviews and focus groups which will be audio-taped. All participants will be given the opportunity to review, edit and erase interview and focus group tapes. The taped interviews and focus groups will be transcribed and filed against a code number. During the research period, all records will be kept in a secure place to which only the researchers have access. After five years, the consent forms, surveys and transcripts will be destroyed by a shredder machine, and the tapes erased.

We cannot promise you any personal benefit from participating in this research, nevertheless your views and opinions can help provide an informed understanding of attitudes towards TVET in Fiji. You will not be asked any personal questions. It is intended that a written report from the data we collect will be presented to participating schools, to the Fiji Ministry of Education and to other stakeholder organisations. We also intend to publish some research papers in education and social science journals.

Please read this information statement carefully and be sure you understand its contents before you agree to be involved. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the student researcher. If you would like to participate, please tell the student researcher.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our project and considering this invitation.

____________________________________
Isimeli W Tagicakiverata (Student Researcher)

If you would like further information please contact:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor Pam Nilan, School of Humanities &amp; Social Science, Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, New South Wales, 2308 Australia</td>
<td>Dr Don Adams, School of Education, Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, New South Wales, 2308 Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: +61 2 49215912 Fax: +61 2 49216933 Email: <a href="mailto:Pamela.Nilan@newcastle.edu.au">Pamela.Nilan@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
<td>Ph: +61 2 49215907 Fax: +61 2 49217616 Email: <a href="mailto:Donald.Adams@newcastle.edu.au">Donald.Adams@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researchers, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, telephone (61 2 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au or Mr Paula Cavu, Research Coordinator, Fiji Institute of Technology, Suva, Fiji, Phone: (679)3389317.
APPENDIX 2: Research Ethics Committee Progress Acknowledgement

| To Chief Investigator or Project Supervisor: | Associate Professor Pamela Nilan |
| Cc Co-investigators / Research Students: | Doctor Donald Adams  
Mr Isimeli Tagicakiverata |
| Date: | 30-Nov-2011 |
| Reference No: | H-2008-0372 |

Thank you for submitting your **Annual Progress Report** to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in relation to the above protocol.

Your report has been accepted and your HREC approval for the above research remains valid. Continuation of this approval will again be subject to the provision of an annual progress report by the due date approximately one year from now.

The timely submission of your report is greatly appreciated.

Approved

**Human Research Ethics Administration**

Research Services  
Research Integrity Unit  
HA148, Hunter Building  
The University of Newcastle  
Callaghan NSW 2308  
T +61 2 492 18999  
F +61 2 492 17164  
[Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au)
APPENDIX 3: The Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

Survey for Junior Secondary level Students (Forms 3 & 4)

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TVET – A STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FIJI
[Conducted by Pam Nilan, Don Adams & Isimeli Tagicakiverata]
Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Australia

(Please answer all the questions as accurately as possible. Do not hesitate to ask the researcher for clarification.)
a) NAME (optional): ____________________ b) School: ___________________________ c) Form: ____

d) AGE (tick one): 10 -12 years □ 13 years □ 14 years □ 15 years □ 16 years and over □
e) SEX (tick one): Male □ Female □
f) Ethnicity (tick one): Indigenous Fijian □ Indo Fijian □ Other □
g) Religion (tick one): Christian □ Hindu □ Muslim □ Other religion □
h) Province (If you are Indigenous Fijian, tick your province of origin. Otherwise tick the province where you live - tick one only)
Tailevu □ Naitasiri □ Rewa □ Namosi □ Serua □ Nadroga /Navosa □
Ba □ Ra □ Bua □ Macuata □ Cakaudrove □ Lau □ Kadavu □ Lomaiviti □
i) Father’s occupation: ____________________ j)Mother’s occupation: ________________

1. Where do you live? (Write the name of the place & select a category below):
____________________________________

Village □ Rural settlement / farm □ Sub-urban residential □ Town/CBD □

2. Which statement(s) is(are) true for you regarding your family background? (tick the ones that best represent you)

i. I live with my parent(s) and sibling(s) - My immediate family □
ii. I live with my parents, siblings & some relatives - My extended family □
iii. I live with my guardian(s) who is/are not my biological parent(s) □
iv. I am an adopted child □
v. I am an only child (with no brothers and sisters) □
vi. I come from a single-parent family (due to death, divorce or separation) □
vii. I live in a very religious family, that strictly observes religious teachings □
viii. I live in a moderately religious family □
ix. I live in a liberal family that does not follow any particular religion □
x. I am aware of my traditional status, role and responsibilities □
xii. My family strictly observes traditional/customary duties and rituals □
xiii. My family is marginally traditional and modern □
xiv. My family is modern and does not observe any traditional rituals □
3. Which statement(s) is (are) true for you regarding school and education? (tick the ones that best represent you)

i. I do not like school because it is boring and a waste of time
ii. I do not like school because of exams and the lessons are difficult
iii. I do not like school because the teachers are sometimes unreasonable
iv. I do not like school because of bullying and/or peer pressure
v. I do not like school because the subjects are useless (irrelevant)
vi. I like school because I get to learn many new things
vii. I like school because of sports, arts and/or music
viii. I like school because I get to spend more time with my friends
ix. I like school because I get to choose the subjects I take
x. I like school because it is preparing me for adulthood
xi. I like school because it is preparing me for future employment
xii. I do not know what I feel about school. I am indifferent about it

4. Select your top three dream jobs from the list of jobs provided. (Write your choices in the spaces below)

| Factory Worker, Cane-Cutter, Labourer, Miner, Fisherman, Market Seller/Trader Or Worker, Farmer (Small Land Holding), Taxi Driver, Transport Driver, Dock Worker, Housewife, International Rugby Player, Movie star, | Teacher, School Principal, Nurse, Paramedic, Health Worker, Accountant, Field Officer, Journalist, Owns a Retail or Service Business, Real Estate Agent, Police, Army, Ship’s Captain, Foreman, Shop Steward, Farmer (Large Land-Holding), Reverend, Pastor, Clergyman. | Civil Servant, Clerk In A Small Company Or Business, Shop Assistant, Waitress, Bank Teller Or Worker, Public Relations, Receptionist, Booking Clerk. | Automotive Mechanic, Mechanical Or Other Engineering (No Degree), Information Technology (No Degree), Carpenter/Joiner, Tiler, Plumber, Electrician, Telecommunications Worker, FEA Worker, Cook, Pastry Chef, Beautician, Builder, Musician, Classical Dancer. | Doctor, Engineer, Lawyer, Architect, University Lecturer, Stockbroker, Bank Manager, Politician, Big Business Owner, CEO or Executive Officer, Resort Manager. |

1st Choice: __________________ 2nd Choice: __________________ 3rd Choice: ________________

5. How would you describe your orientation (or focus)? (tick ONLY ONE from the list below)

i. My orientation revolves around my traditional roles and responsibilities
ii. My orientation revolves around my own leisure interests.
iii. My orientation revolves around my social preferences and personality
iv. My orientation revolves around my faith and religious beliefs
v. I am not sure about this

6. a) How did you decide on your 1st Choice in (a) above? (tick the ones that best represent you)

i. My teachers advised me to aim for this dream job
ii. This job will earn me a good income
iii. I chose this job because of my own personal interest in this career
iv. This job involves working with lots of people
v. This job involves business and selling goods and services
vi. My parents and relatives have advised me to aim for this job
vii. I admire a relative or neighbor who has this job
viii. This is an office job with papers and computers
ix. This job involves working outside
x. I get to wear nice clothes, suits and/or uniforms to work
xi. This job involves wearing overalls or dirty clothes
xii. I like this job because it involves a lot of sweat and hard labor
xiii. This job involves no hard labor and no sweat
xiv. This job does not earn a lot of money

xv. This job requires a vocational (TVET) qualification

xvi. This job requires a university degree and highly specialized skills

xvii. I can get this job even if I fail my exam or dropout of school

xviii. The subjects I am taking in school this year are relevant for this job

b) From the same list above select the three worst jobs you would not want to get. (Write your choices below)

1st Choice: ______________________ 2nd Choice: ______________________ 3rd Choice: ______________________

c) What are your reasons for your three choices in (b) above? (Tick the ones that best represent you)

i. This is a dirty job with hard labor and low wages

ii. The qualification required for this job is too low for me. I can do better

iii. The qualification required for this job is too high for me to get this job

iv. I don’t like this job because I want to be my own boss

v. I don’t have the right qualification and skills for this job

vi. My parents and relatives would disapprove and be ashamed of me

vii. My peers and friends would make fun of me and look down on me

viii. I am a proud person and I want to look successful with a better job

ix. The subjects I am taking in school are not relevant for this job

7. Which statement(s) is/are true for you regarding your future career? (Tick the ones that best represent you)

i. Passing well in high school (up to Form 7) will help me get my dream job

ii. My parents and/or guardians know what is best for me in the future

iii. My teachers and parents will decide my future career for me

iv. I will decide my own future career, depending on how hard I work

v. My future success depends on the support I get from home & school

vi. My future happiness depends on my success in getting my dream job

8. What would you do if you do not get your dream job? (Tick ONLY ONE)

i. I do not know what I would do

ii. I would look for any other available job that suits my qualification

iii. I would stay at home or in the village and try to do something useful

iv. I would try to join the Fiji Army or British Army

v. I would try to utilize some family resources or start a small business

vi. I would try to use my other talents in sports, music and arts

vii. I would return to school and do some relevant vocational training

9. Who would you hold responsible if you do not get your dream job in the future? (Tick ONLY ONE)

i. I would blame myself for not working hard enough

ii. I would blame my teachers and parents for not supporting me enough

iii. I would blame my school for not giving me more training options

iv. I would blame my careers teachers for not giving me adequate advice

v. I would blame government for not providing enough employment

vi. I would not know whom to blame. I have never thought about it

10. What do you know about Technical Vocational Education & Training? (Tick the ones that best represent you)

i. I have no idea what Vocational training is and I have never heard of it

ii. I have heard of it but I don’t really know much about it

iii. It is part of secondary school – some schools have Vocational classes
iv. It is an alternative to mainstream classes (Forms 5 - 7)
v. It is a continuation of secondary education after Form 6
vi. It is only for weaker students who can’t cope with secondary education
vii. It is only for students who can’t get into University or other tertiary level
viii. It is only for students who want to do manual labor intensive jobs
ix. It is skills training for a vocation such as carpentry and catering
x. It provides more relevant training for jobs than mainstream academia

11. Which stream will you definitely enroll into when you begin Form 5? (tick ONLY ONE)
   i. PURE SCIENCE (Physics, Chemistry, Biology)
   ii. COMMERCE (Accounting, Economics)
   iii. ARTS (History, Geography)
   iv. TECHNOLOGY (Engineering Drawing, Computing)
   v. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (mix)
   vi. AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, SECRETARIAL etc
   vii. OTHER SUBJECT COMBINATIONS
   viii. VOCATIONAL TRAINING (carpentry, automotive, catering etc)

12. How did you decide on your subject combination & stream in (11) above? (tick ONLY ONE)
   i. I have no idea. I just made a guess but I may change my mind later
   ii. My parents and/or relatives will decide this for me when I begin Form 5
   iii. My teachers will decide this for me when I begin Form 5
   iv. My parents and/or teachers have already decided this for me
   v. I decided this on my own based on my dream job that I am aiming to get
   vi. I know someone who has that job and it is a good job

13. Who are the most important influences in your life? Who would you believe & obey?
   (Circle one letter for each: i - viii)

   Always (A) – Most times (M) - Sometimes (S) – Occasionally (O) - Never (N)

   i. My teachers in school A M S O N
   ii. My pastor or priest A M S O N
   iii. My parents and/or guardians, elders A M S O N
   iv. My chief and traditional leaders A M S O N
   v. My peers and friends A M S O N
   vi. My favorite sports / movie star A M S O N
   vii. My government leaders A M S O N
   viii. God A M S O N

(Thank you for your participation)
APPENDIX 4: Ministry of Education Consent Form for the Case Studies

Consent Form for the Research Project:

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TVET – A STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FIJI
[Conducted by Pam Nilan, Don Adams & Isimeli Tagicakiverata]
Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Australia

For Fiji Ministry of Education to approve case studies in four schools

I give my consent for case studies focusing on junior secondary pupils to be conducted in the schools listed below. I understand that proper and approved research procedures will be followed. I have read the Information Statement, a copy of which has been retained. I acknowledge that the student researcher Isimeli Tagicakiverata will approach the Principals of all schools listed for their individual permission. I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: ______________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________

Date: ______________________________

Institutional Stamp: ______________________________

List of Schools:

a) VUNIMONO HIGH SCHOOL
b) ALL SAINTS SECONDARY SCHOOL
c) NADI COLLEGE
d) NABUA SECONDARY SCHOOL
APPENDIX 5: Ministry of Education Consent form for the Survey

Associate Professor Pam Nilan
School of Humanities & Social Science /
Faculty of Education and Arts
Ph: 61 2 49215912
Fx: 61 2 49216902
Email: Pamela.Nilan@newcastle.edu.au

Consent Form for the Research Project:

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TVET – A STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FIJI
[Conducted by Pam Nilan, Don Adams & Isimeli Tagicakiverata]
Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Australia

For Fiji Ministry of Education to approve distribution and collection of surveys in schools

I give my consent for surveys necessary for the project above to be distributed to junior secondary pupils in the schools listed below. I understand that the survey will be anonymous as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which has been retained. I acknowledge that the student researcher Isimeli Tagicakiverata will approach the Principals of all schools listed for their individual permission. I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: ____________________________________________

Signature: _____________________________________________

Date: _________________________________________________

Institutional Stamp: _________________________________

School List for Research Participation

ALL SAINTS SECONDARY SCHOOL
NADI COLLEGE
NABUA SECONDARY SCHOOL
VUNIMONO HIGH SCHOOL

399
APPENDIX 6: Consent Form for Ministry of Education Participants

Associate Professor Pam Nilan
School of Humanities & Social Science /
Faculty of Education and Arts
Ph: 61 2 49215912
Fx: 61 2 49216902
Email: Pamela.Nilan@newcastle.edu.au

Consent Form for the Research Project:

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TVET – A STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FIJI
[Conducted by Pam Nilan, Don Adams & Isimeli Tagicakiverata]
Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Australia

For Senior Government Officials of Fiji’s Ministry of Education, Principals and teachers invited to Participate in Interviews in Fiji

I agree to participate in an interview conducted as part of the above research project and give my consent freely. I understand that the interview will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which has been retained. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. I consent to participate in a 30 minute interview on topics listed in the information statement. I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers. I have the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: _______________________________________________________

Print Name of Institution /Organisation: _________________________________

Contact Details: ____________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Signature: ______________

Date: ____________________
APPENDIX 7: Consent for Government officials and External Stakeholders

Consent Form for the Research Project:

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TVET – A STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FIJI
[Conducted by Pam Nilan, Don Adams & Isimeli Tagicakiverata]
Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Australia

For Government Officials and Key Stakeholders invited to Participate in Interviews in Fiji

I agree to participate in an interview conducted as part of the above research project and give my consent freely. I understand that the interview will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which has been retained. I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. I consent to participate in a 30 minute interview on topics listed in the information statement. I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers. I have the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Name: ______________________________________________________

Name of Institution /Organisation: ___________________________

Contact Details: __________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Signature: _____________

Date: ________________
APPENDIX 8: Research Focus Group for Community Leaders

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Research Focus Group for Community Leaders of Junior Secondary Students (Forms 3 & 4)

TOPIC: Perceptions and Attitudes towards TVET: A Study of Junior Secondary Education in Fiji

Guide Questions

How would you define your role as community leaders?

What do you look forward to in the future of children in your communities?

Do you play any part in the educational and career choices of children in your communities?

What kind of career motivation do you give children in your communities?

How would you avoid educational and career disappointments for children in your communities?

Would you consider TVET as a educational and career option for children in your communities?
APPENDIX 9: Research Focus Group for Teachers

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Research Focus Group for Teachers of Junior Secondary Students
(Forms 3 & 4)

TOPIC: Perceptions and Attitudes towards TVET: A Study of Junior Secondary Education in Fiji

Guide Questions

How would you define your role as a teacher?

What advice do you give your students regarding their future careers?

Do your students ask you questions about possible careers?

What do you know about TVET, skills training and TVET careers?

Would you encourage your students to pursue TVET jobs?
APPENDIX 10: Research Focus Group for Senior and Matua students

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Research Focus Group for Senior Secondary & Matua Students

TOPIC: Perceptions and Attitudes towards TVET: A Study of Junior Secondary Education in Fiji

Guide Questions

What is your career ambition?

Why did you choose your current subject combination?

Do you have a back-up plan, in case you don’t achieve your career goal?

What advice would you give someone who has failed his/her final examination?

Who normally gives you careers advice?

What do you know about TVET in Fiji?
APPENDIX 11: Research Focus Group for Parents

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Research Focus Group for Parents of Junior Secondary Students (Forms 3 & 4)

TOPIC: Perceptions and Attitudes towards TVET: A Study of Junior Secondary Education in Fiji

Guide Questions (These questions were used to guide the veivosaki-yaga)

How would you define your role as parents?
(Ni vakamacalataka mada na nomuni itavi vaka-i-tubutubu?)

What do you look forward to in your children’s future?
(Na cava o ni vakamamata-tu kina ena nodra bula na luvevumi?)

Do you play a part in the career choices of your children?
(O ni soli vakasala vei ira ena nodra digi-cakacaka na luvevumi?)

What kind of career motivation do you give your children?
(Na veivakuqet i cava o ni dau solia me baleta na qara-cakacaka?)

How would you avoid exam and career disappointments for your children?
(Na ivakasala cava o ni dau solia me walia na nodra sega ni rawa-ka na gone?)

Would you consider TVET as an option for your children in their education and careers?
(O ni na vakauqeti ira na luvevumi ena vuli-tara me ra rawa cakacaka kina?)
APPENDIX 12: Interviews with External Stakeholders

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Interviews with External Stakeholders

TOPIC: Perceptions and Attitudes towards TVET: A Study of Junior Secondary Education in Fiji

Guide Questions

What are your views on the link between education and employment in Fiji today, and in the future?

Are you satisfied that Fiji’s current education system meets labour force needs?

How could Fiji improve labour market capacity towards a sustainable economic future?

What role can TVET play in the future of education and work Fiji?

Academic pathway or TVET pathway? What is the best way for children and their parents to make informed decisions?

What role could government play in promoting TVET education and careers?
APPENDIX 13: Principals’ Consent for Survey

Associate Professor Pam Nilan
School of Humanities & Social Science /
Faculty of Education and Arts
Ph: 61 2 49215912
Fx: 61 2 49216902
Email: Pamela.Nilan@newcastle.edu.au

Consent Form for the Research Project:

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TVET – A STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FIJI
[Conducted by Pam Nilan, Don Adams & Isimeli Tagicakiverata]
Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Australia

For Principals to approve distribution and collection of surveys in their schools

I give my consent for surveys necessary for the project above to be distributed to junior secondary pupils in my school. I understand that the survey will be anonymous as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which has been retained. I acknowledge that the student researcher Isimeli Tagicakiverata will distribute and collect the surveys. I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: ________________________________

School: _______________________________

Signature: _______________________________

Date: ______________

Institutional Stamp: _______________________________
APPENDIX 14: Principals’ consent for Case Study

Consent Form for the Research Project:

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS TVET – A STUDY OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN FIJI

[Conducted by Pam Nilan, Don Adams & Isimeli Tagicakiverata]
Faculty of Education and Arts, The University of Newcastle, Australia

For Principals to approve case studies to be conducted in their schools

I give my consent for a case study focusing on junior secondary pupils necessary for the project above to be conducted in my school. I understand that proper and approved research procedures will be used. I have read the Information Statement, a copy of which has been retained. I acknowledge that the student researcher Isimeli Tagicakiverata will conduct the case study in my school. I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: ________________________________

School: ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________

Institutional Stamp: ____________________________
24th November 2008

The Principal
____________________ High School
Nausori

Re: Request for permission to conduct PhD field research at your school – *Perceptions and Attitudes towards TVET: A Study of Junior Secondary Education in Fiji*

I am a PhD student at the University of Newcastle, Australia conducting my research on the above mentioned topic, and seek your permission in allowing me to conduct my research fieldwork (and attachment) at your school for a period of four weeks in Term One of 2009. The exact dates that I wish to come in are from 26th Jan to 20th Feb (Weeks 1-4).

My school-based fieldwork will mainly involve general observations as well as discussions with stakeholders such as teachers, students and parents. Primary information gathering tools used will include questionnaire surveys for students, focus groups for parents and teachers, as well as interviews with school administrators such as yourself and other invited individuals.

I am fully aware that while at your school, there are scheduled lessons taking place and I intend to participate and contribute in all activities of the school as much as possible. I will be using a participatory approach so that my time in your school is beneficial and intellectually stimulating for all concerned.

While in Fiji, I can be contacted on telephone 3410331 or email: Isimeli.Tagicakiverata@studentmail.newcastle.edu.au

I look forward to your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely

Isimeli W Tagicakiverata

Attachments: 1. Information Sheet  
2. Consent Forms
APPENDIX 16: List of Participants

Names are only used where participants have given their approval. Others preferred to be identified by their designations. Some participants registered more than one date which means that there were more than one interview, meeting or informal discussion.

A. Ministry of Education Senior Officials (for interview or discussion)
   1. Minister for Education: Mr Filipe Bole (3 Feb 2010)
   2. Permanent Secretary for Education: Mrs Emi Rabukawaqa (20 Jan 09)
   3. Deputy Secretary for Education (Professional): Ms Buatoka Nayaga (20 Jan 09)
   4. Acting Director TVET: Mrs Kaisau (23 Jan 09)
   5. Principal Education Officer TVET: Adi Alumeci Tuisawau (26 Jan 09)
   6. Divisional Education Officer Eastern: Mr Parayame Cakacaka (5 Feb 09)
   7. Senior Education Officer Research & Development: Mr Joji Qaranivalu (19 Jan 09)
   8. Senior Education Officer (Primary) Macuata / Bua: Mr Peni Saune (2 Feb 2010)

B. Senior Officials from TVET Providers - FIT / TPAF & USP (for interview)
   1. Director General TPAF: Mr Jone Usamate (25 May 09)
   2. Former Director FIT: Mr Kolinio Meo (20 May 09)
   3. Dean, Faculty of Education and Art: Mr Alifereti Cawanibuka (04 May 09)
   4. Coordinator Research & Development: Mr Paula Cavu (01 Jun 09) (Jan 2010)
   5. Head of Department of Education: Mr Seveci Naisilisili (03 Jun 09)
   6. Lecturer in Education (TCTVET): Mrs Laisha Mailekai (03 Jun 09)
   7. Lecturer in Education (TCTVET): Mrs Bedh Prasad (05 Jun 09)
   8. USP Head of Department of Education: A/Professor Akhilanand Sharma (28 May 09)

C. Fiji Department of National Planning (for meeting and discussion)
   1. Senior Planning Officer – Mr Kemueli Naqama (18 May 09)
   2. Acting Senior Planning Officer (Macro) – Mr Paula Cirikiyasawa (18 May 09)

D. Provincial Administration & Community Leaders (for interview or discussion)
   1. PATVET Coordinator: Ms Emily Hazelman (02 Jun 09)
   2. Divisional Youth Officer Northern: Mrs Emele Navunicagi (03 Mar 09)
3. District Officer Macuata (02 Mar 09)
4. Deputy Chairman Rewa Provincial Council: Mr Pita Tagicakiverata (10 Jan 09)
5. Naseakula Methodist Circuit Minister: Reverend Samisoni (08 Mar 09)
6. Former Fiji Parliamentarian: Mr Emasi Qovu (28 May 09)

E. Secondary School Administrators & Senior Teachers (for interview)
1. Principal, Nabua Secondary School: Mr Marika Uluinaceva
2. Principal, All Saints Secondary School: Mrs Kaliote Mckenzie
3. Principal, Nadi College: Mr Ganeshwar Prasad
4. Principal, Lami High School: Mr Vilikesa Saumaka
5. Vice Principal, Vunimono High School
6. Vice Principal, Nabua Secondary School
7. Vice Principal, Nadi College: Ms Ven Sudha
8. HOD Languages All Saints Secondary School: Mrs Nileshni Prasad
9. HOD Computing All Saints Secondary School
10. HOD PEMAC All Saints Secondary School
11. HOD Home Economics Vunimono High School: Mrs Analaisa Nacola
12. HOD Science Vunimono High School: Mrs Raijieli Rawasoi
13. HOD Commerce Sila High School: Mrs Sereseini Lesi
14. HOD Languages Vunimono High School
15. HOD Social Science Vunimono High School
16. HOD Languages Nabua Secondary School
17. HOD Languages Nadi College: Mrs Priya Anglish Lata
18. HOD Agriculture Nadi College: Mr Suresh Chand
19. HOD Industrial Arts Nadi College: Mr Praveen Kuar Chand
20. Catering Teacher Vunimono High School: Mrs Bale Tatatau
21. Industrial Arts Teacher Adi Cakobau School: Mr Wame Niutamata
22. Agriculture Teacher Kadavu Provincial Secondary: Mr Alifereti Korovulavula

F. Participants not identified:
1. Parents: who would be identified as Parent 1, Parent 2 etc.
2. Students: who would be identified as Student 1, Student 2 etc.
APPENDIX 17: Fieldwork Images

1: Catering students of Nadi College who hope to join the hospitality industry in the future.

2: TVET Automotive students at Nabua Secondary School preparing their machines.

3. Villagers listen to the researcher at a Fijian village church in rural Fiji.

4. A TVET graduate demonstrates his welding skills for fellow villagers.

5. An example of Fiji nationals living and working in Australia. The man is a policeman in Alice Springs and the wife is a NSW registered nurse.

6. TVET Industrial Arts teachers at Vunimono High School, Nausori.
7. Below are two images of poverty from squatter settlements in Fiji

8. Below is an image of a white-collar professional’s residence in Suva.
APPENDIX 18: Categories of jobs

| Factor Worker, Cane-Cutter, Labourer, Miner, Fisherman, Market Seller/Trader Or Worker, Farmer (Small Land Holding), Taxi Driver, Transport Driver, Dock Worker, Housewife, International Rugby Player, Movie star, Teacher, School Principal, Nurse, Paramedic, Health Worker, Accountant, Field Officer, Journalist, Owns a Retail or Service Business, Real Estate Agent, Police, Army, Ship’s Captain, Foreman, Shop Steward, Farmer (Large Land-Holding), Reverend, Pastor, Clergyman. | Civil Servant, Clerk In A Small Company Or Business, Shop Assistant, Waitress, Bank Teller Or Worker, Public Relations, Receptionist, Booking Clerk. | Automotive Mechanic, Mechanical Or Other Engineering (No Degree), Information Technology (No Degree), Carpenter/Joiner, Tiler, Plumber, Electrician, Telecommunications Worker, FEA Worker, Cook, Pastry Chef, Beautician, Builder, Musician, Classical Dancer. | Doctor, Engineer, Lawyer, Architect, University Lecturer, Stockbroker, Bank Manager, Politician, Big Business Owner, CEO or Executive Officer, Resort Manager. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Categories</th>
<th>Examples of jobs. Some may overlap into other categories.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Doctor, Lawyer, University lecturer, Accountant, Pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para- professional</td>
<td>Teachers, nurse, Captain, paramedic, Chef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public servant</td>
<td>Policeman, soldier, Clerical officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>Business owner, managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades technical work</td>
<td>Plumber, mechanic, electrician Driver,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Farmer, farm hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty trade, shop keeper</td>
<td>Shop keeper, market vendor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled, unskilled paid work</td>
<td>Factory worker, casual labourer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed, domestic work</td>
<td>Housewife, unemployed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 19: Table of Influence

Table of influence based on Question 13 options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
<th>PASTOR</th>
<th>PARENTS</th>
<th>CHIEF</th>
<th>PEERS</th>
<th>STARS</th>
<th>GOVT</th>
<th>GOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALWAYS (5)</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOST TIMES (4)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMETIMES (3)</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCCASIONALLY (2)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEVER (1)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>n=358</td>
<td>n=336</td>
<td>n=373</td>
<td>n=317</td>
<td>n=334</td>
<td>n=335</td>
<td>n=323</td>
<td>n=377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE SCORE</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The columns indicate the groups of influence with the frequencies of responses. The rows mark the level (or degree) of influence that are identified by participants.