

CHAPTER 11

BRIEF HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN FIJI

The history of the development of education in Fiji may be divided into four broadly defined periods. Firstly, the time prior to 1835, the arrival of the pioneering missionaries; secondly, the activities of the christian missionaries from 1835 to 1916 in which year the first Education Ordinance of the Colony was passed and an Education Department established; thirdly, the period from then until 1926 when the second Education Commission was appointed; and, lastly, the modern period from 1926 to the present day.

Education before 1835

The primary educational aim of the society, which existed in Fiji before the coming of the European, was to teach an understanding of and conformity to customs and traditions. The participation of the young in the various tribal activities constituted what might be called schooling. Most of these activities concerned the immediate needs, or the duties, of the social unit; hence the training was direct, realistic and purposeful as well as exacting. Each social function, each activity, was an opportunity for the uninitiated to learn and acquire the skills and knowledge of the society.

There was ample scope for developing the individual's physical abilities when he took part in games, some of which, for example, *veitiga* (something like javelin throwing) was a great national recreation. As the boy grew up to the

adolescent stage, he took part more and more in adult activities, learning the skill by doing and closely supervised and coached by the elders. After circumcision, the boy was regarded as a young man and was admitted to the "bure", where the young men of the village lived. The throwing of the spear, the wielding of a club, the use of stone tools, the poling and sailing of canoes, the lashing and weaving of complicated patterns in house building, the performance of ceremonies, required the co-ordination of the physical and other abilities of the individual's make-up.¹

There were differences in mental training, depending on the roles and ranks of parents. A priest's son was expected to learn chants and rites which formed part of the duties of his father. The best story-tellers of the village passed on legends to their children.

The exigencies of everyday life afforded excellent opportunities for the development of the senses. One had to be constantly on the watch for a possible enemy ambush; be able to identify leaves and berries; sense the approach of bad weather; be able to locate the presence of people in the bush and to recognise foot-prints as those of fellow villagers or strangers.

The effects of the culture on the instincts and emotions deserve attention. Religion and superstitions, the chief's changing moods and fancies, and the ordinary social relationships nurtured fear. The individual lived in a perpetual state

¹ W.W.Lewis-Jones, Article entitled "A Historical Survey of the Development of Education in Fiji". Shri Vivekananda Annual - Xmas 1957. Nadi, Fiji, Shri Vivekananda High School, 1957. Pp.17-18.

of fear, which coloured his whole outlook. Self-assertion was suppressed through fear of and respect for those in their many crafts. The custom of "kerekere" (begging/borrowing) checked any over-development of the instincts of ownership and hoarding.¹

By taking part in group activities the individual learnt the value of team-work and co-operation. His interests and sentiments were reconciled to those of his society. Obedience, reverence, tolerance, respect for the elders, appreciation of skills - these and similar qualities had disciplinary value which kept together the respective social groups and enabled them to function.

Christian Missions (1835-1916)

The Wesleyan Methodist Mission. The first European Missionaries to Fiji arrived on 12th October, 1835. They were William Cross and David Cargill, who sailed from Tonga to Lakeba in a small schooner named Blackbird. Although they met with no direct opposition, these early pioneers encountered many adventures and hardship.²

The missionaries quickly acquired a working knowledge of the Lakeba dialect and Cargill undertook the difficult task of reducing the native tongue to writing. He arranged an alphabet suitable for the phonetics of the language and, when a sufficiently large vocabulary had been completed, a catechism and primers were translated, and printed on a small hand press which the party had brought from Tonga.³

¹ Ibid. P. 19.

² Ibid. P. 22.

³ Loc.cit.

The missionaries soon established their usual system of circuits and each station had its vuli-ni-lotu where instruction was given to the teachers who went out into the villages to teach the children in reading and writing their own language, and in a little number work. Some pupils from these stations went on to a District Institution, the "Vuli-Levu", where they were trained as pastors, and by 1856 a central training school had been established which after several moves, finally developed at Davuilevu where it still flourishes with secondary and primary schools and a theological institution. Technical training and agricultural education at a nearby farm, were developed at this centre, as well as the training of teachers (discontinued at the end of 1946). Work among the Indian settlers started in 1898, but the Indian was less responsive and the work proved less obviously rewarding. In 1931 most of the Fijian village schools were handed over to the District Administration, but there is still a number under the mission control. The mission also established schools in various parts of the Colony for Fijian girls.¹

The Roman Catholic Mission. The work of the Methodist Mission was spread widely, if lightly, throughout the Colony. That of the Roman Catholic Mission, dating from the arrival of two Marist Fathers, also at Lakeba, in 1844, has been intensive, the policy being rather to gather pupils in central schools under the charge of a European missionary. The work of the Mission developed rapidly after 1887 with the arrival of Marist

¹ Department of Education. Annual Report for the year 1960. C.P. No. 29 of 1961. Suva, Government Printer, 1961. Para. 1

Brothers, Marist Sisters and Sister of St. Joseph de Cluny; the education of girls was undertaken, and an Order of native nuns was established.¹

The Seventh Day Adventist Mission. The Seventh Day Adventist Mission, under J.E. Fulton, commenced education work at the beginning of the present century. The first of a number of schools was established at Savavou. Later a training school was established, and progress has been steady ever since.²

The Anglican Mission. Under a "gentleman's agreement" with those at work before the Anglican Mission arrived in Fiji, this mission has confined its educational activities to Indians, Chinese and Melanesians. The mission established schools at Labasa, Nasavusavu and Suva.³

Among private bodies the Colonial Sugar Refining Company Limited established schools for European and Part-European children at a number of its refining centres, while the Gold Mining Company in conjunction with the government, also established a large school for the Fijian children and smaller schools for European and Part-European children at Vatukoula.⁴

Indian Education. The first indentured Indian immigrants arrived in Fiji in 1879 and immigration continued until 1916. For many years, however, very little progress was made in the education of Indian children. Indian education in the words of 1909 Education Commission report, "compared most unfavourably with those offered for any other class of the community".⁵ The

¹ Ibid. Para. 2.

² Ibid. Para. 3.

³ Ibid. Para. 4.

⁴ Ibid. Para. 5.

⁵ As quoted in Report of the Education Commission 1926. Suva, Government Printer, 1926. Para. 4.

absence of any village organisation, the religious and linguistic differences in many Indian settlements, the employment by the family on farm and domestic duties of Indian children and the slow emancipation of the Indian girl from ties of home and hearth to active participation in community life were some of the factors mitigating against educational development.¹

Gradually, however, the picture changed. Indian organisations such as the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharam encouraged the building of schools as did the Then India Sammarga Ikiya Sangam for the children of South Indians. The Muslim community too, entered the educational field. Most Indian schools, however, have been established on the initiative of local communities who have elected a school committee and have raised funds to build and maintain a school. The lack of any local Government Organisation among the Indian communities, in sharp contrast with the elaborately organised Fijian communal system, accounts in considerable measure for the sporadic emergence of school committees.²

Education during the Period 1916 to 1926

Before 1916 government itself exercised little control over education. The first Education Commission had been set up in 1909 by the then Governor, Sir Everard im Thurn, but European Schools in Levuka and Suva were financed from local rates and a capitation grant from the government, and the only real effect

¹ Department of Education. Annual Report for the year 1960.
Op.cit. Para. 8.

² Loc.cit.

of the Commission was the assumption by the government of financial responsibility for Queen Victoria School and the Provincial Schools as they were developed.¹

The first Education Ordinance of 1916 created a Department of Education with a Superintendent of Schools and a Board of Education of immense weight but with little specialised knowledge, including as it did, the Governor and the whole of Executive Council. A system of grant aid was established so that gross expenditure on education rose from £2,375 in 1915 to £30,035 in 1925.²

In 1917 the first grants were made to the missions for teacher-training. In 1924 a Scheme of Co-operation with the New Zealand Education Department was entered into and provided for the recruitment of New Zealand teachers under contract terms for service in Fiji.³

Modern Developments (1926-1960)

The foundations of the present system of education were laid in 1926 when a second Education Commission was appointed which included the Director of Education of Victoria, Australia, an Inspector of Schools from New Zealand, and representatives of the Missions and Fijian and Indian communities. Recommendations of the Commission were made effective by the promulgation of the Education Ordinance No. 103 of 1929. This repealed and replaced the 1916 Education Ordinance and remained in force until the end of 1960 when it was itself repealed and replaced by a new Education

¹ Ibid. Para. 9.

² Loc.cit.

³ Ibid. Para. 10.

Education Ordinance No.24 of 1960. The 1929 Education Ordinance constituted a Department of Education under the control of the Director of Education and a Board of Education nominated by the Governor. The Director of Education was entrusted with the following powers or duties:

1. The registration of schools and teachers, including control over the establishment of all new schools;
2. The payment of grant-in-aid on conditions laid down by the Board;
3. The duty of prescribing all syllabuses and the right to approve all text-books;
4. Control of staffing standards and the inspection of schools;
5. Full responsibility for the administration of all Government schools.¹

These powers have been defined and exercised through rules and regulations published under the Ordinance. In 1930, the first year in which the Ordinance became fully effective, gross expenditure on education rose to £52,000; the net expenditure was £36,800, the equivalent of 4s. 1d. per head of the population, and 5.8 percent of the general revenue of the Colony. (The corresponding figures for 1960 were £1,198,818 and £961,115, the equivalent of £2. 19s. 9d. per head of the population, and 16.8 percent of the general revenue of the Colony, respectively.) The new administration which entailed general government supervision of the three systems based on the three major races of the Colony, European, Fijian and Indian, worked largely on the basis of grant-in-aid, receipt of which entailed obligations in respect of syllabuses, staffing and building standards.²

¹ Ibid. Para. 11

² Ibid. Para. 12

In 1936, A.I. Mayhew, Joint Secretary to the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, made a survey of the education system in Fiji, and embodied his findings and recommendations in "Report on Education in Fiji". The war intervened, however, before any of his recommendations could be implemented. When it became clear that a further revision of the education system was urgently necessary, a New Zealand educational administrator, F.B. Stephens, was invited in 1944 to investigate education in the Colony. On the basis of Stephens' "Report on Education in the Colony of Fiji", the Board of Education in 1946 drew up a "Plan of Development for the Educational System in the Colony of Fiji".¹

The main features of the 1946 Plan were: more adequate administration; the appointment of all teachers as civil servants; the creation of the three Education Districts; the establishment of a government school in every well populated area; the consolidation of the Fijian Provincial schools for boys into larger Intermediate schools; the establishment of a Fijian girls' Intermediate school; the reorganisation and rebuilding of the Suva Boys' and Girls' Grammar Schools (European); the implementation of a primary school building programme; the replacement of the existing small Mission and Government Teacher Training Colleges by one large Government Teacher Training College; and, lastly, the gradual development of agricultural and technical education and the teaching of domestic science.²

¹ Ibid. Para. 13.

² Ibid. Para. 14.

For various reasons, partly financial, the 1946 Education Plan could not be implemented in toto, but by 1955 several major projects had been completed or were under way. The Teachers' Training College at Nasinu at a distance of about five miles from Suva was established in 1947 and on 1st January, 1948 all registered teachers became civil servants with the exception of 210 teachers, who, on the inception of the scheme remained, at their own request, "reserved" for the service of the particular mission or society which employed them. In the case of all government teachers the old grant-in-aid was withdrawn, government paying the teachers in full and requiring the contribution of 25 percent of the salary of all such teachers employed in aided schools to be paid into the Treasury. In the case of reserved teachers, grant-in-aid continued to be paid, the grant being equivalent to two-thirds of the minimum of each teacher's salary scale. District Education Offices were established under Education Officers, one in each of the three Administrative Districts of the Colony. Further, much new building at Lodonu enabled four Fijian Provincial Schools to be consolidated as the Ratu Kandavulevu Intermediate School, where post-primary agricultural and technical courses were subsequently introduced. The adaption of Provincial School Southern, Sawani, as an intermediate and secondary school for Fijian girls began in 1948, and the new classroom section for this, the Adi Cakobau School, was occupied in 1956. Queen Victoria School (secondary school for Fijians) was rebuilt at Matavatuou on a site of some 200 acres of land donated by the late Sir Henry Scott, K.C., and was opened in 1953.¹

¹ Ibid. Para. 15.

Between 1947 and 1955, the main emphasis was on the expansion of primary education with little improvement in the quality of applicants coming forward for training as teachers and without any corresponding increase in government provision for post-primary education. The missions and independent bodies endeavoured to fill this gap but met with many difficulties in the way of finance and teachers. The overall result was that a balanced series of post-primary courses was not available. In the "Report on Education in Fiji", published in 1955, the position as then existed was summed up as follows:

1. The primary schools are not as efficient as they should be owing to the low academic standards of the majority of those coming forward for training as teachers.

2. The Colony is short of young people with sufficient schooling to enter the professions, government service, commerce and technical trades or to take up an agricultural life with a reasonable expectation of success.

3. In order to meet the demand for further education a number of mission and independent secondary schools have been opened. In this modern materialistic world the missions, while regarding the provision of educational services as a vital part of mission endeavour are finding it more and more difficult to raise funds to supplement fee revenue. The independent schools are handicapped by lack of finance and can neither readily obtain qualified teachers nor if they do, can they offer reasonable salaries. In order to increase fee revenue, classes in these schools are often too large. In many cases buildings are inadequate and facilities such as laboratories and workshops have not been provided.¹

The proposals in the 1955 Report on Education in Fiji, which were subsequently approved by the Legislative Council, were designed to fill the gaps in the existing educational

¹ Department of Education. Report on Education in Fiji. Suva, Government Printer, 1955. Para. 9.

system. Accordingly a new five-year development plan for the period 1956-1960 was drawn up in which the main emphasis were:

1. The provision of a balanced series of post-primary courses embracing academic, modern, technical and agricultural education to provide for a reasonable proportion of those who complete satisfactorily the primary school course.

2. The continued improvement of the quality of the Primary teachers trained in the Colony and the provision of facilities for the training locally of teachers capable of teaching in the lower forms of post-primary schools.

3. The provision of the post-school-certificate pre-university training on an inter-racial basis in order to ensure that those young men and young women, who are able to proceed overseas for University or other training, either by their own resources or with the aid of one of the many scholarships and bursaries which are available, are as well fitted as possible to take full advantage of their opportunities.¹

The 1956-60 plan has come to an end, the main developments of the period being the inauguration of capital and recurrent grant-in-aid to a few selected mission and independent post-primary schools, the development of post-primary agricultural schools for Fijian, the consolidation of the multi-racial higher education courses for both boys and girls, the expansion of broadcast service to both primary and secondary schools, the construction of Suva Grammar Schools for European children and the passing of a new Education Ordinance.

The Educational System

An Educational Advisory Council, under the chairmanship of the Director of Education, advises the Director of Education on the administration of education in the Colony. The functions of

¹ Ibid. Para. 10.

the Council are laid down as:

1. The organisation of educational facilities;
2. The course or courses of instruction to be given in different types or classifications of schools;
3. Tuition and boarding fees to be charged in schools;
4. The making of grants-in-aid to schools, training schools and hostels;
5. The award of scholarships and bursaries;
6. Any proposed legislation affecting education;
7. Any other educational matter which may be referred to it by the Director or by at least two members of the Council.¹

The Education Department trains, appoints and transfers government teachers, inspects all schools and is particularly concerned with the content and standard of primary, post-primary and technical education throughout the Colony. In 1960 the administrative staff of the Department of Education comprised: Director of Education, Deputy Director of Education, Chief Inspector of Schools, Inspector of Secondary Schools, 8 Education Officers, 8 Assistant Education Officers, 24 Visiting Teachers, Supervisor of Technical Education, Supervisor of Homecraft, Supervisor of Infant Method, 3 Higher Executive Officers and 39 clerks.²

For purposes of administration, the Colony is divided into four Education Districts, in each of which is stationed an Education Officer who is responsible to the Director of Education for all matters relating to primary education in his area. Each of these Education Officers is assisted by an Assistant Education Officer and a number of Visiting Teachers.

¹ Department of Education. Annual Report for the year 1960.
Op.cit. Para. 64.

² Ibid. Para. 66-67.

The District Education Officer is advised by a multi-racial District Education Committee on such matters as the establishment of new schools and the allocation of building grants to primary schools.¹

In 1960 there were 588 schools (534 primary, 45 secondary, 7 technical and vocational and 2 teacher training colleges). Schools are either registered or recognized. A registered school is one whose grounds, buildings and equipment satisfy the requirements set out in the Education Ordinance and which has been approved by the Director of Education as being a school in which registered teachers may be employed. A recognized school is one which is authorized but where the training of staff/or accommodation have not reached a level at which the school can be registered.²

The provision of education is shared by the government with various voluntary bodies, the latter being responsible for the maintenance of the great majority of the Colony's schools. School authorities employing government teachers are required to contribute 25 per cent of the salaries of teachers. The cost of maintaining government schools is met wholly from the public funds. Recognized schools conduct^{ed}/by voluntary bodies are not subsidised by the government; they are financed entirely by the committees. All types of schools whether government, registered or recognized, charge school fees. The following table lists the Educational Agencies

¹ Ibid. Para 68.

² Ibid. Para. 72.

functioning in the Colony and the number of schools controlled by each in 1960 :

TABLE 5

Distribution of Control of Schools in 1960*

<u>Controlling Authority</u>	<u>Registered</u>	<u>Recognized</u>	<u>Total</u>
Government	36	1	37
European Committee	5	..	5
Fijian Committee	264	7	271
Indian Committee	146	22	168
Chinese Committee	2	..	2
Roman Catholic Mission	35	3	38
Marist Brothers	3	..	3
Sisters of St Joseph de Cluny	1	..	1
Methodist Mission	27	..	27
Anglican Mission	6	..	6
Seventh Day Adventist Mission	3	8	11
Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd.	3	..	3
Gold Mining Company	2	..	2
Nadi International Airport ..	1	..	1
Medical Department	1	..	1
Kindergarten ... ..	..	1	1
Mago Island Estate ... ..	..	1	1
Kioa Island	1	..	1
Rabi Island Council	3	..	3
Rotuman Committee	5	..	5
Total	544	44	588

* D. of E. Annual Report for the year 1960. Op.cit. Para.72.

The following table gives, racially, the number of government, aided and non-aided schools in the Colony in 1960:

TABLE 6
Racial Distribution of Schools in 1960*

		Government	Aided	Non-Aided	Total
Chinese	....	..	2	..	2
European	....	8	12	2	22
Fijian	....	13	307	18	338
Indian	....	11	158	23	192
Mixed	....	5	23	6	34
	Total	37	502	49	588

* Department of Education. Annual Report for the year 1960.
Op.cit. Para. 73.

Except on the remote island of Rotuma, education is not yet compulsory, though Fijian Affairs Regulations require that every Fijian child between the ages of 6 and 14 attend a school if one exists within a distance of three miles. The following table gives the number of children of each race attending primary and secondary schools in the Colony in 1960:

TABLE 7
Number of Pupils in Attendance in 1960*

Race	Primary		Secondary		Total		Grand Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Chinese	487	432	86	77	573	506	1,079
European	1,835	1,738	224	192	2,059	1,930	3,989
Fijian	18,856	16,847	1,276	863	20,132	17,530	27,662
Indian	20,123	15,864	2,299	928	22,422	16,792	39,214
Total	41,301	34,881	3,885	1,887	45,186	36,758	81,944

* Depart. of Education. Annual Report for the year 1960. Op.cit.
Para. 77.

The primary school course lasts 8 years, and the school age is 6 to 14 years. A child is normally required to discontinue his primary schooling at the end of the year in which he reaches the age of 15 (in mixed school) or 16 (in single-sex school) but staffing requirements are based on the average attendance of children aged 6 to 14 years. The great majority of the Colony's primary schools cater for boys and girls.¹

In the first four years of the eight year primary school course, the vernacular is the medium of instruction, the main vernacular being English in the case of European schools, Fijian in Fijian schools and Hindi in Indian schools. Where the mother tongue of the majority of Indian pupils warrants it, however, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu or Gujarati takes the place of Hindi as the medium of instruction. In the fifth and succeeding years English is the medium of instruction while the vernaculars continue to be taught as the second languages. In mixed schools in urban areas English is the medium of instruction from Class 1.²

The school year usually opens in the first week of February and close early in December. It is divided into three terms, two of thirteen weeks and one of fourteen. The minimum daily session is four and a quarter hours for infants in Classes 1 and 11 and four and three quarters for older children.³

At the end of Class 8 pupils wishing to continue their education in secondary schools sit the Fiji Secondary Schools Entrance Examination. On the result of this examination they

¹ Ibid. Para. 22 and 84.

² Ibid. Para. 61, 75, 85-86.

³ Ibid. Para. 89.

are considered for entry by up to three secondary schools which they are required to list in order of preference. Half marks in this examination constitutes a pass.¹

Fiji secondary schools provide a two-year course leading to the Fiji Junior Certificate Examination followed by a two-year course leading to the Cambridge Oversea School Certificate Examination. A number of secondary schools which are staffed by New Zealand teachers offer courses leading to the New Zealand School Certificate Examination.²

Most of the Colony's post-primary schools provide academic courses only. But there are a few schools where courses more appropriate to the needs of Fiji are provided: Ratu Kadavulevu School (a government boarding school for Fijians) provides separate four-year courses in agriculture and building trades; Labasa Secondary School (mixed) offers four-year "modern" course, with emphasis on technical, homecraft and commercial training; Navuso Agricultural School (a mission school with a predominantly Fijian roll) provides a four-year course in agriculture; and the Lelean Memorial School also conducts a technical course.³

In 1960, seven schools offered Sixth Form courses leading to the New Zealand University Entrance Examination. Multi-racial co-educational University Scholarship (Upper Sixth) classes are held at the Suva Grammar School.⁴

Of the 2,516 teachers employed in the Colony in 1960, 2,038 were "registered" (trained), 82 emergency-trained and 396 "recognized" (untrained). 1,840 trained teachers were in

¹ Ibid. Para. 30

² Ibid. Para. 31

³ Ibid. Para. 42.

⁴ Ibid. Para. 44-45.

government service, and 198 trained teachers were "reserved" for the service of particular agencies. Of the 1,840 teachers in government service, 69 were recruited from overseas, mainly under the Scheme of Co-operation with the New Zealand Education Department.¹

There are two teacher training colleges in Fiji - Nasinu Training College managed by the government, and the Corpus Christi College managed by the Roman Catholic Mission. Nasinu Training College offers a two-year course and the Corpus Christi College three-year course. Together they produce approximately 120 teachers a year.²

The highest form of education obtainable in Fiji is provided at the Fiji Medical School, Suva. Apart from medical and dental training, courses are available in pharmacy, laboratory technicians, health inspection, radiography, dietary and physiotherapy. The students for these courses come from various parts of the Pacific. Graduates from the Fiji Medical School are styled "Assistant Medical Officers", "Assistant Dental Officers", etc.³

There are no universities in Fiji. Government awards a number of scholarships and bursaries each year to enable selected students to undertake university and other advanced studies in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Other scholarships are also available. Besides scholarship and bursary holders, a large number of students, at their own

¹ Ibid. Para. 21.

² Ibid. Para. 51.

³ Fiji - Report for the year 1960. Op.cit. P. 59.

expenses, go overseas each year for university education.¹

In 1960, total gross government expenditure on education was £1,198,818, including £24,676 from the United Kingdom Colonial Development and Welfare funds. No figures are available of the substantial additional sums expended by non-government bodies. Government pays salaries of all teachers in government service. Non-government bodies employing government teachers are required to refund to the government 25 percent of the cost of teachers' salaries and allowances. In aided privately managed post-primary schools, government subsidises 50 percent of the approved teachers' salaries. In the case of "reserved" teachers government gives a grant of averaging £200 per annum.²

¹ Ibid. P. 54.

² Ibid. P. 50.