

Education in Fiji

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Education in Fiji
Policy, Problems and Progress in
Primary and Secondary Education,
1939-1973

C. Whitehead
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Summary

This study analyses government education policy in Fiji since 1939, within the context of the development of primary and secondary schooling. It shows how policy has been influenced primarily by the rising tide of social demand for schooling and by the economic importance attached to education as a source of skilled manpower. Throughout the period under review there has been a constant imbalance between the quantity and quality of education, which has been accentuated by the Government's lack of effective control over the growth of schools. Consequently, until recently, educational planning at government level has been characterized by a piecemeal approach. It is the author's contention that the voluntary school principle, the keystone of former British colonial education policy, has outlived its usefulness as the basis on which to build an education system designed to meet Fiji's current and future social and economic needs. Instead, a state or public school system would be more appropriate.

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Preface

Since World War II educational planning has emerged as a challenging subject for scholarly analysis principally because of the world-wide preoccupation with the promotion of economic growth and social improvement. Education is now universally regarded as a basic human right and as an essential component in the process of national development. Moreover, especially in the so-called developing countries of the Third World, the demand for education constitutes an explosive political force, as Dr C.E. Beeby emphasized in his address to the Eleventh Unesco General Conference in 1960.¹ He claimed that the demand for education stemmed from the love of parents for their children and that no democratic government could resist it. Furthermore, no government of any kind could remain stable for very long unless it made serious plans to meet the social demand for schooling.

During the past twenty-five years remarkable progress has been achieved in promoting education throughout the world, particularly in the poorer countries of South America, Asia, Africa and the Pacific, but its rapid growth has created a host of problems. Even now, our knowledge about how education systems develop and the relationships that exist between education and the various aspects of national development is still in that amorphous state in which there is little general consensus of viewpoint. Beeby and L.J. Lewis stressed this fact in a recent joint statement.² They pointed out that educational planners lack a body of theory that takes account of all that has happened in education

¹C.E. Beeby, statement made on 23 November 1960 as leader of the New Zealand Delegation to the Eleventh Session of the General Conference of Unesco during General Discussion of Reports of Director General on activities of the Organization, p.3.

²C.E. Beeby and L.J. Lewis, 'Introduction' to the special review number on Education in Developing Countries, *International Review of Education*, vol.8, 1971, pp.131-7.

throughout the world in the last twenty years 'during which educational events have far outstripped our capacity to think about them'. Given the current incomplete state of our knowledge about how education systems develop, it seems important at the present time to bring into sharper focus a variety of key questions and problems which appear to be of universal concern, rather than to seek any final answers. This can seemingly best be done not by abstract theorizing, but by examining the actual experiences and conditions of education systems in a variety of areas. Comparative detailed case studies of this sort may then enable the educational theorists to arrive at a better understanding of the persistent difficulties that have been experienced by educational administrators in developing countries since the early 1950s. Such a view is also supported by P.H. Coombs, the former Director of the International Institute for Educational Planning.³

It was against the broader background of research needs that this study was undertaken. My interest in the development of education, especially in the poorer countries of the world, stemmed initially from studies of the work of Coombs⁴ and Beeby⁵ and later from writing a Master's thesis on the subject.⁶

Fiji was chosen as the topic of this study for several reasons. No comparable study had been made of the post-war development of education in Fiji, and much of the printed primary source material was readily available in New Zealand libraries. Fiji was also close enough to visit in order to consult the records of its Department of Education and to interview several people in Suva who had played leading administrative roles in the period under review. The territory has also enjoyed long-standing educational contacts with New Zealand. Finally, the choice of subject was also motivated by a personal belief in the need to focus greater attention on the educational progress and problems of the

³P.H. Coombs, 'The Adjustment of the Educational Structure to the Requirements of Economic Development', *International Review of Education*, 1964, p.61.

⁴P.H. Coombs, *The World Educational Crisis*.

⁵C.E. Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*.

⁶C. Whitehead, Problems of educational growth in under-developed countries.

South Pacific, which, as Howard Hayden has suggested, has hitherto been an almost forgotten corner of the globe.⁷ The neglect is undeserved, for during the past two decades there has been a rapid growth in education throughout the various territories of the region.

The subject of this study is the development of primary and secondary education in Fiji since World War II. No attempt is made to relate or assess the growth of tertiary education, and mention of it is made only in so far as it has a bearing on formal schooling. The general aim is to examine and account for the nature of Government education policy, and to highlight the difficulties that have been experienced over the post-war years.

In any work of this nature it can justifiably be argued that there is a debatable value judgment written into the entire exercise. For some time now, it has been fashionable in some academic circles to question the social and economic aspirations implicit in the conventional use of the term 'national development'. Moreover, this scepticism has also extended to the value of education and schooling as it has traditionally been conceived. This is not the place to enter into what amounts to a major philosophical and ethical study. Instead, I have assumed that it is desirable for Fiji to continue fostering social and economic progress based on the European or Western model, and that, by implication, it is worthwhile for Fiji to strive to expand and improve its education system in the traditional sense. This approach has never been seriously challenged in Fiji. It is true that the British always appeared to be in something of a quandary about what to do with their tropical dependencies after World War I, and that the system of indirect rule of the Fijians, which was introduced in 1945, was designed to preserve the traditional lifestyle of the race from the less desirable effects of Western commercialism; but Ratu Lala Sukuna, one of Fiji's leading statesmen, still hoped that indirect rule would allow for substantial economic development within the traditional communal structure. More recent critics of the Fijians, such as O.H.K. Spate⁸ and the Burns

⁷Howard Hayden, 'On the Quality of Education in the South Pacific', *International Review of Education*, vol.8, 1971, p.165.

⁸O.H.K. Spate, *The Fijian People: Economic Problems and Prospects*, FLCP 13/1959.

Commission⁹, had spoken out strongly in favour of allowing them greater freedom to adjust to the Western economic way of life. Finally, throughout the 1960s, various national development plans emphasized Western-style economic and social goals and these were unquestionably accepted by the Education Commission which visited Fiji in 1969.¹⁰ National Development Plan (DPVI) further reiterates the social and economic values which underlie this study.

Similarly, in dealing with the concept of quality in relation to education, a concept that figures prominently throughout this work, one could engage in another prolonged debate on the meaning and appropriateness of the use of the term. Again, I have avoided doing this. Instead I have distinguished between the quality or efficiency of the educative process and the quality or fitness of the sort of education offered in the schools. The quality of the educative process refers to what goes on in the schools and is usually judged by the levels of attainment reached by pupils in the various subjects of the curriculum, and speed with which pupils pass through the school grades, and the numbers who pass various public examinations at the end of their time at school. The quality of the type of education offered in the schools relates to whether or not it is relevant or fitting to a country's needs. For example, it is commonly argued that the academic type of secondary education traditionally offered in secondary schools is inappropriate or unsuited to the manpower needs of most developing countries. This is certainly the case in Fiji where there is currently a shortage of secondary school leavers with technical or vocational training.

The study has been arranged on a chronological basis, partly on grounds of convenience, but also in order to maintain a sense of historical perspective — a component of educational planning perhaps not emphasized as much as it deserves. In no sense is this study intended to be a comprehensive history of education in post-war Fiji. Many subjects, for example agricultural and technical education and curriculum revision, are dealt with only in so far as they relate to the central theme of Government education policy, while

⁹*Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Natural Resources and Population Trends of the Colony of Fiji, 1959* (The Commission was headed by Sir Alan Burns), FLCP 1/1960.

¹⁰*Education for Modern Fiji, FLCP 2/1970.*

individual schools receive only passing mention. Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction to the social, economic and political settings of post-war Fiji. No education system operates in a cultural vacuum, and an awareness of the main features of the prevailing cultural milieu is necessary if education policy is to be fully understood and appreciated. Chapter 2 examines British colonial attitudes towards education and the general economic and social development of the colonies in the period between the two world wars, including the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. Chapter 3 traces the development of education in Fiji before the outbreak of war in 1939. Chapter 4 examines the influence of Governor Mitchell in procuring the services of F.B. Stephens to conduct an inquiry into the state of education in Fiji in 1944, and an account of the report which followed. Reactions to the Stephens Report are detailed in Chapter 5, while Chapter 6 outlines the work of F.R.J. Davies in drawing up the Ten Year Plan for educational development in post-war Fiji, which was largely based on the Stephens Report. The fate of the Ten Year Plan and the difficulties associated with the development of education during Howard Hayden's term as Director of Education, which ended in 1953, are discussed in Chapter 7. Then follows an analysis in Chapter 8 of the Lewis-Jones Report and its contribution to education in the late 1950s. Chapter 9 elaborates on the gathering momentum of educational expansion in the early and middle 1960s and the educational program of Fiji's Fifth Development Plan (1966-70). The Report of the Education Commission (1969) and the educational component of Fiji's Sixth Development Plan (1971-75) are analysed in Chapter 10. The post-independence scene is looked at in Chapter 11, and the study concludes with an evaluation of post-war educational development in Chapter 12.

Most of this study was based on printed primary sources such as the Fiji Legislative Council Papers and Debates, the files of the Fiji Department of Education and the education records of the Fiji Archives, and primary material placed at my disposal by Mr F.R.J. Davies. Original research into Fiji's post-war educational development is limited and much of it is of dubious value. The only doctoral study was done by S.A. Sahib (1963), and while it provides a wealth of descriptive material, it is clearly coloured by the author's political views.¹¹ Moreover, it appears that little attempt

¹¹S.A. Sahib, Educational reorganization in the colony of Fiji.

was made to go beyond the use of printed material, and the work extends only as far as 1963. Two diploma in Education studies by R.O. Sinclair and J.S.T. Kao proved useful, as did J.P. Bhagirathi's M.A. thesis.¹² Other works of marginal value included those by Suzanne Madgwick and J.L.S. Wood, and to a lesser extent those by M.N. Surridge and Thomas McKinney.¹³ The opportunity to interview various people who have figured prominently in educational administration in Fiji since 1945 proved immensely valuable. No fewer than three such people are currently living in retirement in Auckland.

In footnoting references to material in the files of the Department of Education and the Fiji Archives I have retained the number index system as used by the Department. This should make it a relatively simple matter for researchers to locate material for future studies.

The currency quoted refers to the Fijian pound, which was linked to sterling at a rate of £F111 to £100 sterling up to November 1967 (when sterling was devalued), and thereafter at £F104 10s to £100 sterling. In January 1969 a new decimal currency was introduced based on the Fiji dollar, equivalent to 10s of the former currency. The Fiji dollar is roughly on a par with the Australian and New Zealand dollars. All currency is quoted in Fiji dollars after Chapter 9.

In compiling this study I was greatly assisted financially by a generous staff research grant from the University of Otago, for which I am grateful. I also owe debts of gratitude to many individuals for their help and advice.

¹²R.O. Sinclair, A description and critical account of the education services in the Crown Colony of Fiji with particular reference to developments in the years 1946-1960; J.S.T. Kao, A history of Catholic education in Fiji; J.P. Bhagirathi, The Education Ordinance of 1916: its impact on subsequent educational developments in Fiji.

¹³Suzanne Madgwick, The inter-relationships of race relations and education in Hawaii and Fiji; J.L.S. Wood, Education policy in British South Pacific Islands: a comparative survey of education policy in Fiji, Western Samoa, and Papua New Guinea; M.N. Surridge, Growth and development of the educational system in Fiji; Thomas McKinney, A survey of post-war educational development of the Fijian.

In particular, I wish to mention Mr Gordon Rodger, who gave me access to the files of the Education Department in Suva, and Mr F.R.J. Davies, for the valuable source material that he generously made available to me. Both men also gave freely of their time and hospitality when interviewed. Likewise, my thanks are extended to Mr Max Bay, Mr Howard Hayden, Mr Fred Moffett, Mr Murray McGrath, and the staffs of the Department of Education in Suva and the Fiji Government Archives for their assistance, as well as to the students and staff at the University of the South Pacific who made my stay in Suva such an enjoyable and profitable experience. Finally, I am deeply grateful to Dr C.E. Beeby, who, despite the pressures of his own work, agreed to supervise the final stages of this study.

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Abbreviations

ACEC	Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies
CF	Confidential File, Fiji Department of Education
DPIV	Fiji's Fourth Development Plan
DPV	Fiji's Fifth Development Plan
DPVI	Fiji's Sixth Development Plan
FLCP	Fiji Legislative Council Paper
FLCD	Fiji Legislative Council Debates
FDEF	Fiji Department of Education Correspondence Files (post-1945 housed in the Department of Education)
FEF	Fiji Education Department Correspondence Files (pre-1945 housed in the Fiji Government Archives)
RF.P.	Reference Pamphlet (prepared for British Information Services by the Central Office of Information, London)

Chapter 1

Introduction — the post-war setting

All education systems are shaped by the course of history and by the physical and cultural milieu in which they function. In Fiji, nearly a century of British colonial rule has left an unmistakable legacy of British educational institutions and practices, clearly reflected in the system of grant-aided voluntary schools, the use of indigenous languages in the early years of primary schooling, the use of English as the medium of instruction at the secondary and tertiary levels, and the widespread practice of wearing school uniforms. The influence of New Zealand has been another, almost equally important, factor in shaping Fiji's education system, due mainly to the large number of teachers from New Zealand who have taught in Fiji's primary and secondary schools since the Scheme of Co-operation was established in 1924.¹ Furthermore, for many years the work in the primary schools in Fiji was based on the New Zealand primary school curriculum, while in the last fifteen years Fiji's secondary schools have increasingly geared their course offerings to the New Zealand School Certificate and University Entrance examinations. Finally, many New Zealanders have served Fiji as senior educational administrators and head teachers. Fiji has undoubtedly reaped great benefits from the regular influx of New Zealand teachers, but the cost has been high. Salaries paid by Fiji have been equivalent to those in New Zealand and there have also been additional travel and removal expenses. Moreover, most New Zealand teachers have stayed for only two or three years, so that the rate of turnover has also been high, with detrimental effects on the continuity of teaching, especially in the secondary schools.

¹For an analysis of the scheme see A.G. Hopkin, 'The scheme of co-operation between New Zealand and Fiji 1924-1972', *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, vol.8, no.1, May 1973.

The geographical setting of Fiji has also had a decisive influence in shaping the nature of the education system, and has created several long-standing administrative problems. Fiji consists of more than 800 islands scattered over nearly 100,000 square miles of ocean. Their combined surface area is equal to 7055 square miles, approximately a quarter of the size of Tasmania. There are two main islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, which are both rugged and mountainous. Communications between the various islands and within the two main ones have always been difficult, and distances between the capital at Suva and the outer islands extend to several hundred miles. Traditionally, contacts have been maintained by sea or on foot. Modern air travel, radio, and roads on the main islands have vastly improved communications, but many of the outer islands are still very isolated because of the irregularity of inter-island shipping. This isolation causes serious administrative problems, for correspondence from the Department of Education in Suva may take many weeks, if not months, to reach the outer islands, and still longer for replies to be received. Fifty-five islands currently have schools established on them, the most remote being on Rotuma, situated about 600 km north of Viti Levu. The far-flung distribution of the schools makes it very difficult for Department of Education officers to visit them all regularly, especially when the number of inspectors is small, as it has been for most of the past thirty years. Until 1960, Fiji was divided into four districts for the purposes of educational administration, but lack of field staff meant that many schools were lucky if they received a visit once a year. The situation has greatly improved since then, and there are now eight administrative districts with their own offices and a substantially increased field staff. Nevertheless, as the former Director of Education in Fiji remarked recently, it is still difficult to know what is going on in each area at any one time.² The Department of Education currently has only one boat and it is not allowed outside Suva harbour. Consequently, the only way field staff can visit outlying islands is by commercial shipping — not a very convenient or reliable arrangement. The remoteness of many areas, allied to the fact that about three-quarters of the population live on Viti Levu, has in the past led to a feeling of injustice in some parts of the country. James Madhavan and H.B. Gibson, both long-standing Members of the Legislative Council, repeatedly

²Interview with Gordon Rodger, Suva, 2 May 1973.

pointed to what they claimed was the educational neglect of Vanua Levu in the first decade after World War II.³ The obvious inequality of education provided for rural and urban areas has also been a constant problem which has been exaggerated by the difficulties of communication. The far-flung distribution of the population has resulted in the growth of many small one- or two-teacher schools and the necessity for multiple-class teaching, which is thought to have been a major factor accounting for the relatively poor educational performances of Fijians in the post-war years.

Fiji's tropical climate also has its educational drawbacks. The high humidity experienced throughout the year is not conducive to sustained intellectual effort, and it often makes the storage of equipment more difficult. The heavy rainfall causes deterioration of buildings, thereby inflating maintenance costs, and the frequent occurrence of hurricanes is an added hazard for both pupils and buildings.

Socially and in an economic sense it is misleading to talk of Fiji as a single entity. For practical purposes there are three Fijis, clearly distinguishable on racial or cultural bases.⁴ The population of approximately 550,000 consists primarily of indigenous Fijians and Fiji-born Indians.⁵ In addition, there is a heterogeneous group consisting of relatively small numbers of Europeans, part-Europeans, Chinese, and other Pacific islanders.

Most Fijians still live in tribal communities centred on the village. An extensive network of schools was formerly established throughout the villages by the Methodist Mission.⁶ The Roman Catholic Church was also prominent in providing schools for Fijians, but it tended to concentrate its efforts

³For example, see *FLCD*, 18 Nov. 1946, pp.486-9, and 7 Sept. 1955, pp.132-42.

⁴The distinction is well illustrated in Sir Alan Burns, *Fiji*; J.W. Coulter, *The Drama of Fiji*; E.K. Fisk, *The Political Economy of Independent Fiji*; and Michael Ward, *The Role of Investment in the Development of Fiji*.

⁵Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Annual Report, 1973 (mimeo), p.3.

⁶C.W. Mann, *Education in Fiji*, esp. Chapter III.

in selected areas.⁷ The Methodist Mission gave up most of its village schools in the 1930s, and they were replaced by Fijian District schools which were run by local committees financed from local taxes. Before 1939 there were also six Provincial schools superimposed above the village schools to cater for pupils of above-average ability. At the apex of the Fijian education system was the Queen Victoria School, established in 1906 to educate the sons of Fijian nobility. Since 1945 the District schools have increased greatly in number, but the Provincial schools have either been disbanded or integrated into the general system of secondary schools.

The Indians owe their presence in Fiji to the system of indentured labour introduced in 1879 to overcome a shortage of workers in the European-owned sugar plantations. The system was terminated in 1916, but not before nearly 63,000 Indians had been introduced into Fiji.⁸ Despite the fact that approximately 40 per cent exercised their right to be repatriated, those who remained and their descendants made up over 30 per cent of the total population at the outbreak of World War I.⁹ Thereafter the Indian population increased steadily, until in 1946 it surpassed that of the Fijians. Indians currently constitute about 52 per cent of the total population of Fiji. The original immigrants came from all parts of India, but despite the obvious need to adjust to life in a strange land, many of them have maintained their traditional customs, languages, and religious beliefs. Before 1939, educational provisions for the Indians lagged behind those of other races in Fiji,¹⁰ but they have grown steadily since. The Indians have traditionally attached much greater importance to education than have the Fijians. They view it as a means of escape from the drudgery of farmwork and as a ticket to a white-collar job, and families will endure great privations to enable sons in particular to receive an advanced education. Perhaps this attitude is not altogether surprising. As aliens in a strange land, the Indians had no security in life except that achieved by their own energy and initiative. Moreover, the fear of possible racial strife has always posed a potential threat to their long-term livelihood.

⁷Interview with F.R.J. Davies, Auckland, 22 May 1973.

⁸Michael Ward, p.18.

⁹*ibid.*

¹⁰See Arthur Mayhew, *Report on Education in Fiji FLCP* 3/1937, and the debate on the report, *FLCD*, 5 Oct. 1937, pp.160-95.

As might be expected, the Indians have always been very active in establishing their own primary and secondary schools, and the committees that run them reflect the wide spectrum of Indian cultural groups to be found in Fiji. The Indians have also always been the most militant racial group in pressing for more government action in the provision of schools. This was particularly so in the late 1930s and in the decade after the end of World War II, when the Indians expressed a deep sense of injustice over alleged discrimination exercised against them by the Government in the provision of schooling. In the Legislative Council, Indian Members frequently made long and impassioned speeches in support of their claims for a better deal from the Government.¹¹ It was also the Indians who were primarily responsible for the major growth of secondary schooling in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and they are currently the dominant racial group enrolled at the University of the South Pacific.

Other races have never constituted a large group numerically, and at present they represent about 6 per cent of the total population. The Europeans, mainly expatriate government officers, established schools for their own children in the early years of colonial rule and these remained relatively segregated on racial lines until comparatively recently. Part-Europeans are mainly the offspring of inter-marriages between Europeans and Fijians. Traditionally they have constituted a depressed segment of society. For many years, even after 1945, many of them were illiterate and a high proportion of their children, especially in the southern part of Vanua Levu, failed to receive any kind of schooling. The Chinese, who now number in excess of 5000, live mainly in the urban areas and figure prominently in the retail trade. Their numbers increased significantly after the Communist Revolution in China in 1949.

Since 1946 there has been an overall growth in population from 260,000 to the present total of over half a million. In the mid-1950s the rate of population increase was estimated to be 3.5 per cent — as high as anywhere in the world. A vigorous family planning campaign initiated in the 1960s appears to have been successful, and the current rate of increase is about 2.5 per cent. Naturally, the high rate of population growth imposed a very heavy strain on the country's

¹¹See especially the speeches of Vishnu Deo — e.g. *FLCD* 19 Nov. 1946, pp.492-512.

educational resources and still does. In 1966 more than half the population was under sixteen years of age, and by 1973 29 per cent of the population was at school. These facts raise critical problems of providing enough work and suitable job opportunities. The age imbalance will also exert an important influence on the potential future population growth as the younger age group enters the child-bearing age.

The increase in population has been accompanied by a rise in the number and size of urban centres. Suva, the capital of Fiji, now has a population in excess of 50,000. With its government offices, tourist hotels, duty-free shops, produce market, and busy waterfront, it is unquestionably the urban hub of the South Pacific. However, it would be misleading to equate Fiji as a whole with its leading metropolis. Most of the people still live in rural areas, often seemingly cut off from the mainstream of national development. From an educational standpoint, there has always been a wide disparity between the opportunities for schooling in Suva and those in other towns like Lautoka, Nadi and Ba, and in the rural areas. Virtually all secondary education has been traditionally centred in Suva or Lautoka, and the chances that children who lived beyond Viti Levu would receive more than a rudimentary elementary education were very restricted. Major changes have taken place in the past ten years and educational opportunities are now much more freely available to all the children of Fiji, but regional imbalances in student enrolments, especially at secondary and university levels, still exist. Moreover, Suva continues to attract a large number of children from adjacent districts and the outer islands, thus creating a serious overcrowding problem in many schools.

Fiji's economy has traditionally relied almost exclusively on sugar as its main export, and world prices have fluctuated since 1945. In the last decade, major efforts have been made to broaden the base of the country's economy, and manufacturing and the tourist industry have developed rapidly. E.K. Fisk has pointed out that by world standards Fiji is not a poor country, but unfortunately the distribution of the national income is very uneven and most families live on much less than the national average. This fact becomes educationally significant when one realizes that most parents of children attending school pay school fees. These vary greatly from school to school, but they represent a heavy financial burden, especially when, as is so often

the case, there are large numbers of children to be educated. Furthermore, frequently the family income is derived from farming, and the family must often live on credit until the sugar or copra is harvested. Only in the urban areas are there many males earning a regular weekly income, and they are often unemployed for several months at a time because the work available is seasonal. In these circumstances it is not surprising that children traditionally dropped out from school in the first or second year or left after a maximum of about four years' schooling. Since the start of the 1960s there has been a steady improvement in the holding power of the schools, and the drop-out problem is decreasing every year. However, the acute economic strains imposed on families by the costs of schooling have been recognised by the Government, and since 1965 much has been done to reduce the burden.

Fiji was a British Crown Colony for ninety years before being granted independence in October 1970. During most of that time the day-to-day administration was in the hands of the Governor, his Executive, and the Legislative Council. Before 1916 the Government exercised little control over education. Then a Department of Education, a Superintendent of Schools and a Board of Education were created.¹² In 1929 the Department of Education was reconstituted under the control of a Director of Education, who was to be assisted by a new Board of Education.¹³ The Director of Education, who was a Colonial Service appointee, was a member of the Legislative Council until the mid-1960s. Before 1939 the progress of education was highly dependent on the attitudes of the Governor and his advisers and the Director of Education. If the latter was prepared to be forceful, he might succeed in getting more money for schools and teachers. On the other hand, everything finally depended on the Colonial Treasurer's advice to the Governor and his subsequent decision. It was not until after 1945 that education was accorded a high priority by the Government.

During the 1960s the pace of constitutional change quickened as Britain accelerated the policy of granting independence to its Crown Colonies. In 1964 the 'Membership' system of government was introduced, whereby six unofficial

¹²*Education Act* 1916; Fiji Ordinances, no.8 of 1916. See also Bhagirathi, 1970: The Education Ordinance of 1916.

¹³*Education Act* 1929. Fiji Ordinances, no.1 of 1929.

Legislative Council Members were invited to join the Executive Council, thus providing for an unofficial majority. At the same time the number of 'official' Members in the Legislative Council was reduced to ten, thereby creating a further unofficial majority. A.D. Patel, a leading Indian politician, became the first Member for the Social Services, which included education, and the Director of Education henceforth ceased to sit in the Legislative Council. In 1966 further constitutional changes were introduced which paved the way for the introduction of 'Ministerial' government in 1967. The progression towards greater popular participation in government aided the cause of education because the demand for more schooling was a powerful political force and also a key factor in the Government's social and economic development plans. It is not surprising, therefore, that the speed of educational development has quickened appreciably since the mid-1960s. Moreover, since independence and the advent of 'party' government, a more readily identifiable education policy has become discernible, as illustrated in DPVI, or Fiji's Sixth Development Plan, which embodies the ruling Alliance Party's educational program.

Chapter 2

British colonial education policy between the two world wars

In education, as in all other aspects of government, administrators and policy-makers carry history on their backs. It is essential, therefore, to consider the wider setting of ideas and attitudes that shaped British colonial education policy in the period between the two world wars before discussing educational development in Fiji, both before and since 1939.

The motives behind the acquisition of the empire were varied. Colonies were assumed to be a source of economic and political power, but they were also thought to involve moral responsibilities, and it was widely believed to be Britain's long-term duty to prepare its colonies for and eventually grant them their independence. While this sense of altruism was heightened with the establishment of the League of Nations and the principle of the 'mandate' after World War I, the years that followed, up to the outbreak of war in 1939, hardly indicated any urgency in the way in which Britain discharged this aspect of its imperial responsibility. As Kenneth Robinson has remarked, in retrospect the main feature of British colonial policy that stood out during the inter-war years was the tranquil assumption of the long-term character of colonial rule.¹ At no stage did the British Government appear to conceive it to be part of its duty 'officially to strive' to bring self-government into existence. This attitude was in marked contrast to that which prevailed after 1945, when the concept of empire became both outmoded and embarrassing to sustain. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the inter-war years the pace of educational progress throughout the colonies was leisurely at best.

¹Kenneth Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship: aspects of British Colonial Policy between the wars*, p.7.

The British dependencies were governed by an administrative system based on *laissez-faire* principles, in which each territory was treated as a separate fiscal and legislative entity, responsible through the Governor to the Colonial Office in London, but able to act with a fair measure of independence.² The British, unlike the French, had no uniform 'colonial policy' or systematic philosophy and no set of rules of administrative morality enshrined in a national code. Nor did they have a supreme court or council of state to judge the appropriateness of decisions taken locally. Such policy as there was, originated less in clear strategic directives from the Colonial Office in London than from empirical decisions made locally.³ This was hardly surprising in view of the heterogeneity of the colonies and the vast distances separating them from London. At best the British Government could keep only a paternal eye on what went on in each territory, supplemented by the occasional visit of a Colonial Adviser. It was understandable, therefore, that educational matters were left primarily to the initiative of the local governor and his executive.

Colonial administrators traditionally ignored education in the initial stages of government, preferring to leave the provision of schools to the Christian missions. Moreover, in many areas, including Fiji, the missions had already established schools long before Britain formally annexed the areas as colonies. Hence, from the outset, fundamental features of colonial educational practice were the free scope given to private enterprise and its corollary of suspicion and mistrust of any rigid official control.⁴ The reasons for the lack of official activity in education were plain enough. In the words of Sir Christopher Cox, formerly Educational Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 'The Governments of the many scattered, diverse and as a rule wretchedly poor colonial territories had neither revenue

²H.C. Brookfield, *Colonialism, Development and Independence – the Case of the Melanesian Islands in the South Pacific*, pp.111-12.

³J.M. Lee, *Colonial Development and Good Government: A Study of the Ideas Expressed by the British Official Classes in Planning Decolonization 1939-1964*, p.2. See also John Anderson, *The Struggle for the School*, pp.33-4.

⁴A.I. Mayhew, *Education in the Colonial Empire*, p.39.

nor personnel to initiate an active educational policy ...'.⁵ Not until after World War I did the British Government attempt to formulate a policy or, to be more precise, a set of principles to guide the development of education in the colonies.

It was the Education Committee of the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland that first exerted direct pressure on the British Government to settle on some general colonial education policy, with particular reference to the African dependencies.⁶ In 1923 a memorandum was submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. It included a recommendation for the establishment of a permanent educational advisory committee within the Colonial Office. Following a conference on the subject at Whitehall, the Government established the Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies. Two years later, after a careful study of the African educational scene, including consideration of the two Phelps-Stokes reports,⁷ the new committee published a memorandum entitled *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa*.⁸ This document, with later additions, subsequently served as the basic reference for educational development in all the colonial dependencies.

In order to appreciate the ideas set out in the memorandum, it is necessary to place them within the context of general colonial policy at that time. During the period between the two world wars the most perplexing problem facing the Colonial Office centred around the task of trusteeship as enshrined in the concept of the mandated territories.⁹ Was the aim of the trustee power to transform colonial society into a modern Western civilization, however long the process might take? Or was it to preserve the traditional order of

⁵Sir Christopher Cox, 'The Impact of British Education, on the indigenous peoples of the overseas territories', *Advancement of Science*, vol.13, no.50, Sept. 1956, p.126.

⁶African Education Commission, *Education in Africa: a study of West, South and Equatorial Africa*, p.52.

⁷*ibid.* A later report on East Africa was published under the title of *Education in East Africa: a study of East, Central and South Africa*.

⁸Cmd. Paper 2374.

⁹Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship*, pp.85-6. See also Lee, *Colonial Development and Good Government*, p.3.

native society, purged of its grosser abuses such as cannibalism, so that it might be enabled to survive until the native peoples were able to stand by themselves? The concept of 'indirect rule', a central feature of colonial administration at the time, did not imply that society should be preserved unchanged. The aim was rather to assist colonial peoples to adapt to the needs and demands of a changing world, but any changes so great that adaptation evidently could not be made were not to be introduced. Accordingly, measures to promote economic and educational growth were to be encouraged only in so far as seemed likely to prove consistent with that overriding purpose.¹⁰ Indirect rule, therefore, called for a gradual blending of modern Western and traditional native cultural elements without attempting to prescribe in advance what character the mixture should ultimately attain.

The theory and practice of indirect rule exerted a decisive influence on the educational ideas expressed in the memorandum of 1925. This was shown by insistence on the use of native or indigenous languages in the early years of a child's schooling and the adaptation of education to local conditions by giving it a practical emphasis, and by the expressed desire to pay more attention at the secondary level to vocational rather than literary or academic education. It was also stated that local governments should direct educational development and supervise all educational institutions by regular inspection, but at the same time voluntary educational agencies were to be encouraged to extend the range of their activities. The Advisory Committee also recommended that boards of education be established in each dependency to ensure the co-operation of all parties concerned with the provision of schooling. Schools run by voluntary agencies were to be paid grants-in-aid provided that they met required standards of efficiency. All schools were to be inspected regularly, and religious and moral training was to be accorded equal status with secular subjects. The Advisory Committee also emphasized the importance of considering the education of females as an integral part of any system of education. Finally, it suggested that colonial governments should aim eventually at providing elementary schooling for both sexes, secondary education, technical training, and institutions of higher education which might develop at a later stage into universities.

¹⁰Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship*, p.86.

Provision for adult or community education was also recommended.

The Advisory Committee's memorandum received a mixed reception. It was intended that the statement should provide a set of broad principles as guides to action but that local administrators should be left free to implement them as they saw fit. It would seem, however, that in the late 1920s and early 1930s many colonial administrators were suspicious of outside influence after a long period of 'going it alone'. Furthermore, they were convinced in many instances that what was good for another colony was *ipso facto* useless for themselves.¹¹ In 1929 the original Advisory Committee, which had confined its attentions to education in African territories, was superseded by the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, which was empowered to deal with educational matters in all the Crown Colonies. Like its predecessor, it lacked any executive powers, but its advice was widely followed in many colonial territories.

The extent to which notice was taken of the Committee's recommendations was often dependent on the stage of a colony's constitutional development. In colonies with a high degree of elected government representation, the Committee's advice was often disregarded. In more autocratically governed territories, the Governor's influence was crucial. In Fiji, where the Governor ruled with the advice of a Legislative Council which was partly nominated and partly elected, the Advisory Committee's recommendations were generally used as the guide to education policy.

The reactions of the colonial peoples themselves were also decisive in determining the outcome of some of the educational principles laid down in the mid-1920s. By the end of World War I the desire for Western-type literary schooling was already firmly established in the minds of the governed, and there was little enthusiasm for primary or secondary education with a non-literary bias. Various practical difficulties also prevented the widespread adoption of many of the Advisory Committee's recommendations. These included the lack of finance to establish key institutions in which the practical implications of the various recommendations could be worked out, the inadequacies of equipment in many schools run by voluntary agencies, and the

¹¹ Mayhew, *Education in the Colonial Empire*, p.41.

lack of educators with anthropological training. In the 1930s the economic depression and its aftermath and the widely held belief that colonial territories should be financially self-supporting also prevented the widespread adoption of the Advisory Committee's advice. One basic principle was firmly established, however, if only because it was financially expedient, and that was the value of private or voluntary educational effort. Mayhew termed it 'a fundamental feature of English policy at all times and in all places'.¹² Private schools and especially denominational or mission schools, were claimed to safeguard moral education, to provide a saving in cost to the government, and to ensure a variety of aims and methods, so safeguarding against the possibility of official standardization and rigid uniformity. Nevertheless, the ultimate control of education in any colony still resided with the local government, which was expected to ensure adequate provision of schools, the maintenance of acceptable standards of work, and the protection of the physical and moral welfare of the pupils.

Educational practice in British dependencies in the late twenties and throughout the thirties clearly reflected the benevolent paternalism which characterized British colonial rule in general. It was essentially pragmatic and in keeping with the spirit of indirect rule and *laissez-faire* philosophy.

It is doubtful whether there was any coherent education policy as such, despite the work of the two advisory committees. As one British colonial administrator remarked 'There is, in the full sense of the term, no educational policy for the colonial empire as a whole ...'¹³ What policy there was amounted to general statements which left local administrators with a large degree of freedom to choose their own methods in order to relate them to the particular conditions of their area. While this lack of a more positive initiative from the Colonial Office was a cause for criticism in some quarters, elsewhere it was regarded as a most praiseworthy aspect of Britain's imperial role. W. Ormsby-Gore, at one time Secretary of State for the Colonies, expressed this view in an article he wrote

¹²*ibid.*, p.44.

¹³F.M. Keesing, *Education in Pacific Countries*, p.20.

in 1937.¹⁴ He applauded the fact that Britain, unlike France, had no clearly defined attitude towards its colonies. He argued that the heterogeneity of the colonies made any uniform policy both undesirable and virtually impossible to implement, and concluded by saying, rather facetiously, 'We are, I fancy, a nation of opportunists; let us hope of enlightened opportunists'.

The British Government's attitude to education in the colonies in the inter-war years was equivocal. On the one hand it expressed the belief that education was an essential component in the general policy of preparing the colonies for eventual self-government, but on the other hand it left the framing of specific policy to individual colonial administrations, with the proviso that education, along with other social services, should be financed out of internal revenues. Bearing in mind the prolonged and detrimental effects on colonial revenues of the economic depression of the early 1930s, and the preference in colonial spending for economic rather than social projects, it is not altogether surprising that educational progress in the colonies generally was slow in the decade before World War II.

The statement of policy on colonial development and welfare

Wars have the habit of ending eras, and World War II was no exception. Before 1940, British colonial development policy was based on the principle of financial self-sufficiency for each of the dependencies. Colonies were expected to promote their own economic and social growth within the limits of their own monetary resources, aided where absolutely necessary by sporadic loans, grants-in-aid, and other contingent financial assistance from the United Kingdom. Private overseas loans and local investment were considered the primary means of promoting local development. Public funds were made available for such essential utilities as transport and communications, but in most other fields colonial governments were expected to support and follow rather than to lead and compete with private capital. This policy made it difficult, if not impossible, for colonial governments to launch ambitious schemes for improved social services.

¹⁴W. Ormsby-Gore, 'Some educational problems of the colonial empire', *Empire Review*, no.433, 1937, pp.75-80.

These were regarded as essentially 'spending' or consumption items and were accordingly given a low priority when funds were scarce, as they were throughout the aftermath of depression in the mid- and late-thirties.

By 1939 the Colonial Office was faced with a variety of general social and economic problems in the dependencies, which brought into question the suitability of general development policy. Reports on disturbances in a number of colonies highlighted the inefficiency of labour utilization, the uncertainty of marketing, the lack of planning and the prevalence of waste in many local economies, and the deplorable standards of many social services, including education.¹⁵ Local criticism of colonial development policy was also reinforced by advances in monetary and capital theory which seriously challenged long-held assumptions about the best means to promote economic growth. The late thirties also witnessed a leftward swing of progressive political sentiment and mounting world criticism of the colonial powers for their alleged neglect and indifference to trusteeship and its attendant social responsibilities. Finally, the onset of war in 1939 quickly brought to a head the controversial question of self-determination for colonial territories. Within a matter of months dependent empires became a source of political unrest and anxiety to their rulers.

It is difficult to give any precise date for the general acceptance in Whitehall of a more direct responsibility for colonial development, but the *Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare*, published in February 1940, proved to be the major landmark from a practical viewpoint.¹⁶ For the first time the British Government officially acknowledged that the colonies could not be expected to develop unaided and that, accordingly, imperial funds would be made available on a much more extensive scale than hitherto, to facilitate development projects. A.C. Jones, a prominent Labour spokesman on colonial affairs, claimed that the ensuing Colonial Development and Welfare Bill marked the end of the *laissez-faire* attitude towards colonial development and the end of platitudinous talk about trusteeship.¹⁷

¹⁵A.C. Jones, 'Social and Political Objectives', *The Year Book of Education* 1954, p.33.

¹⁶Cmd. Paper 6175.

¹⁷*Parliamentary Debates: House of Commons*, vol.361, 21 May 1940, p.55.

The colonies were no longer to be regarded as places for easy profits for those with money to invest in them. In future, the British Government's attitude towards the colonies would be more constructive and positive. The new policy abandoned the old principle that each colony must be self-supporting. The British Government also agreed that economic growth and the extension of social services should proceed together. This point was stressed by Malcolm MacDonald, the Minister of Health, who introduced the Bill into the House of Commons:

In this legislation, the word "development" has not a narrow materialistic interpretation. It certainly covers the development of the material economic resources of a territory, but it also covers everything which ministers to the physical, mental or moral development of the colonial people of whom we are the trustees.¹⁸

He then stated that health and educational projects would count as qualifying for assistance under the new legislation. The primary emphasis was still to be centred on the economic development of the colonies — 'That is the primary requirement upon which advance in other directions is largely consequential' — but it was formally recognized that effective growth was dependent on supporting social services. Social improvements needed to be sustained by increased productivity, but they, in turn, were essential to an expanding economy.

Once the Colonial Development and Welfare Act was passed, colonial governments were invited to prepare long-term development plans and to submit them for consideration by the Colonial Office and the various advisory committees on colonial affairs. It was hoped that co-operation between the British Government and the individual colonies would ensure that development proceeded on a balanced and comprehensive plan, but there was no intention of imposing any uniform system of co-ordination throughout the colonial empire or of imposing any set pattern from Whitehall. It was readily appreciated that the circumstances, resources and needs of individual territories were so diverse that no rigid formula was practicable or appropriate.

¹⁸*ibid.*, p.47.

The change of policy by the British Government was partly attributable to the influence of Keynesian economic theory and the advocacy of direct government intervention in the management of a nation's economy. Lord Hailey's timely *African Survey* may also have exerted a decisive influence on the British Government.¹⁹ His report contained several classic statements which advocated greater attention to social and economic development in the African colonies. It would be quite unrealistic, he argued, to plan for the self-government of the colonies 'unless we can build up a social foundation adequate to bear the structure of the political institutions in which our intentions will eventually find expression'.²⁰ The exigencies of war also quickly transformed the pre-war assumptions of the long-term nature of colonial rule. As Lee has since remarked, the war compelled those responsible for the Empire to be more explicit about their intentions.²¹ Henceforth, the promotion of self-determination throughout the empire grew apace and educational development assumed a new importance as an essential pre-requisite for political independence.

The full impact of the new policy was not felt until the immediate post-war years when 'it ... resulted in what almost amounted to an educational revolution throughout the Colonial Empire'.²² By 1950, £140,000,000 had been allocated for colonial development of various kinds.²³ The implementation of the new policy was not without its critics and perhaps some misunderstanding on the part of colonial administrators far removed from the centre of operations in London. The British Government had stressed the need for balance between schemes designed to maximize economic productivity and those to promote growth in the social services. Unfortunately, there appeared to be a general tendency in the colonies, and this included Fiji, to embark on over-ambitious development plans and to place too great an emphasis on social welfare projects at the expense of schemes designed to increase economic productivity. *The Economist* pointed out that the accent on social welfare schemes was hardly

¹⁹W.M. Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara*.

²⁰Quoted in Lee, p.17.

²¹*ibid*, p.14.

²²*Education in the United Kingdom Dependencies*, RF.P. 2605, 1954, p.13.

²³*ibid*, p.2.

surprising 'in view of the neglect of social services in the past',²⁴ but the net effect of the new policy was to precipitate a major debate on the best method of promoting national development. On the one hand, it was argued that economic growth was a necessary prelude to social welfare because the latter could only be maintained on a long-term basis from the proceeds of increased productivity; on the other hand, it was claimed that maximum productivity could not be achieved without an educated and healthy workforce. Moreover, it was also asserted that economic growth was not an end in itself, but merely a means to a better life for society as a whole. Despite the British Government's attempt to retain a degree of balance in the approval of development schemes, limited financial resources created what W.E.H. Stanner termed a 'fundamental problem of colonial administration; the choice between capital development from limited means, and the improvement of social standards from the same means at the same time'.²⁵ The conflict remains unresolved although the controversy surrounding it has gained in intensity in recent years as developing countries around the globe have embarked on plans to promote simultaneous economic and social growth.

²⁴*loc. cit.*, 15 Mar. 1947, p.364.

²⁵W.E.H. Stanner, 'Observations on Colonial Planning', *International Affairs*, vol.25, 1949, p.324.

Chapter 3

The development of education in Fiji prior to 1939

The development of education in Fiji in the forty years before the outbreak of war in 1939 followed a pattern typical of many British colonies. During the nineteenth century the Methodist, Anglican, and Roman Catholic missions all established schools in Fiji. At the turn of the century they were joined by the Seventh Day Adventist mission and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company. Before 1914 government interest in the provision of schools was minimal. In 1879 an ordinance had been passed to provide for schools in townships, to ensure adequate educational facilities for the increasing number of European children. Schools were to be financed by fees and payments from general colonial revenue. As a result of this measure the Levuka Public School was established in 1879 and the Suva Grammar School in 1883.

In 1909 the Governor, Sir Everard im Thurn, appointed an Education Commission to inquire into the existing provisions for education within the colony and to advise on what improvements were needed. The Commission reported its findings in 1910.¹ Its main recommendations were that public elementary schools should be maintained entirely from public revenue; that private schools should receive grants-in-aid; that the direction of public education should be vested in a Director, assisted by a Board of Education; that all schools should be inspected regularly; and that the Government should provide schooling for the Indian population. The Government evidently thought the recommendations were too ambitious, for nothing happened. C.W. Mann suggested that the main outcome of the Commission's report was to draw attention to the extent of missionary activity in the

¹Education Commission 1909: *Report of the Commission*, Suva, 1910.

educational field.² The missions appeared to be doing a commendable job at little cost to the Government and there was, therefore, thought to be little need for any further action.

It was in the years immediately before the outbreak of World War I that the problem of providing schooling for the growing Indian population became a major issue. By 1910 it was abundantly clear that the indentured Indian population was not to be a transient feature of life in Fiji. Moreover, the Education Commission's report was very critical of the lack of schools for Indian children. In 1912 an Education bill was introduced incorporating the idea of mixed or inter-racial schools, but it was withdrawn in the face of strong European opposition.³ Two years later attention was drawn to the fact that little more than 1 per cent of the colony's revenue was being spent on education, none of which contributed to educating the Indian population.⁴ Following this disclosure, a Select Committee was set up to look into the steps needed to establish a suitable system of education for the colony as a whole. The Committee's recommendations formed the basis of the Education Ordinance of 1916. This provided for the establishment of a Department of Education, a Superintendent of Schools, and a Board of Education to oversee standards and co-ordinate the various racial schools. In theory the Board carried considerable weight, including as it did the Governor and the entire Executive Council, but it contained little specialised knowledge of educational matters. A grant-in-aid scheme was also introduced for subsidizing agencies, but grants were to be given only towards the salaries of teachers of the English language. The 1916 Act gave the Government potentially wide powers to control and direct the growth of schooling, but in practice it chose not to use them. Instead, the initiative behind the growth and improvement of schooling was to remain with the missions and other voluntary agencies. It was clearly not the Government's intention at that stage to incur large and continuing financial commitments by introducing a system of public schools, but rather to encourage and supervise voluntary effort.

²Mann, *Education in Fiji*, p.30.

³Bhagirathi, *The Education Ordinance of 1916*, p.14.

⁴Mann, p.29.

The stipulation that grants were to be paid only to teachers of the English language proved to be a serious setback, both to existing mission schools and to local Indian communities which sought to start schools, and in 1917 the clause was revoked. Thereafter, the various Indian cultural groups set about providing schools, most of which used Hindustani as the medium of instruction. In framing the 1916 Act, the Government had hoped to expand facilities for Indian education by extending the existing system of mission schools, but this failed to eventuate for two reasons. First, the missions found their resources inadequate to cope with the rapidly increasing number of Indian children, and second, and perhaps of greater long-term significance, the Indians resisted being subjected to Christian education. They preferred, instead, to organize their own schools. The introduction of the grant-in-aid scheme resulted in gross government expenditure on education rising from £2375 in 1915 to £30,035 in 1925.⁵ It also led to the establishment of separate schools for each racial group and the existence of many small schools each serving sectional interests, which in turn led to unnecessary and wasteful duplication of facilities. In 1924 the Scheme of Co-operation was started with New Zealand. By this, teachers from that country were recruited for service in Fiji's schools.

In 1926 a second Education Commission was appointed to look into the state of education in the colony and to advise on what ought to be done to improve educational opportunities for all races.⁶ The decision to conduct another investigation was strongly influenced by the serious lack of schooling for the Indians. Before the Commission began its work, the Governor warned that limited financial resources would prevent the Government from introducing any radical changes in the foreseeable future. The Commission's recommendations were accordingly directed mainly to the improvement and consolidation of existing facilities for education. It was estimated that there were about 14,000 Indian children of school age and only 2485 were known to be attending school. Of this number only 333 were girls.

⁵Department of Education, *Report for the Year 1948*, LCP 1/1950, p.1. Various post-war reports of the Department of Education give useful summaries of the historical development of education in Fiji.

⁶Education Commission 1926: *Report of the Commission*, FLCP 46/1926.

The Commission saw no immediate solution to the problem, especially in view of the Colony's limited financial resources. It was also thought that religious differences would forever prevent mission schools from catering for most Indian children. The Commission concluded, therefore, that there were only two possible solutions to the provision of adequate schooling for the Indians. The first was a system of government schools, which the Government had already indicated it was not prepared to establish. The alternative was an extension of the grants-in-aid scheme.

Apart from the need for more schools for Indians, the Commission considered the most immediate educational problem facing the colony was not so much one of adding to existing educational opportunities by the establishment of new schools as of improving the organization and quality of those already in existence. This could best be done, it was claimed, by strengthening the Education Department by appointing a Director to oversee its operations, and by the establishment of a government teachers' college, which could cater for all religious groups and so provide an alternative and a supplement to the mission training establishments.

Most of the Commission's administrative recommendations were incorporated in the Education Ordinance of 1929, which replaced that of 1916. The Department of Education was re-established under the control of a Director and the Board of Education was reconstituted. Henceforth it was to be nominated by the Governor and to be responsible for the registration of all schools and teachers. The Board was also empowered to lay down conditions for the payments of all grants-in-aid, to prescribe all syllabuses and to approve all textbooks, to control standards of staffing and the inspection of schools, and to administer all government schools. In practice, the Director of Education was to become the key figure with the Board of Education acting in an advisory capacity. In 1929 the first government teachers' training college was opened at Natabua. Two years later the first supervisory teachers were appointed to travel around the schools and assist teachers. They were also to report on teachers seeking promotion. The latter function was designed to overcome the lack of any regular inspection of teachers, which was ruled out on grounds of cost. District Education Committees were also established in 1935, to assist in raising local funds for education and to exert some control over schools in their areas. This

move, initiated by the Board of Education, was designed to secure greater local interest in schools, without which it was felt that the problem of educating the mass of the people could not be solved.

Despite two commissions and two ordinances there was only very limited educational progress in Fiji in the period 1910-30. Lack of money was clearly a major contributing factor throughout the period, but perhaps the absence of any defined purpose and accompanying drive on the part of the Colonial Administration was also to blame. John Caughley, the Director of Education in 1930, certainly thought so. He claimed that the record of the previous twenty years, particularly with regard to the education of the Indians, gave little or no evidence of any general objectives or sequence of action, and concluded that the progress of education had been constantly thwarted by delays and obstruction when anything positive was proposed.⁷ During the 1930s the effects of the depression curtailed any major increase in government spending on the social services. Moreover, the task of expanding education proved too much for the missions, and in 1931 the Methodist mission, hitherto the most active in the educational field, decided to hand over most of its primary schools to local committees. On the positive side, the Department of Education did manage to establish a degree of order in the school system, but the quality of schooling remained poor.

Throughout the 1930s the relative lack of schooling for the Indians remained the most intractable educational problem in the colony, and one which was reflected in bitter exchanges in the Legislative Council and the press.⁸ Despite substantial efforts by the Indians themselves to establish schools, they were unable to keep pace with the rapid growth of the Indian population. The expansion of Indian schools was also impeded by the difficulty of arranging for local financial contributions due to the heterogeneous nature of

⁷FEF 18/- Teaching of English in Non-European Elementary Schools. A Memorandum by the Director of Education, pp.1-4.

⁸The subject also figured prominently in correspondence between the Colonial Office and the Government in Fiji in the early 1930s. See *Great Britain Colonial Office Despatches relating to Fiji 1921-1940*. File nos. 85090/7 and 85090/20 (microfilm) National Archives, Wellington.

the Indian communal structure and the Indians' scattered population distribution. It was the seriousness of the Indian education problem which was mainly responsible for the visit of Arthur Mayhew, the Joint Secretary to the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, to Fiji in September 1936, and for his subsequent report on education in the colony.⁹ Mayhew had served for nineteen years in the Indian education service and was, therefore, equipped with a wide knowledge of Indian education which seemed especially appropriate to Fiji's needs at that time. In retrospect, however, his report appeared to do little more than draw attention to and elaborate on a number of long-standing educational problems in the territory.

Like the Commission of a decade earlier, Mayhew based his report on the assumption that it was the Government's main aim to provide an effective system of primary schools for all races of the colony as soon as possible. As far as government funds were concerned, he considered it should be the basic aim of the Administration to distribute them as evenly as possible among the various areas and races of the colony, paying attention to the needs and population of each race and area rather than to the extent of local contributions. Nevertheless, it was clear that Indian needs were uppermost, and he accordingly recommended that the Government should recognise the fact and increase expenditure on Indian education to bring it into line with that spent on the Fijians. Mayhew also commented on what appeared to be the Government's long-standing inability to organize a workable system of local rating of the Indian population for educational purposes. The Indians had left him in no doubt of their support for the idea, and it was evident that the progress of Indian schooling had suffered for many years because of the absence of such provision. The scattered distribution of the Indian population created many practical problems in introducing such a scheme, but the main reasons for the Government's intransigence appeared to be, first, its fear that it would be over-committed financially, and second, that such a scheme would be unacceptable to the Fijians, who already contributed most of the cost of their schools through local taxes. It was the same fear of offending the Fijians that seemingly accounted for the fact that the Administration had not made greater efforts to build government schools for the Indians in the 1930s. The

⁹ Mayhew, *Report on Education in Fiji*, FLCP 3/1937.

British displayed a marked sense of paternalism towards the Fijians, who had voluntarily handed over their sovereignty by the Deed of Cession some sixty years earlier. The Indians, by contrast, were comparatively recent arrivals, towards whom the Government did not seem to feel the same moral obligation.

Mayhew was also very concerned at the low standards of educational attainment reached by girls. He pointed out that in 1935 only twenty-eight girls had attempted the Qualifying Examination, taken at the completion of the full eight-year primary school course, and that only eight had passed, 'thanks to generous concessions'. In the same year there were only fifty Fijian girls in the top two grades of all Fijian primary schools, for the Indian girls, the situation was even worse. 'In fact their education has barely begun', remarked Mayhew. Only 151 Indian girls aged twelve years or more were enrolled in all the Indian schools in Fiji in 1935, and only nineteen were in the top primary grade. This situation was attributed mainly to Moslem and Hindu attitudes towards the place of women in society, and to the fact that Indians had only recently started to take an active interest in the education of their daughters. Early marriage, social custom, domestic duties, and parental indifference appeared to be the chief reasons why Indian girls either failed to go to school at all or left prematurely. Moreover, the idea of co-education received little or no support from the Indian community because of the predominance of male teachers and the constant fear of promiscuity. To overcome the problem, Mayhew considered it essential to train women as teachers and to provide separate schools for girls. Unfortunately, the provision of a sufficient number of teachers promised to be a long and slow task. The training of Fijian and Indian women as teachers had only begun in 1934, and the number of trainees was very small. There was also little prospect of any substantial increase in their numbers.

Mayhew was also critical of the Board of Education for failing to concern itself with issues of general policy, and stressed the need for more administrative assistance for the Director of Education, whose time was mostly taken up with petty administrative details instead of with overall planning and direction. The short duration of schooling for most pupils was also highlighted in Mayhew's report. In both Fijian and Indian schools there was a major reduction in enrolments in the first four grades. The repetition of grades was an equally serious problem, which contributed to

the high drop-out rate by increasing the size of the lower primary school classes. The premature withdrawal of pupils from rural schools in particular was largely attributed to the shortage of teachers competent to attract and teach pupils effectively in the higher grades. In Indian schools, the need for parents to employ their older children on their farms was a major reason for absenteeism. Amongst both Fijian and Indian parents there was also what Mayhew termed 'a natural ignorance ... of the value of prolonging the education course beyond the stage when reading and writing have been learned'. The same factors, along with adverse climatic conditions and the remoteness of many schools, also accounted for the low level of school attendance.

The poor quality of education was attributed to the dearth of good teachers and to unimaginative methods of teacher-training. Mayhew claimed that the training colleges were desperately in need of new ideas and new personnel. Training tended to be formal and stereotyped and out of touch with the needs of schools in rural communities. The supply of teachers was also totally inadequate for Fiji's future needs, but he saw no immediate solution to the problem because of the extremely limited number of potential recruits.

Mayhew's report was adopted in principle by the Legislative Council in October 1937, but as James Russell, the Director of Education, remarked at the time, the report added nothing new in principle to the policy adopted by previous Councils.¹⁰ He also commented on the proposal hinted at in the report, but widely advocated by the Indians, of building government schools to overcome the acute shortage of schools for Indians. This was not the answer, in his opinion. Such schools would have to be staffed, and that would mean taking qualified teachers from existing schools — a clear case, he thought, of robbing Peter to pay Paul. The Governor pointed out that the rate of education progress in the colony was dependent entirely on finance and personnel, and both were in short supply and likely to be so for some time. At the conclusion of the debate on the report, a Select Committee was appointed to look in detail at a proposed three-year plan of capital expenditure, drawn up beforehand by Russell on the basis of Mayhew's recommendations.

¹⁰FLCD 5 Oct. 1937, p.167.

As fate would have it, less than half of the £50,000 approved for the plan was spent before the outbreak of World War II brought all further educational development to a halt.

In retrospect, the 1930s was a disappointing period for those people anxious to expand education in Fiji. The constant need to curb the costs of government and the shortage of skilled teachers effectively retarded any major progress. Net government spending on education during the period 1931-39 dropped from 5.8 to 4.7 per cent of total government expenditure.¹¹ Over the same period, primary enrolments rose from approximately 23,000 to 30,000, but the quality of schooling was very poor and there was no appreciable increase in student numbers at the secondary level. As Stanner later remarked, education policy remained almost static throughout the 1930s.¹²

Nevertheless, by 1939, a variety of educational problems had emerged that were to persist throughout the post-war years. Foremost among these was the rising social demand for education. The late thirties saw the start of what was ultimately to become an almost overwhelming desire on the part of parents to obtain schooling for their children. Before the war the growing pressure was most noticeable amongst Indian parents, which was not surprising in view of the paucity of schooling available for their children. In 1939 the total number of Indian children enrolled in schools in Fiji was about 8400. By the end of the war the number had risen to over 14,000. By comparison, Fijian enrolments totalled approximately 19,500 in 1939. Six years later the figure had risen to 23,000. Since 1945 the universal parental demand for more schooling has been the prime motive behind the impressive expansion of education in post-war Fiji.

The lack of adequate finance to meet the rising demand for schools was also one constant feature of the inter-war years which persisted after 1945. Even since the late 1950s, when Fiji's economic fortunes took an upward turn, there has never been enough money to match the rising tide of parental demand for education. Before 1939 there were never enough primary schools, while secondary education was non-existent except for European children and a select group

¹¹Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, p.188.

¹²*ibid.*, p.188.

of Indians and Fijians. Since 1945 provision has been made for almost every child to receive at least six years of primary schooling, and significant progress has been made in the last decade in extending educational opportunities at the secondary level, but there is still a long way to go before Fiji achieves its current aim of a minimum of ten years basic education (six years primary and four years secondary) for every child.

The quality of work done in the schools was also very poor in the 1930s, and despite a vast improvement since then, current practices still leave much to be desired. The incidence of drop-out and repetition of grades has declined steadily since the mid-1950s, but there are still many children who do not complete their primary schooling. As in so many countries throughout the world since 1945, it has been politically expedient to sacrifice quality of education in the interests of quantity. Many factors influence the quality of work done in the schools, but none more so than the supply of competent teachers. Unfortunately, the teacher shortage of the thirties has remained a feature of the post-war scene. Despite the opening of a new government teachers' college at Nasinu in February 1947, the steady and relentless expansion of both primary and secondary schooling has constantly outstripped the country's teacher-training capacity.

The racial disparities in the educational opportunities of the 1930s were rapidly removed after World War II, but they have since been replaced by a serious and growing imbalance of educational achievements between the Indians and Fijians at the secondary and tertiary levels. Since the late 1950s, for various cultural and practical reasons, the educational attainments of the Indians have surpassed those of the Fijians, and the Government is currently engaged in efforts to redress the balance in order to avoid potentially undesirable political consequences.

The lack of educational achievement by girls in the thirties persisted after the war, and it was not until the late fifties that the position began to improve as greater numbers of women teachers became available and Indian cultural attitudes began to change significantly. The past decade has seen a vast improvement in the educational attainments of both Indian and Fijian girls, and together they now form a significant component of the annual intake of student teachers at the University of the South Pacific.

Since 1945 Fiji has experienced a very rapid rate of population increase, which has imposed very great strains on the country's capacity simultaneously to expand and improve its education system. In addition, several new educational problems have emerged. The type of education offered in the schools has come under increasing scrutiny since the mid-fifties, partly because of economic manpower planning, but also in response to a world-wide concern to make education more meaningful and satisfying for all pupils. Despite the obvious need to expand technical and vocational education in the past twenty-five years, for economic and cultural reasons Fiji has been slow to develop these fields. Furthermore, multiracial schooling, long resisted by all races, now appears to be gaining greater popularity as Fiji strives to build a genuine multiracial society, but there are many practical problems to be overcome if full integration is ever to be achieved. Finally, the rapid post-war growth of Fiji's education system has created a growing administrative problem and imposed new strains on the limited resources of the voluntary agencies. The traditional system of voluntary schools supported by grants-in-aid has never produced a wholly satisfactory solution to Fiji's educational needs, and the inherent weaknesses in such a system have been ruthlessly exposed in the unprecedented increases in primary and secondary enrolments of the past two decades. For financial, administrative, and educational reasons it may well be necessary, therefore, for the Fiji Government to establish a state system of schools for the future, rather than go on relying on local committees to establish and manage schools assisted by judicious grants-in-aid. Subsequent chapters of this study examine the post-war development of education in Fiji within the context of these problems.

Chapter 4

The Stephens Report

The background to the report

Despite the outbreak of war, agitation for government action concerning education continued in Fiji, and was heightened after the publication of the British Government's *Statement of Policy on Colonial Development and Welfare* and the accompanying Act. The administration in Fiji was basically criticised for failing to draw up a long-term plan for the future development of education in the colony.¹

The general dissatisfaction with education in Fiji was duly noted by Sir Philip Mitchell, who became Governor late in 1942. In the following February, he sent a memorandum to James Russell, the Director of Education, in which he outlined what he thought was wrong with education in Fiji and how it might be improved.² He claimed that his intention in writing to Russell was 'to discover a line of policy by which education in Fiji may be governed in future'. From a study of past records, he concluded that no one had given much thought to the type of education most suited to Fiji's population. Instead, the approach had been to consider how the education given in the United Kingdom or New Zealand could be provided in increasing quantities for the people of Fiji. Furthermore, he concluded that racial segregation had been accepted as inevitable in all educational arrangements, with the result that separate schools had proved

¹For example see the speech by B.D. Lakshman, *FLCD* 24 Nov. 1942:76.

²*FDEF* 24/22/9 Education in Fiji. A Note from the Governor to the Director of Education, 23 Feb. 1943. In his book *African Afterthoughts* (1954:175) Mitchell claimed that education had always held a fascination for him since his early days as a minor colonial official in East Africa.

expensive and of uneven quality. He, therefore, thought it necessary to instigate a 'radical' investigation of the education system before the Government was committed to the further expansion of practices which had seemingly yielded unsatisfactory results at 'excessive costs'. Evidently he was far from satisfied with the Mayhew report and Russell's three-year capital development plan as the basis for future growth.

Mitchell also outlined a number of basic principles which he thought should govern future educational development. He laid particular emphasis on the need to generate racial harmony and toleration as a prerequisite for future political independence. Three points of policy were seen to emerge from this premise. The first was that racially segregated schools should be regarded as a temporary concession to circumstances, which should be progressively removed as soon as possible. Second, there should be a common language with English as the obvious choice; and finally, opportunities for education at all levels should be made as equal as possible for all races. In view of the relative size of Fiji's current and foreseeable population, Mitchell did not consider it feasible to establish institutions for higher education. From a geographical viewpoint, he considered it logical for Fiji to look towards New Zealand to fulfil its educational needs at the tertiary level. Mitchell was also critical of the general practice in most British colonies of planning education from the bottom upwards or of concentrating on primary education. He preferred to view primary education as a source for providing an adequate stream of pupils for higher education and technical training. He was also critical of the provisions made for the training of teachers both in Fiji and in other British territories, and considered an efficient teacher-training institution the first priority in any reorganization of Fiji's education system. He was also keen to improve conditions of service for teachers in Fiji, and to establish a committee to look into the need for technical training. Financially, Mitchell thought it would be safe to assume a maximum vote of £100,000 annually. He also had hopes of receiving aid from the newly established Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. Collaboration with the missions in the development of education was desirable, but he stressed the need to assume that the whole cost of education in the future would fall upon the Government. To some extent the cost might be 'mitigated by the benevolences of the faithful', but voluntary contributions were unreliable and he did not think that they should be used as a basis for future planning.

Russell had spent most of his working life in Fiji, first as a teacher and, since 1931, as Director of Education. He had, therefore, a wealth of practical experience and insight into local conditions, but he was hardly a dynamic figure. One of his contemporaries has suggested that at that late stage of his career he had no wish to be an innovator.³ Moreover, his health was not good and he lacked staff for anything but routine administration. In reply to Mitchell, he claimed that although educational standards were low in the schools, as one would expect from untrained and poorly educated teachers, they nevertheless compared more than favourably with those in any African colony.⁴ He also defended racially segregated schools on the grounds that they were based on sound educational principles. He added that any attempt to open all schools to all races would be deeply resented by the European population. On the subject of finance, he doubted whether the proposal to pay the full cost of education from colonial funds would meet with general approval. He might also have added that the cost of taking over the voluntary schools and planning for future growth would have required far more than the £100,000 per annum mentioned by Mitchell. Russell concluded by stating that he did not expect that there would be any radical changes in the education system of the colony in the near future. Mitchell clearly refused to be put off by Russell's lack of enthusiasm, and in May 1943 he informed the Legislative Council that he was arranging for an officer of the New Zealand Government to visit Fiji to investigate 'our Educational establishments and methods'.⁵ The man selected was F.B. Stephens, of the Department of Internal Affairs in Wellington, who had formerly been a lecturer in economics and history at Auckland University and the Chairman of the Social Science Research Bureau. He was chosen because he was thought to have practical administrative talent. What Mitchell apparently wished to avoid at all costs was the appointment of 'an educationist or a theory man'.⁶ Stephens spent approximately four months travelling around Fiji and interviewed scores of people before submitting his report to the Government in June 1944.

³Interview with F.R.J. Davies.

⁴FDEF 24/22/22 Director of Education's comments on the Governor's Note, 12 Apr. 1943.

⁵FLCD 14 May 1943:3.

⁶Interview with Davies.

The Report⁷

Mitchell's principal concern for the quality and efficiency of the schools was reflected in Stephen's terms of reference. He was primarily required to make proposals for the future organization, control and administration of education. In addition, he was asked to examine all existing institutions, whether Government or privately owned, and to advise on any measures needed to improve their functions; to examine and advise on the conditions of service and the training of teachers; and finally, on the basis of an annual education budget of £100,000, to prepare an immediate five-year plan of educational development for consideration by the Government.

There were few aspects of Fiji's education system that escaped criticism in the ensuing report. As one of Stephens's contemporaries has since remarked, 'He was quite ruthless when it came to writing his report on education in Fiji. He didn't try to please anyone'.⁸ In the course of a detailed report which ran to more than ninety printed foolscap pages, Stephens systematically exposed what he thought to be the shortcomings of the system. He claimed that there were insufficient schools; that the existing ones were generally poorly administered and financed; and that the quality of education, as judged by the educational achievements of most pupils, was very poor. He was also critical of the Education Department for its alleged failure to supervise and administer education efficiently, and of the Board of Education for failing to concern itself with broad policy matters. He also rebuked the Government for failing in the past to organize an effective system for training teachers, with the result that many schools were staffed by poorly educated and ill-trained personnel. The lack of facilities for technical training at the post-primary level and of schooling for girls were two further points of censure. Stephens also disliked the racially segregated nature of the schools and the system whereby voluntary agencies controlled and operated the majority of them. He argued that the voluntary principle encouraged a wasteful duplication of facilities and that most schools were generally inefficient. In summary, his report amounted to a sustained criticism of

⁷F.B. Stephens, *Report on Education in the Colony of Fiji*, FLCP 18/1944, and Reconstruction Paper no.6.

⁸Interview with Davies.

British colonial education policy in Fiji since World War I. As he pointed out in his concluding remarks, his investigation had shown the emergence of a chaotic system of education in the past fifteen years, largely due to the absence of any definite plan for the administration to follow.

More specifically, the report illustrated that in both Fijian and Indian primary schools few pupils progressed beyond class 4. Indeed, the educational attainments of most Fijian pupils were no higher than class 2. The Indians fared a little better with some 70 per cent of them reaching a class 3 level, but the general standard of primary schooling was clearly unsatisfactory. Moreover, as Stephens pointed out, improvements could not be achieved overnight, nor was there a simple solution to the problem. Any attempt to improve the quality of schooling inevitably involved questions relating to the standards of training and the supply of teachers, the availability of finance, and the effectiveness of voluntary control of the schools. The report also highlighted the problem of the irregular attendance of pupils — 'To say that on the average 75 per cent of the children enrolled are at school is probably very generous' — and the overcrowding and lack of basic equipment in many schools, which frequently made any attempt at teaching 'farcical'. Stephens also commented on the unsatisfactory nature of many school committees.

He was especially critical of those run by Indians, many of which were riddled with internal friction. Few committee members appeared to have much knowledge of educational matters, and their treatment of teachers was often scandalous. Staff were dismissed for reasons quite unconnected with their efficiency as teachers, and frequently as a result of some strife quite unconnected with school matters. Stephens also claimed that Indian school committees competed with one another for teachers by offering attractive salaries which resulted in frequent movements of staff from one school to another. The same committees were also often guilty of failing to pay teachers on a regular basis. In some instances, substantial sums of money were known to be owing to teachers. The various religious and cultural groupings amongst the Indians appeared to be the chief reason for the unnecessary duplication of schools. Finally, it was emphasized that the Indians themselves were highly critical of the committee system of school administration, and that they strongly supported the idea of all Indian schools being administered by the Government.

The Education Department was criticised for failing to maintain close contact with all the schools in the territory. Evidently many of them were lucky to receive even one visit a year from an officer of the Education Department or an organizing teacher. The trouble stemmed from a lack of administrative and clerical staff, which resulted in the Director of Education and his professional staff being bogged down in routine paperwork. This prevented them from getting out into the schools. Stephens conceded that the war had aggravated staffing shortages, but he was nevertheless still astonished at the general lack of knowledge on the part of departmental officers of conditions in the schools, especially in rural areas. The Education Department's statistical services were also claimed to be practically non-existent and many schools were accused of being lax in sending in essential returns. There was no doubt in Stephens's mind that inadequate supervision of the schools had retarded the quality of schooling and resulted in public money being 'poured down the drain'.

The Board of Education was criticised on the same grounds as in the Mayhew report. Most of its business appeared to consist of routine administrative details which could easily have been left to the Education Department to handle. It was also doubtful whether most Board members had any real appreciation of the educational problems of the colony as a whole. They were all residents of Suva and, as far as Stephens was aware, they had never, either as individuals or as a group, paid any official visits to any areas outside Suva.

The report was particularly concerned with the morale and efficiency of the Colony's teachers. Grading for promotion purposes was almost entirely dependent on academic qualifications, while the lack of any uniform scale of salaries resulted in 'free bargaining' for staff which inevitably engendered discontent and dissatisfaction. Criticism was also levelled at the haphazard way in which teachers were appointed, and it was noted that the best teachers tended to be in the relatively few government schools because of the security of tenure, pension provisions and greater chances of promotion that went with these positions. Stephens was also very critical of teacher-training. Educational standards of trainees were low and few girls sought entry. Moreover, much of the time at the teachers' colleges was spent on improving the general education of the students and not on training them as teachers. In some instances an overemphasis

was placed on religious instruction.

It was evident, the report stated, that there were three distinct streams of education in Fiji, each based on race, and each working in isolation from the others. In theory, the Board of Education was supposed to co-ordinate and oversee the various types of schools, but Stephens claimed that 'diffused responsibility [had] inevitably led to laxity and a tendency to blame someone else for lack of efficiency'.

The report also noted an important feature of Indian attitudes to education, which was to have important long-term consequences for Fiji as a whole. In general, Indians appeared to be much keener than Fijians to secure schooling for their children, and they also made more strenuous efforts to obtain qualified teachers for their schools. The first of these points was borne out by the preponderance of Indian boys enrolled in the Colony's four secondary schools in 1944, as illustrated in Table 1. The same table also highlighted the 'absolute inadequacy' of Fijian secondary education.

It was not hard to account for the Indian 'drive' for schooling. Education opened the way to professional careers and financial security in the towns. Conversely, it was the means of escape from the drudgery and poverty of rural life.

Finally, Stephens reviewed the way in which education was financed and concluded that it was as complicated as the administrative organization. Several significant points emerged from his investigation. First, despite the vociferous complaints of the Indians, it was evident that educational provision for Indian children had improved steadily during the late 1930s, and that between 1937 and 1942 the Government had spent more money on Indian education than on the other races combined. This was an important finding at a time when the Indian community was loudly proclaiming that the Government had done next to nothing to provide education for young Indians. The second point concerned the grants-in-aid system. As it was being administered, it appeared to favour the mission schools, because they had a preponderance of certificated teachers and registered schools and relatively smaller classes compared with Fijian and Indian schools. Stephens ruefully remarked that the advice of the Good Book was being followed to the letter: 'Whomsoever hath, to him

Table 1
Secondary school enrolments in Fiji in 1944

School	European			Fijian			Indian			Chinese			Total		
	B.	G.	T.	B.	G.	T.	B.	G.	T.	B.	G.	T.	B.	G.	T.
Suva Grammar School	44	25	69	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	44	25	69
Natabua	—	—	—	—	—	—	68	—	68	—	—	—	68	—	68
Marist Brothers College	6	—	6	8	—	8	82	—	82	4	—	4	100	—	100
Davuillevu	—	—	—	16	4	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	16	4	20
Totals	50	25	75	24	4	28	150	—	150	4	—	4	228	29	257

Source: F.B. Stephens, Report on Education in the Colony of Fiji, p.20.

shall be given'. He added that if there were any schools important to the future of Fiji, they were surely those run by the people themselves, yet the grants-in-aid scheme was being operated in such a way that they were being starved of government aid. The third point to emerge from the financial inquiry concerned the extent of private Indian contributions towards the cost of education. It appeared that the amount was probably much lower than was generally thought to be the case. Stephens suggested that the figure of between £20,000 and £25,000, as adopted by the Compulsory Education and Rating Committee of 1939, was excessive, and that a sum of about £7250 was more realistic. Evidently, the Government was contributing far more to the total cost of Indian education than had been commonly supposed.

Proposals for reorganization

When Stephens wrote his report, Fiji was experiencing a period of rapid population growth and there was an urgent need both to expand the quantity of education offered and to improve its quality. To complicate matters, the Indian population was increasing much more rapidly than the Fijian, and it was confidently expected that the Indians would soon constitute the largest single racial group in the colony. In addition, the age distribution of the Indian population was lower than that of the Fijian. Consequently the number of Indians of school age would inevitably tend to increase at a faster rate than the Fijians. Finally, despite the evidence of the report, there was still much to be done before it could be claimed that Indians enjoyed educational opportunities equal to the Fijians'.

Stephens was convinced that if a really satisfactory school system was to emerge in the future, much more would be required than a mere patching up of the existing system along the lines suggested by Mayhew in 1936. Instead, some fundamental reorganization was necessary, based on a long-term plan of development covering a period of up to twenty years. It was this premise that made many of his subsequent recommendations as controversial as his initial criticisms. In his opinion, the lack of integration between the various bodies responsible for schooling was the major problem that had to be tackled at the administrative level. Unless this fault was remedied, overlapping would continue, and result not only in excessive and wasteful expenditure but

in gaps which would be nobody's responsibility to fill. The remedy lay in making the education system completely subject to governmental control. Furthermore, the Government should immediately take over all Fijian District and Indian Committee schools.

The mission schools presented a different problem. Each claimed it had a definite religious duty to perform, and as far as the Roman Catholics and the Seventh Day Adventists were concerned, they intended to carry on their educational work irrespective of whether they received government assistance or not. Despite the major contribution made by the missions in the past to the development of education, Stephens felt that the facilities at their disposal were not adequate to cope with the problem of mass schooling. A stage had been reached, he believed, when the Government had to decide whether to increase financial assistance to the missions to enable them to do more or to look to other ways of tackling the need for more and better education. Stephens also felt that with a few exceptions the missions were not keeping pace with modern requirements, nor did they appear to have any prospects of doing so. All were seemingly burdened by onerous financial commitments and inadequacies of qualified staff. If the children of Fiji were to be given an adequate opportunity to acquire even a primary education, then the Government should take the initiative. Grants to mission schools should be phased out gradually, and any subsequent moves to start private schools should be on the basis of doing so without Government assistance and with the Government reserving the right to determine minimum educational standards.

A variety of measures were recommended to improve the quality of education. Foremost was the proposal for the establishment of a new Government teachers' training college to accommodate 200 students, with half that number graduating annually at the conclusion of a two-year course. Stephens was convinced that there was no scope for more than one training college, if high standards of quality were to be developed and maintained. He accordingly argued that no private training institutions should be either recognized or subsidized by the Government. The proposed training college should be operated on a multiracial and co-educational basis. The inevitable Indian objection to co-education could be overcome by building separate hostels for girls and by instructing them in separate classes, at least in the initial stages of their training. The idea of a separate institution

for girls was rejected on the grounds of unnecessary duplication of staff and the cost. He was also anxious to raise the academic standards of teacher trainees but, as he pointed out, in the short run this was not possible. Not until the standard of primary education was raised could one hope to attract better-qualified entrants.

As a corollary to the proposed Government takeover of all District and Committee schools, it was obvious that the appointment and salaries of the teachers working in them would necessarily become the responsibility of the Government. This implied that all teachers in state schools would become government servants. Quite apart from the administrative implications of this move, it was claimed that the greater control exercised over teachers would help to improve the quality of education. Uniform conditions of service and appointment could be laid down and minimum standards of competence maintained. A grading scheme for teachers was also recommended, which should take into account teaching ability and years of service. The advertising of all teaching positions and the provision of pensions for teachers when they retired were also advocated, but these proposals were not intended to apply to teachers who chose to teach in the independent schools.

It was suggested that the problem of irregular attendance could be tackled by a scheme akin to that used in Ceylon, whereby once a child was enrolled, except in case of sickness or any other unavoidable causes, parents were obliged by law to ensure that he or she attended school regularly. Failure to comply resulted in court action. On the subject of girls' education, Stephens recommended the establishment of separate girls' schools in urban areas if there was sufficient demand, based on the multiracial principle. The adoption of English as soon as possible as the medium of instruction in all schools was strongly recommended, despite the obvious practical difficulties, including the lack of competent teachers.

At the secondary or post-primary level, future growth should be planned in terms of potential employment opportunities. The need for academic schooling was relatively small, but there was a need for greater emphasis on a more practical type of post-primary training which would be an entirely new departure in Fiji. Accordingly, Stephens recommended the establishment in Suva of a post-primary technical school to cater for between 250 and 300 boys and girls, with hostel

facilities attached. Courses should be provided in domestic work and homecrafts, woodwork, metalwork, and elementary electricity and magnetism. The same institution should also provide for night classes. It was envisaged that training courses should start in the later stages of primary schooling and extend, for the best students, for three years at the post-primary level.

Regretfully, Stephens concluded that for practical reasons multiracial secondary education of the academic type was not feasible in the immediate future. The Queen Victoria School was more than just a school to the Fijian people. It was a traditional source of Fijian leaders and an integral part of Fijian life and custom, and 'to destroy its distinctive significance would be a mistake'. The Suva Grammar School had a predominantly European roll and was unable to increase its intake, while the Indian Secondary school at Lautoka was not geographically situated to cater for other than Indian students. Stephens was also anxious to see a substantial upgrading of the quality of work done at the Queen Victoria School, so that it would become more of a true secondary school rather than a higher grade primary school. At the same time, he hoped that by generally improving the quality of the Fijian District primary schools it would be possible to dispense with the six Provincial schools which had hitherto been superimposed on the District schools. The importance of developing agricultural training for potential farmers and instructors or those 'otherwise engaged on the administrative or supervisory side of agriculture' was also emphasized. To cater for the first group, it was suggested that two of the five Provincial schools should be converted into agricultural high schools. The establishment of an agricultural college was suggested for the second group.

As might have been expected of an 'administrative expert', Stephens was very critical of the administrative structure of the Education Department. He considered it to be out of touch with what was going on in the schools and wholly inadequate for its existing and projected responsibilities. Clearly, no education system could function efficiently unless there was an effective administration to hold it together. Accordingly, an immediate and sweeping reorganization was called for. The report also stressed the essentially social and political nature of much of the work the Department would be called on to perform if the education system was to undergo radical changes: 'There will

be problems of finance, problems of land purchase, problems of architecture, problems of sanitation, to say nothing of the question of reconciling the various racial and inter-racial groups'. In each of the three administrative districts of the Colony, Stephens advocated the appointment of an Education Officer to relieve the District Commissioners of detailed inspection work for which they were not qualified, and to act in a general administrative capacity in educational matters. He also recommended an increase in the number of organizing teachers, so that practising teachers could be more effectively supervised; extra clerical and administrative staff in the Department's main office in Suva; and an improved statistical and record system.

Stephens was aware of the danger of a loss of local interest in education if the Government took over control of the schools. To guard against this possibility, he suggested retraining the existing local committees of Fijian District schools and the establishment of committees of residents for other schools. He also recommended that education districts, coinciding with the Colony's main administrative districts, should be set up, each with an Education Board to supervise schools within its district and to act as a liaison between the local population and the Education Department. The latter should concern itself with the administration and supervision of education throughout the Colony and not with the detailed management of individual schools. The Department of Education was ultimately responsible for policy decisions, but there was a vital need to develop public interest in education and to encourage local control where appropriate. The Board of Education was thought to be in need of a complete reconstitution, to include persons not resident in Suva, but it should not be necessary for it to meet more than about twice a year.

Finally, Stephens urged the Government to sponsor a detailed survey of the educational needs of the community as a whole, before making any major decisions about the reorganization of the school system. He warned against adopting any 'opportunistic policy', and pointed out how both Mayhew and the 1926 Education Commission had been hampered in their inquiries by a lack of detailed and accurate data of how many schools were needed and where. Above all, he stressed the necessity for an end to the chaotic state of affairs that had emerged over the previous decade owing to the absence of any definite plan of development for the administration to follow.

Chapter 5

Reaction to the Stephens Report

W.E.H. Stanner, writing at the start of the 1950s, stated that the Stephens' Report received a very mixed reception 'as much for its unusually frank language as for its views'.¹ The report certainly bore testimony to the thoroughness of Stephens's inquiry, but his pungent comments and blunt criticisms were hardly calculated to endear him to the Government or to the Missions. His report, however, was welcomed by many Indians and teachers in the colony. As Girin Mukherji, an Indian teacher, remarked, the report was a very considerable improvement on the earlier Mayhew Report.

Unlike others, afraid to disturb the apparent equilibrium, Mr Stephens could not be corrupted by the nice welcomes, teas and dinners, and he wrote about some serious defects of our system ... credit must be given to Mr Stephens that he at least made his mind clear and did not confuse issues with a meaningless verbiage.²

Whether one agreed with Stephens's views or not, he certainly provided a controversial basis for discussion of future educational development, which had been Mitchell's primary intention in extending the invitation to him to visit Fiji.

Stephens made little effort to ingratiate himself with the missions and they in turn predictably showed little or no sympathy with his views. The Methodist Mission rather disdainfully pointed out that Stephens was essentially an economist, whereas Mayhew had been an educationist who had studied educational problems throughout the British colonial

¹Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, p.189.

²FEF 25/19 (2nd ser.) Girin Mukherji to the Director of Education, 31 Jan. 1945.

empire. It followed, therefore, that closer attention should be given to Mayhew's findings and recommendations. Stephens's conclusions were said to be highly controversial and to be the outcome of his limited and superficial experience of educational problems. The Roman Catholics condemned the report because they claimed it was based on an unacceptable underlying philosophy that education should be a state monopoly. Nevertheless, many people did see much merit in the report, although they frequently doubted its financial and political practicability. H. Cooper, a member of the Board of Education, suggested that the value of the report lay in the information it contained and the arguments it stimulated rather than in its recommendations. His main criticism was that the whole tone of the report indicated a too restless desire to get a great many things done in a short time. Moreover, he claimed that the report erroneously implied that the education system could be transformed overnight and that the millennium was just around the corner if the Legislative Council would only vote the necessary funds.

Stephens's criticism of the grants-in-aid scheme and his emphasis on the need for radical and comprehensive changes in the control and administration of the territory's schools were strongly endorsed by the Indians living in the Lautoka and Rewa districts. They argued that the existing system of government financial aid had only intensified religious and racial divisions and had led to a wasteful competition between denominational schools in some areas while other areas were starved of schools of any kind. They strongly supported the suggested government takeover of Indian committee schools, the use of the English language as the medium of instruction in all schools, and the making of education compulsory between the ages of six and twelve years.

The teachers, and particularly the Indian teachers, were probably the most ardent supporters of the Stephens Report. Indeed, during the course of his visit to Fiji, Stephens is reported to have said 'that only the teachers' organizations appeared to have any real appreciation of the general problems involved'.³ In commenting on the Stephens Report, the Fiji Teachers' Union strongly supported the belief that the most immediate need was for the

³*ibid.* Comments on the Stephens Report, F.J. Irvine to the Director of Education, n.d., p.4.

Government to formulate some positive policy in education.⁴ The Union condemned the inadequate provision for education in the colony and attributed it to the vacillating course steered by previous administrations. The Union also expressed its strong opposition to the continuation of the mission and committee school system:

We ... are animated by the desire to see the provision of equal educational opportunities for the full development of every child in the colony, irrespective of race or the economic position of his parents. In our view this can only be done by Government assuming the full responsibility for education ...

The Union also pointed out that in the past the Government had assumed responsibility for the running of several schools, including the Levuka Public School and the Suva Grammar School, which catered mainly for European children. Why then, it was asked, should the benighted and economically ill-organized natives or the illiterate Indians be expected in the name of self-help to organize their own education for the bulk of the population? The Union also strongly supported the idea of teachers becoming civil servants. Finally, reference was made to the fact that in some quarters it had been suggested that Stephens was ignorant of conditions in Fiji's schools, and that accordingly he did not really know what he was saying. The Union categorically repudiated such claims. Instead, it paid high tribute to him for his penetrating insight into Fiji's educational problems.

After the Stephens Report was published, the Board of Education called for comment from interested bodies and the public generally, with a view to preparing a plan of education based on the report to guide educational development in Fiji over the next decade. A wide variety of comments were received from many groups and individuals during the fifteen months it took to prepare the plan. However, the principal influence behind the Ten Year Plan appears to have been F.R.J. Davies, the Acting Director of Education at the time. Davies was a New Zealander who had gone to teach in Fiji in the late 1930s. He had subsequently moved into educational administration and was responsible for looking after Stephens during his visits. Both men shared a

⁴*ibid.*, 18/37/4 (2nd ser.) comments of the Fiji Teachers' Union on the Stephens Report as submitted to the Board of Education.

common background and their basic educational beliefs were similar, but Davies had the advantage of knowing the local scene more intimately and this was reflected in the Ten Year Plan that he prepared. It was his rather unenviable task to assess the viability of the Stephens Report as a basis on which to build for the future, bearing in mind the climate of popular opinion in Fiji and the likely reactions of the Colonial Office in London.

Davies endorsed much of what Stephens had said about the poor quality of education in Fiji's schools, but he was also acutely aware of the various practical difficulties associated with the implementation of many of Stephens's recommendations.⁵ He strongly supported the idea that the Government should take over responsibility for Fijian District and Indian Committee Schools, but not immediately. 'If Government were to take over some 300 schools immediately, there would be endless chaos and confusion and it would be a considerable time before even the present standard was regained.' He also feared that if the Government immediately took over control of the schools, the various committees would make unforeseen demands in terms of staffing and equipment entailing an enormous increase in expenditure and one that had not been budgeted for. Whether or not Fiji could afford to undertake a major program of educational expansion remained an open question, but he was convinced that Stephens had greatly underestimated the cost of implementing his ideas. Davies was prepared to double Stephens's estimate. He pointed out that Stephens had based his estimate of costs on a skeleton system of schools. Moreover, it needed to be borne in mind that there was pitifully little equipment and there were very few satisfactory school buildings in the Colony. If the Government took over responsibility for compulsory education, Davies was sure that Indians and Fijians alike would demand educational standards comparable with those provided for the Europeans.

Davies was particularly anxious to see Indian primary schools taken over by the Government because of what he thought to be the poor quality of their administrative personnel. As he remarked, 'efficient management [was] beyond the capacity of committees composed usually of

⁵Davies's comments on the Stephens Report are drawn from his personal annotated copy of the report which he kindly made available to the author. A copy of these remarks is now housed in the Hocken Library in Dunedin.

uneducated peasants'. He was also very critical of 'interference' with the work of the teachers by uneducated members of school committees. Nevertheless, he saw that there was little sense in the Government's taking over control of committee schools until it was in a position to supervise them adequately and bring them up to standard. Moreover, the additional administrative burden involved would be quite beyond the existing capacity of the Education Department. Instead, he favoured a gradual takeover dependent on the availability of finance and the supply of trained teachers. No one, he claimed, was keener than he was to see as many schools as possible under Government control, but if Mr Stephens thought that taking over a school meant merely making an entry in a book and paying the teachers, he was mistaken. He also rejected any suggestion of the Government's taking over the mission schools. On practical grounds it would be folly, he argued, to abandon what had taken years to build up. Furthermore, the missions constituted a powerful political force both in Fiji and in Whitehall, and Davies knew that they would resist strongly any move to force them to give up their schools. It was, he remarked, 'against Colonial Policy and the ideals of democracy for the Missions to hand over their schools unwillingly'. It would be wiser, he argued, to build up satisfactory government schools in areas where they were most needed and to let the mission schools carry on as at present. As the government schools improved in quality, dependence on mission schools would decrease. Provided mission schools were inspected regularly and maintained satisfactory standards, he saw no reason for the Government to interfere with them. Whether or not the Government should continue to provide financial aid for mission schools was a debatable issue and one which he left unanswered.

Davies fully endorsed Stephens's proposal for a single government training college for teachers: 'This is the most outstanding need of the Colony and I agree ... that all teacher-training must be done by the Government'. However, he thought that Stephens had seriously underestimated the shortage of trained teachers in Fiji and that provision for 100 new teachers each year was 'grossly inadequate'. He also supported the proposal for a teachers' grading scheme similar to that proposed by Stephens. Indeed, he claimed to have suggested it to Stephens in the first place. He also agreed wholeheartedly with the need to place greater emphasis on the development of technical training at the post-primary level, and he shared the view that greater stress should be

placed on the study of agriculture in the post-primary school curriculum.

On the subjects of compulsory education, multiracial schooling, co-education, and the language of instruction, he sympathized with Stephens's views, but pointed out that there were a number of practical difficulties which made their implementation next to impossible in the immediate future. Compulsory schooling could not be enforced as long as most schools were associated with religious and political bodies: 'It would be quite wrong to force Moslems to attend Hindu schools or Roman Catholics to attend Protestant schools or vice versa'. However, he fully supported the idea that once a child was enrolled at a school the onus should be placed on the parents to ensure the child's regular attendance except in unavoidable circumstances. He considered multiracial schooling to be impractical in Fiji at that time because of the varying educational standards of the different races. The problem was very similar to that currently being experienced in many English schools with a high proportion of coloured immigrant children. To lump together children with widely varying levels of educational attainment would only add to the difficulties experienced by poorly trained and poorly educated teachers. Davies also highlighted a variety of other practical problems. These included the choice of a suitable language of instruction, differing standards of hygiene and toilet, and the prevalence of certain contagious diseases amongst some races. For example, the incidence of tuberculosis and leprosy was much higher amongst Fijians and Indians than amongst Europeans. To argue that if Europeans were not prepared to share common facilities, they should be expected to make separate provision for their children in unsupported private schools, was also unjust: 'So long as Europeans contribute a large proportion of the taxation, they are entitled to consideration'. Before any major attempt was made to introduce the principle of multiracial schooling, he thought that a few experimental schools should be established to test its feasibility. In his opinion, the widespread adoption of the co-educational principle was hardly worthwhile as long as orthodox Hindus believed it a religious duty to marry their daughters at the age of thirteen plus. Apparently nothing would persuade Hindu parents to accept co-education after about eleven years of age. This meant that no more than 5 per cent of girls in mixed schools would ever get beyond class 6. The adoption of English as the medium of instruction in all schools was also impractical as long as there

were so few teachers proficient in the language. Davies was also opposed to Stephens's suggestion that Fijian and Indian languages should be taught or examined beyond the primary school level. He claimed that a people's culture was closely bound up with their language and that the Indians would resist any attempt to minimize the importance of their languages. He also doubted whether the Fijians would take kindly to such a proposal. It was true that the Indians desired to learn English because they thought it would make them powerful and wealthy, but he did not think that they wished to lose their cultural identity. He instanced the tendency in New Zealand at that time to deplore the fact that the Maoris had almost lost the use of their language, and claimed that efforts were being made to restore it in the hope that it would prevent the Maoris from becoming poor imitations of Europeans.

As might have been expected, he took issue with Stephens over many of his less complimentary remarks about the alleged inadequacies of the Education Department, but he agreed in general about the need to restructure the administrative organization of education throughout the colony and to increase the professional and clerical personnel in the Education Department. Contrary to what Stephens had alleged, he argued that the Department did act as a unifying link for all the schools; that the Department's officers did know what was going on within the schools; and that the schools were visited more frequently than Stephens had suggested. He also attached major importance to the appointment of District Education Officers and the establishment of local education boards and favoured the restructuring of the Board of Education to include people who were not resident in Suva.

On one issue, namely how best to improve the quality of Fijian education, he had views diametrically opposed to Stephens. Instead of raising the quality of the District schools and thereby obviating the need for Provincial schools, Davies was convinced that 'The improvement of the standard of education must come from the top and not from the bottom'. He argued that, in the short term the quality of Fijian education would depend on the success of the Queen Victoria School in producing potential teachers: 'The district schools cannot be raised much until they are properly staffed and they cannot be staffed until Queen Victoria School turns out suitable boys for teacher-training'. However, as Davies pointed out, Queen Victoria School was itself dependent on the Provincial schools for suitable entrants and the latter were badly in need of reorganization. He was also sceptical about

expanding secondary facilities for Indians for fear of creating a surplus of what he termed 'white collared parasites'.

Overall, Davies suggested that the main theme of the Stephens Report was the need to abolish mission influence which in turn constituted a basic criticism of colonial policy. While he had no great love for the missions, he did appreciate their immense contribution to education in Fiji. Before it contemplated any takeover of mission schools, he claimed, it behoved the Government to set its own house in order. Despite a great deal of sympathy with many of the comments expressed by Stephens, the evidence suggests that Davies was not in favour of embarking on wholesale changes. Having had teaching and administrative experience in Fiji, he was only too well aware of the complexities of local conditions and of what constituted practical politics. He said as much in his comments on the Stephens Report to the Colonial Secretary in London.⁶ The one thing that struck him most about the report was the fact that the New Zealand system of education tended to colour it. It was clear, said Davies, that Stephens's background consisted mainly of an empirical knowledge of the New Zealand school system. He had obviously not appreciated the problem in Fiji or the reasons behind colonial policy as it related to education in Fiji. Davies went on to state that while sweeping changes were desirable in many cases, they should not be rushed into blindly. He supported a full reorganization of education in Fiji, but he felt it was necessary to conduct several experiments first before launching out on a complete reversal of policy. Nevertheless, he considered the report to have been of the utmost importance because it had emphasized the urgency of the Government recognizing its responsibilities for the education of the people.

In conversation with the author, Davies stressed that in his opinion the Stephens Report at the time of its publication had no chance of being accepted either by the Colonial Office or the Legislature in Fiji. As he put it, 'The Colonial Office had never taken education into a colony without Christianity. Missionaries were the best tax gatherers the Government had; they raised taxes in the name of God'. At the time, the British administration in Fiji was happy to let the missions carry on with their work amongst the Fijians

⁶FEF 25/19 (2nd ser.) Davies to the Colonial Secretary, London, 20 Oct. 1944.

and Indians while it concerned itself with looking after the interests of the Europeans. Davies also claims that the Fiji Government was reluctant to extend educational opportunities too lavishly to the Indians because they would all want white-collar jobs and there would be no one left to cut the sugar cane. Educated Fijians also sought clerical work, and there was a strong resistance on the part of both races to the teaching of agriculture in the schools. Nevertheless, he agrees that at the time when Stephens visited Fiji there was opposition to the educational influence of the missions. The Indians, in particular, had no wish to be converted to Christianity, and many Indians and Fijians alike supported the idea of a system of government schools because they thought it would be cheaper.

Davies was disappointed with the Stephens Report and said so to J.F. Nicol, the Colonial Secretary in Fiji. Nevertheless, he was prevailed upon to use it as the basis for a Ten Year Plan of educational development which he was asked to prepare jointly with the Board of Education. The plan was to form part of a general ten-year program of social and economic development for Fiji, to be drawn up in response to the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940.

There is always a danger in bringing in an outsider to report on a subject such as education, which is so closely tied to the social, economic and political life of a community. So often the expert fails to understand fully the complexities of life within that society or fails to realize the full implication of what he recommends. On the other hand, it can also be an advantage to see an education system from the outside, unhindered by the inevitable biases of one who lives and works within the system for any length of time. Stephens exemplified both the advantages and disadvantages of his position. Hindsight suggests that he may have been some thirty years or more ahead of his time in his main recommendations. Fiji still relies on voluntary agencies to operate the vast majority of its schools, but it is one of the main contentions of this study that the territory may well be close at the present time to adopting at least a modified system of government schools. Moreover, Stephens was not the last 'visiting expert' to recommend a state school system for Fiji. As recently as 1969, the Fiji Education Commission came to a similar conclusion. Nevertheless, Davies and others were probably right at the time to claim that many of Stephens's recommendations were politically

and financially impractical. Quite apart from the obvious lack of finance to support a wholesale government takeover of voluntary schools, the European settlers and the missions were opposed to such a move in principle, and they had the backing of the Colonial Office.

What Stephens did succeed in doing was to highlight the need for more positive Government approach towards education. As Davies pointed out, over the previous twenty years the Government's approach to education had been essentially 'negative'. Whenever the Government had taken over an institution or assumed new duties, it had usually done so reluctantly, and the strong demand for more Government action in education in 1944 sprang from the fact that the Government had done so little in the past. In fairness to the Government, lack of funds had seriously reduced its range of activities, but there was, nevertheless, ample evidence to support Davies's claims. Stephens was clearly appalled at the poor quality of schooling and at what seemed to him to be a chaotic collection of schools and voluntary agencies supporting them. His New Zealand background was also likely to have reinforced his initial impressions. New Zealand had rejected the voluntary school principle as long ago as 1877, and since then a state system of primary and secondary schools had been built up based on a centralized administrative structure. Uniformity and equality of opportunity were the two major principles on which New Zealand's education system had been based. This in itself constituted a rejection of traditional English practice whereby, despite the introduction of state schools in 1870, the voluntary principle had been retained under the guise of a dual system.

Nevertheless, one can argue that Stephens could have shown more tact and sympathy for local feelings over such issues as the medium of instruction in the schools, co-education, and the future of the mission schools. Perhaps he would have done so had he been more of an educator and less of an economist. Moreover, it is also possible to argue with equal cogency that he purposely set out to 'rock the boat', whether at Mitchell's instigation or of his own volition. Whatever his motives, there is no doubt that he succeeded in provoking a stimulating debate on Fiji's educational future.

The experience of the past thirty years in British colonial territories seems to have enhanced the image of the Stephens Report. In numerous instances the voluntary school

principle has come under criticism, and local governments have been obliged to assume greater responsibility for furthering educational development. Indeed, it is possible to argue that Stephens's principal recommendations appear even more forceful and compelling now than they did in 1944.

Chapter 6

The Ten Year Plan

The Stephens Report was tabled in the Legislative Council in November 1944, but it was never formally debated, probably because of its highly controversial nature. Instead, the Governor announced that the matter of educational reorganization was to be left to the Acting Director of Education and the Board of Education. When a plan was drawn up, it would be submitted to the Legislative Council for debate and approval. Vishnu Deo, a leading Indian Council Member, immediately took issue with the Governor, claiming that the matter should be handled by the Council.¹ He claimed that the Board of Education was dominated by 'denominational interests' and that whatever plan was arrived at would result in 'a tug-of-war' when it was submitted for approval. The Governor remained unmoved by Deo's remarks. He appreciated the controversial nature of the Stephens recommendations, but wished to avoid any premature debate that might jeopardize future developments.

Before framing a ten year plan, Davies reconstituted the Board of Education to ensure as far as possible that all interested parties were represented.² Unfortunately, a dispute arose between Davies and Bishop Foley over a suitable Roman Catholic representative, with the result that no one was appointed to represent the Roman Catholic Church. The omission was regrettable because the Roman Catholics subsequently became hostile opponents of the Ten Year Plan, and relations between the Department of Education and the Roman Catholic Church remained strained for several years afterwards.

¹FLCD 20 Dec. 1944:242.

²Interview with Davies.

From the outset Davies was convinced that the Stephens Report would need substantial amendments if it were to stand any chance of being accepted in London or Fiji as the basis for educational reorganization. He aimed to give the effect of a state system of education without substantially altering basic colonial education policy. This was to be achieved by making the majority of teachers into civil servants, by improving Departmental supervision of the work of the schools, and by encouraging the growth of more government schools in areas where there was a definite need or where local school committees were willing to hand over their schools. What he had to avoid at all costs was any threat of compulsory acquisition of voluntary schools which would have been both politically and financially untenable. He was able to take comfort from the fact that any extension of government involvement in running the Colony's schools would necessarily be a slow process because it would be limited by the supply of money and trained teachers.

Davies's careful selection of Board members paid dividends. Few questioned his successive drafts of a possible ten-year plan, and when the Board finally presented its views on the Stephens Report and the outline of a ten-year plan for educational development to the Governor, both documents reflected his strong influence.³ In particular, he succeeded in persuading the Board that it would be unwise to scrap the Provincial or intermediate schools. Indeed, the Board asserted that Stephens proposal to concentrate on building up the quality of primary education by improving the efficiency of the District schools was 'the greatest weakness of the Report'.⁴ The Board then reiterated Davies's arguments about the need to build up intermediate education in order to supply the necessary teachers for the primary schools. Davies also succeeded in persuading the Board of the value of his proposal for overcoming the problem of ensuring that teachers received their salaries on a regular basis and in full. This was a problem to which he had given much thought when drawing up the plan.⁵ He was aware that Government grants-in-aid paid to mission schools towards the cost of teachers' salaries often failed to reach the teachers.

³FEF 18/37/3 (2nd ser.) comments of the Board of Education to the Governor on the Stephens Report, n.d.

⁴*ibid.*, p.18.

⁵Interview with Davies.

This was particularly the case with teachers in Roman Catholic schools, who were often members of religious orders. Most of them worked for next to nothing, but as Europeans they were classified as registered teachers and therefore were eligible for government grants-in-aid. Davies suggested solving the problem by the original idea of the Government paying the teachers their salaries in full and at the same time requiring the controlling authorities of the schools to pay the Government the difference between the Government grant-in-aid due to them and the teachers' full salaries. This scheme would ensure that teachers received their salaries, and at the same time it would oblige school authorities to raise money to pay the balance owing to the Government. Moreover, it would accord the teachers a measure of prestige because they would not be at the mercy of the voluntary agencies. The Board of Education not only agreed to the suggestion but also recommended that when sufficient money was available the Government should pay the salaries of teachers in full, in preference to awarding building grants to private schools. The Board thought that this would ensure that public money was spent 'for service and not for the creation of private interest in property'.⁶ The Board also rejected Stephens's proposals for expanding technical education, preferring instead to extend evening classes for those actually engaged in trades.

The Ten Year Plan was finally completed in draft form early in October 1945 and forwarded to Whitehall for comment and approval. The Secretary of State for the Colonies conveyed his report⁷ and that of a sub-committee of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies⁸ to the Government of Fiji in August 1946, and Davies piloted the

⁶FEF 18/37/3 (2nd ser.) comments of the Board of Education ..., p.25.

⁷Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Fiji, Confidential Despatch no.78, 29 Aug. 1946. (A copy of this document was made available to the author by Mr F.R.J. Davies.)

⁸Report of the Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies which has considered the Davies Plan of Development of Educational Services in Fiji. A.C.E.C. 5/E.46. (A copy of this document was also made available to the author by Mr Davies.)

plan through the Legislative Council in November of the same year. For practical purposes the plan became operative as from the start of 1947.

The plan itself was a lengthy document which reiterated much of what Davies and the Board had already said in their comments on the Stephens Report.⁹ Davies was careful to stress that it did not represent any attempt to set out a completely new system for education, 'but only to indicate the changes required in the present one'. On the controversial subject of whether the Government should take over voluntary schools, the plan stated that it was desirable in the interests of improving the quality of primary education that all Fijian District and Indian committee schools should 'eventually be taken over and directly administered by the Department'. No school was to be taken over, however, unless it was sited in such a way that it was capable of serving all sections of the public. Furthermore, no school committee was to be compelled to hand over its school, and schools were to be taken over only when there were sufficient money and teachers available to bring the school and its equipment up to Government standards. It was generally envisaged that there should eventually be one Government school in every well-populated district. No firm policy was recommended on the number of schools that the Government should take over annually. In view of the uncertain supply of finance and teachers it was thought best to rely on *ad hoc* arrangements from year to year.

The plan was concerned with two essential aims: the extension of facilities for primary education throughout the Colony, and 'the consolidation of an educational system which had developed empirically and was badly in need of co-ordination'.¹⁰ But, as was pointed out subsequently in successive annual reports of the Department of Education, the expansion of primary education involved the territory in the typical and vicious circle of requiring more and better-trained teachers who could not be produced without a more efficient system of primary education, and this in turn could not be achieved without more and better-trained

⁹*Plan of Development for the Educational System in the Colony of Fiji, FLCP 27/1946.*

¹⁰Howard Hayden, 'Educational Development and Research Programmes in Fiji', *Proceedings of the Seventh Pacific Science Congress of the Pacific Science Association 1949*, vol.8, p.550.

teachers. As always, factors limiting the scope of the plan were financial resources and the pressing demands for expansion of other social services.

The main features of the plan were the establishment of a central Government Training College for teachers; the absorption of the main body of teachers into the civil service, exemptions being made for those teachers for whom the employing missions sought exemption; a primary school building program spread over ten years to cost £140,000, in addition to specific building projects covered by the plan; the consolidation of the Fijian Provincial schools into one large Intermediate school (Ratu Kadavulevu), and the establishment of Intermediate schools for Fijian girls (Adi Cakobau) and for Indian boys and girls; the establishment of technical centres, similar to that in Suva, in other areas, including Levuka and Labasa, and the creation of mobile technical units to cater for primary schools; and the creation of three education districts, each headed by an Education Officer who was to be advised by an Education Board representative of the three major races of the Colony. The plan also provided for the rebuilding of the Queen Victoria School for Fijian boys; a grading system for teachers; the emphasizing of agricultural instruction in all schools; a greater stress on the teaching of English, especially in the lower classes of the primary schools; and, finally, a general endorsement of the need to overhaul the entire school curriculum, to prepare detailed schemes of work for teachers, and to develop science education. At the time when the plan was drawn up, it was estimated that the capital cost would be about £461,000 and that additional recurrent expenditure would rise from £34,500 in the first year of the plan to £67,200 in the tenth and final year. However, these estimates were to be invalidated by the rising costs of labour and materials even before the plan was approved in principle.

Reaction to the Ten Year Plan

As might have been expected, the sub-committee of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies expressed reservations about what it claimed to be the two tendencies in the plan towards secularism and centralization. Both were thought to be inconsistent with the basic principles of colonial education policy as recommended by the Advisory Committee. However, the sub-committee acknowledged that

Fiji's close proximity to New Zealand did place it in a special position. It understood both aspects of policy to be in accord with practice in New Zealand, and it thought their adoption understandable in view of the fact that the plan had been prepared by a New Zealander on the basis of a report by another fellow-countryman. The sub-committee also conceded that further development along New Zealand lines appeared probable. It claimed it had no desire to be dogmatic about the secular issue; it merely wished to point out that the degree of secularization envisaged was clearly greater than in other colonial territories. The sub-committee also pointed out that at no stage in the plan was there any reference to the value of religion or any definition of the principles governing the relations between the Government and the mission schools: 'Here and there the permanent retention of such schools within the system seems to be accepted as inevitable. But they are not a fundamental feature and a preference for schools with no definite religious commitments is clear'.¹¹ On the centralist tendency, the sub-committee remarked:

The ultimate aim seems to be complete centralisation; not merely the final responsibility of Government for determination of policy and provision of facilities ... but also the direct management, administration and financing of all schools by Government through its education department. Stimulation of local enterprise and the raising of local funds for education by delegation of powers to local bodies find little place in the Plan. Non-Government schools are a provisional rather than fundamental feature of the system.¹²

Doubts were also expressed about the adequacy of the proposals for teacher-training, while the proposed grading scheme for teachers was condemned on the grounds that the sub-committee could not see how such a system would provide satisfactory evidence of progress and act as an incentive. The method of assessment envisaged would, it was claimed, throw too much responsibility on the personal opinions of the inspectors, and as salaries were to be determined in accordance with such assessments, it was felt that there was danger of abuses creeping in. The sub-committee also

¹¹Report of the Sub-Committee of the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies ...

¹²*ibid.*

deprecated the view that a competitive spirit was the only way of stimulating teachers who had slackened in their work. Finally, doubts were expressed about the adequacy of the proposals for extending manual training. The Secretary of State gave the plan formal approval on the understanding that the relevant aspects of it would be reconsidered in the light of the Advisory Committee's comments.

Davies replied to the Advisory Committee's report in a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary in Fiji, dated 6 December 1946.¹³ Shortly before he had successfully steered the Ten Year Plan for Education through the Legislative Council. Despite the lack of chronological sequence, it seems appropriate to review Davies's comments on the remarks of the Colonial Office at this point. The long delay between the receiving of the Advisory Committee's comments in the August and Davies's reply in the December was due to the fact that when the plan was being considered in London Davies had resigned from his position in Fiji and returned to New Zealand. A.H. Phillips, then Director of Education in Fiji, had been absent on sick leave at the time of Stephens's visit and had played no part in drawing up the Ten Year Plan. He subsequently considered it essential to have Davies present when the plan was put before the Legislative Council and successfully persuaded him to return to Suva in time for the November sitting of the Council.¹⁴

Davies denied that the policy outlined in the Ten Year Plan was aimed at secularization. He pointed out that four-fifths of the schools in Fiji were conducted by non-Christian bodies, the majority of which were only interested in secular education. Moreover, he argued that public opinion was generally in favour of the Government's assuming greater responsibility for schooling. The missions were in no position to increase their services because they lacked personnel and finance. Davies claimed that the new plan gave parents a choice between mission schools and those run by the Government. He had no doubt that the missions would continue to play an important role in education in Fiji in the future, but he thought it was quite clear that the public demand for a better standard of schooling was increasing. Moreover most mission funds for education were collected

¹³E.18/37.

¹⁴Interview with Davies.

locally, and Davies claimed that there was evidence of strong public feeling from all sections of the community that the Government should control such funds rather than the missions, 'who may, and usually do use the funds for proselytizing'.¹⁵ He also pointed out that the missions had had a disproportionately large share of Government grants in the past because of their virtual monopoly of teacher-training. This had enabled them to recruit the best teachers and so claim bigger grants-in-aid: 'Consequently Government has been spending about twice as much per head in Mission schools as in non-Mission non-Government schools'. He also took the opportunity to launch into a strong attack on the Roman Catholic Church which was known to be strongly opposed to the Ten Year Plan on 'secular' grounds.

I suspect that there has been strong Roman Catholic pressure and that the Sub-Committee has been informed of the trouble which occurred when the Bishop refused to nominate a member of the Board. I have good reason to believe that the Bishop's point of view was placed before the Roman Catholic representative on the A.C.E.C. [Advisory Committee]. I doubt whether any other section's views received that consideration. I disagree that any one vested interest should be allowed to bring pressure on a country's policy ...

He refuted the charge that the ultimate aim of the plan was to centralize educational administration by pointing to the inclusion of three separate regional education boards. However, he did admit that a greater degree of centralization was necessary than hitherto because, on past experience, local control had proved to be unsatisfactory: 'the Managers of many local committees are completely incompetent to do the job they are attempting'. He was also confident that the teacher-training scheme would not founder. The main difficulty in Fiji, as he saw it, was not the training of sufficient teachers, but the provision for them of adequate primary and secondary education before they commenced training. The Advisory Committee in London had also expressed concern over the proposed racial segregation at the new teachers' training college, and it doubted the need

¹⁵Memorandum to the Colonial Secretary, Fiji, from the Acting Director of Education outlining his comments on Despatch no.78 from the Secretary of State, 6 Dec. 1946, p.2. (A copy of this document was made available to the author by Mr Davies.)

for any large-scale increase in the administrative staff of the Department of Education. On both counts Davies attributed the Committee's view to insufficient appreciation of local conditions. The Advisory Committee had also suggested that the Board of Education should include representatives from all the different religious and other bodies interested in education. Once again Davies argued that their view was quite impractical and lacking in appreciation of local conditions. He indicated that if the principle was adopted there would be agitation for inclusion from no less than nineteen groups, with the possibility of more to come. Then, he continued, the issue of proportional representation might well arise: '... Roman Catholics would argue that they needed two members if the Seventh Day Adventists had one, or that Hindus needed two, for the Muslims one, and so on'. It seemed much wiser, in Davies's view, to change the personnel of the Board from time to time in order to give each of the various interests an opportunity to influence the shaping of policy. Vested interests, he argued, were liable to obscure educational aims.

In reply to the criticism levelled at the idea of a grading system for teachers, Davies argued that the Advisory Committee had once more had no experience of local conditions, nor had they seen the New Zealand system in operation. Most European teachers to whom he had spoken had assured him that they were agreeable to the scheme as 'the only possible way of stimulating a staff showing lack of interest'. He was personally convinced that the grading system was the key to the whole effort to raise the quality of work in the classroom and the morale of the teachers in general: 'File no. F.29/722, promotion of teachers, will show the general dissatisfaction which exists at present, concerning promotion of teachers'.

Generally speaking, Davies was disappointed with the comments of the Advisory Committee on the Ten Year Plan, and said so:

There is little constructive criticism and a surprising lack of knowledge of local conditions. I understand that the Sub-Committee had influential clerical members and that may be the reason why the comments are concerned mainly with the religious issue. That four-fifths of the schools in Fiji are today non-mission, shows either the inability of the Missions to cope with the situation or the desire of the public to develop secular education.

He went on to say that before publication of the Stephens Report there was widespread agitation for the reorganization of the education system. When the report was published there was much criticism of it, and he was by no means sure that it would be possible to devise a plan which would satisfy the majority of the community. The missions, in particular, in his view, were the major stumbling block to educational progress in Fiji. He added that one had to live in Fiji to realize the difficulties inherent in a multiracial society which was going through a 'delicate' period of transition. Moreover, he did not think that the missions commanded the respect accorded to them in other colonial territories where they were much wealthier and better staffed. All the missions in Fiji found it hard to recruit teachers for their schools, and many staff were unqualified. Once more, he singled out the Roman Catholic Church for special mention. They in particular, he claimed, were concentrating on a form of education which was a potential danger to the Colony. They were not attempting to graft on to the local culture but were superimposing a foreign culture and depending on examination results to justify their actions. Moreover, he claimed that in 1945 one-twelfth of the population was Roman Catholic but one-quarter of all Government education grants was paid to the Roman Catholic Mission. Put another way, of the total amount received in Government grants by the various missions in 1945, over half was paid to the Roman Catholics. Davies claimed that, on the basis of those facts, it was quite clear that the Government was fostering the spread of Roman Catholicism from public funds and that the position was getting worse daily. In a recent conversation with the author, Davies also asserted that Bishop Foley strongly opposed the Ten Year Plan in radio talks.

In the circumstances, it was not surprising that relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and the Temporary Director of Education were strained, and that it was not until some years after Davies's departure from Fiji that relationships were restored between the Department of Education and the Catholic Church.

Davies further commented to the Colonial Secretary that when the Ten Year Plan was presented to the Legislative Council a month or so earlier, most Council Members felt obligated to the missions for the work they had done in the past and duty-bound to offer an apology for supporting greater Government control. However, only two Members

actually advocated strengthening the missions' role in education, 'and one of them openly stated that he was representing the Roman Catholic Mission'.¹⁶ In the debate the only substantial opposition to the plan had come from the Roman Catholics.¹⁷ They claimed that the plan did less than justice to Catholic education and teacher-training; that it infringed upon the liberty of conscience; and that it offered no definite guarantee against unfavourable interpretation in certain clauses, since the general tone of the plan conveyed an impression of indifference and even of antagonism towards religious schools.¹⁸ Davies hastened to point out yet again that the plan did not abolish mission or religious education, but left it to the people to decide the actual form which education should take in the Colony. Since the public paid for education, he thought it would be wrong to attempt to force everybody to accept the creeds of a few religious or political bodies. He pointed out that the missions were free to improve their schools from their own funds and so safeguard their future if they so wished, but to deny schooling to children unless they attended a denominational school amounted to a form of persecution, especially since half the population of Fiji was non-Christian.

In moving the adoption of the Ten Year Plan in the Legislative Council in November 1946 Davies emphasized that it was designed to suit local conditions.¹⁹ It was unwise, he claimed, to attempt to transplant education systems because of differering environments. Nevertheless, education was a dynamic process and local authorities had to be prepared to change or even to scrap their whole system periodically as the local situation changed. On the controversial subject of the future of the voluntary schools, Davies quoted a passage from a report on education in Fiji prepared by C.W. Mann for the Methodist Mission in 1935, in which Mann had said that if and when the Government was in a position to take over elementary education, the missions should be ready and willing to co-operate. Everywhere education was being looked upon as a matter of State concern, and when the State was ready it should take over the education of its

¹⁶*ibid.*, 18. See also *FLCD* 19 Nov. 1946, Speech by A.A. Ragg, pp.524-31.

¹⁷*FLCD* 18-20 Nov. 1946, pp.462-553.

¹⁸J.S.T. Kao, A history of Catholic education in Fiji, p.56.

¹⁹*FLCD* 18 Nov. 1946, p.462.

citizens. It was not his intention, said Davies, to get rid of mission schools, but as the guardian of public funds it was his responsibility to see that they were used as intended.

The ensuing debate lasted for three days — the longest in the history of the Fiji Legislative Council — but most Members had few positive criticisms to make of the plan, and the discussion centred around age-old racial and religious questions. The Council finally approved the plan in principle but reserved the right to approve individual capital projects as they came up for consideration in annual estimates. *The Fiji Times and Herald* praised the plan and expressed the hope that it would quickly introduce order and good management 'out of our educational chaos ...'.²⁰ Due recognition was also accorded to Davies for his part in the new plan. He was described as a most effective speaker whose 'masterly handling of the complicated proposals rarely left the critics with a leg to stand on'.

In October 1949 Davies returned to New Zealand to take up an appointment as Officer for Islands Education with the Department of Education in Wellington, a position he retained until his retirement in 1967. As the Acting and later Temporary, Director of Education in Fiji, he played a decisive role in the formation and adoption of the Ten Year Plan. Moreover, many of his criticisms of the Stephens Report and his assessment of the difficulties to be overcome in the development of education in Fiji appear to have stood the test of time. The entrenched positions of the various Christian missions, the growing political pressure of the Indians, the need to safeguard and promote the interests of the Fijians, and the immense practical difficulties of administering education — difficulties engendered by geographical, racial, cultural and economic factors, as well as an inadequate administrative staff — were all considerations appreciated by Davies from first-hand experience. It was through no fault of his that the Ten Year Plan was destined to be shelved so soon after its inception.

The basic educational problem facing the administration in Fiji at the end of World War II was clear enough.

²⁰*loc. cit.*, 22 Nov. 1946.

The social demand for education had mounted steadily in the 1930s, and by 1939 the Government in Fiji was faced with a situation in which some definite restatement of policy was required for the future. Throughout the previous decade the Government had been able to evade the basic issue by, to quote Davies, 'leaning on the missions', but by the outbreak of war a situation was fast developing in which the limited resources of the missions and other voluntary agencies were being stretched to the limit. The issue facing the Government was whether to increase financial aid to the voluntary agencies so that they could continue and expand their educational work or whether to establish its own system of public schools financed from government funds. The problem was complicated by the fact that during the 1930s the Indian demand for education increased dramatically, and this in turn created a potential threat to the traditional power structure in the territory. Moreover, while the majority of Indians rejected mission schools in favour of schools run by local Indian committees, they were, nevertheless, equally keen for the Government to take over their schools. The Government was therefore faced with the fact that if it chose to encourage mission schools still further, it would also be obliged on grounds of principle to offer additional aid to voluntary schools run by Indians. Another factor to consider was the 'shocking' standard of education in most schools in pre-war Fiji. Not only was there an urgent need to make provision for more education; there was an equally urgent need to improve its quality. Whether the quality of schools run by voluntary agencies could be improved by the judicious application of grants-in-aid and periodic inspection remained in doubt.

The need to provide for a substantial increase in the amount of education offered in the Colony both in the short and the long term forced the Government to look more closely at the structure of educational administration. It was clear that the existing education system was urgently in need of co-ordination. The empirical growth of the previous thirty years had resulted in what amounted to three systems of schools, based on racial lines, each operating largely independently of the others. It is true that the Department of Education from time to time passed regulations designed to apply to all schools, but this did not prevent observers like Stephens from asserting that there were essentially three separate systems of education operating in the territory.

By the outbreak of war in 1939, Fiji had reached what seemed like a decisive point in its educational development. Was the Colony to perpetuate and strengthen its system of voluntary schools aided by Government funds, or was it to develop, at the expense of voluntary effort and traditional colonial policy, a system of public schools run by the Government? Stephens left no one in any doubt as to where he stood in the matter, but his background and sympathies were that of a New Zealander whose government had opted for a state rather than a denominational system of schools as far back as 1877.

It is one thing to theorize about possible educational reforms but, in practice, schools operate within a particular socio-economic setting in which there are long-established vested interests to consider. In Fiji the missions had for many decades enjoyed a privileged position that was reinforced by the influence they exerted in London on the Advisory Committee for Education in the Colonies. Davies attempted to introduce significant changes without unduly alarming the missions, and to some extent he was successful. He was able to reorganize teacher-training and to make provision for most teachers to enjoy the status of civil servants, but the policy for increasing the number of Government schools had to be stated in such a way that it did not alarm the supporters of the voluntary schools. Hence the statements about the gradual and voluntary takeover of schools, and the constant assurances that there was no sinister plot afoot to abolish mission schools.

The Government was also faced with the fact that, however logical and compelling the arguments in favour of a system of public schools, it was highly unlikely that vast additional revenues would be made available for education in the immediate post-war years. The Government had to be careful, therefore, not to commit itself to expenditures it could not sustain. The situation was further heightened by the knowledge that there were many thousands of children in the Colony who were not receiving any worthwhile formal schooling and that the social demand for education in the post-war years was bound to increase as population growth increased. In the circumstances, it is perhaps surprising that the Government agreed even in principle to the outline of the Ten Year Plan, especially as it was clear that the Advisory Committee in London was not happy with the proposed extension of Government schools. Davies hastened to assert that the establishment of more Government schools did not constitute

the creation of a new policy and that there was no intention of taking over large numbers of voluntary schools *en masse* as suggested in the Stephens Report, but the missions had good cause to suspect the Government's long-term intentions.

Despite the controversies surrounding the Ten Year Plan, it constituted a notable achievement and a major turning point in the development of education in Fiji. The reorganization of teacher-training and the creation of better conditions of service for most teachers were essential factors in a program designed to improve the quality of the schools, while the rebuilding of Queen Victoria School and the erection of the Ratu Kadavulevu Intermediate School for boys did much to improve the quality of Fijian education. The creation of Education Districts administered by Education Officers also greatly improved the administrative efficiency of the Department of Education.

Finally, in terms of the broader theme of this study, the Stephens Report and the drawing up of the Ten Year Plan highlighted the problems engendered by the divided nature of educational administration and control, as well as the complex array of social, economic and political factors involved in any attempt to introduce widespread educational changes into Fiji. By 1946 it was apparent that, whether the Government wished to or not, it was obliged by the pressure of circumstances to adopt a more positive attitude towards its educational responsibilities. The new approach was also in keeping with the spirit of the Colonial Development and Welfare legislation of 1940 and 1945.

Chapter 7

The austere years

Soon after Davies had steered the Ten Year Plan through the Legislative Council he was replaced as Director of Education by Howard Hayden, who remained in Fiji until May 1953. Unfortunately, Hayden's term of office was to be associated with a major curtailment of the Ten Year Plan and also a constant shortage of funds, which forced the Government to continue to rely on the voluntary agencies to promote schooling. The education plan he had inherited was part of a wide-ranging program of economic and social development which, from the outset, was subjected to severe criticism from the Secretary of State in London.¹ Moreover, it had only received the assent of the Fiji Legislative Council after a lively debate on condition that each capital project was considered separately when it came up for consideration in the Estimates. The main criticism of the overall Development Plan was that insufficient emphasis had been placed on economic growth. In both London and Fiji it was claimed that the expansion of social services on the scale envisaged would lead to higher taxation, which would be in disproportionate relation to the growth of the Colony's income.² A start to the Ten Year Plan was made in 1947, but the misgivings of the Colonial Office remained, and in February 1948 all further financial outlays were frozen pending a general financial review. This was not completed until 1950, by when a revised plan had been drawn up which substantially altered the emphasis. Social services were cut back to approximately 25 per cent of total expenditure, while the outlay on economic schemes was increased from 12 to 36 per cent.³ Capital spending on education was reduced

¹Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, p.252.

²*ibid.*

³*ibid.*, p.257.

from £461,550 to £302,000, which included a special Colonial Development and Welfare grant of £100,000 for the rebuilding of the Queen Victoria School. For effective purposes, the Department of Education could count on no more than about £200,000 for future development projects. The acute shortage of finance in the late 1940s was accentuated by the inflationary effects of World War II which forced steep rises in building costs. Increases in the salaries of civil servants, which after January 1948 included the majority of teachers, also inflated the recurrent costs of education. In retrospect, Stanner was probably correct when he stated that the Ten Year Plan was an impetuous, badly balanced document that made no real inquiry into the Colony's ability to finance development schemes and contained a good deal of the intellectual wool which entangled the whole development *versus* welfare debate of the period. The guiding principles of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act were seemingly misinterpreted. The original plan allowed for about 59 per cent of total spending to be devoted to the social services. This was far higher than that expected by the British Government and no thorough examination was made of the annual recurrent charges that would have accrued.

The financial restrictions imposed in 1948 and the shortages of building materials soon forced the curtailment of the school building program, and Hayden had no choice but to revert to the traditional policy of encouraging the voluntary agencies by grants-in-aid: 'it is physically and financially impossible for Government to build rapidly the great number of schools that are needed, and I would again appeal to local committees to continue with the good work of building schools ...'.⁴ The neglect of the war years had created an urgent need for more schools, and this was heightened by the rapid growth of the population in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The 1946 Census showed that the Colony's population rose by almost 31 per cent, from 198,000 to 260,000 in the period 1936-46. The average annual growth rate was about 2.6 per cent, and it was confidently predicted that this would rise in the years ahead. Perhaps of even greater social and political significance was the fact that the Indian population had increased by nearly 42 per cent, as compared with the 21 per cent increase of the Fijians. By 1948 the Indians had become numerically the dominant racial group (see Appendix F). Moreover, approximately 50 per cent of Indians were under twenty-one

⁴FLCD 19 Nov. 1947, p.439.

years of age and 48 per cent of Indian women were in the child-bearing age group. It was predicted that if existing rates of population growth continued, Fiji's population would pass the half million mark in 1970. The prediction was a year out: the population was estimated to have passed the half million mark in 1969.

The rapid growth of the Indian population created a political as well as an educational problem. Mention has already been made in Chapter 3 of Indian politicians' criticisms of the Government in the late 1930s for its alleged neglect of schooling for the Indians. Most Indian schools were of poor quality — not surprisingly, in view of the fact that their establishment had been left to the initiative of the Indians themselves, most of whom were semi-literate farmers. Many Indian leaders strongly believed that the British Administration in Fiji was deliberately discriminating against them in favour of the Fijians. Clearly, the provision of schooling for both races formed part of the complex issue of race relations. Racial antagonism had been present in the territory from the time when the Indians were first introduced into Fiji as indentured labourers in the late nineteenth century, but it was heightened in the 1930s by the rapid growth of the Indian population and by deteriorating Anglo-Indian relations in India. World War II exacerbated the problem. The Fijians, traditionally loyal to Great Britain, volunteered for the armed services in large numbers, but the Indians refused to do so. The result was anger and resentment on the part of the Fijians towards the Indians, and these were hardened by the obvious signs of profiteering engaged in by numerous Indian businessmen during the war years.⁵ The British Government found itself in an awkward position. The Fijians had handed over their country to Britain's protection in the nineteenth century, and since then they had retained an almost childlike trust in Britain's paternal role. The British seemingly made no effort to foster a greater degree of Fijian self-determination, and the Fijian Affairs Ordinance of 1945, which established a separate Fijian administration, was criticized by many people because it seemed to be perpetuating Britain's paternalistic role. Europeans, in particular, were sceptical of the move, which seemed to them an attempt to isolate the Fijians from the unavoidable demands for cultural adaptation in a rapidly-growing exchange economy.⁶

⁵Interview with Davies.

⁶Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, p.221.

The two races also differed markedly in temperament and in their outlook on life. The amiable Fijian with his essentially communal lifestyle contrasted strongly with the serious-minded, industrious and highly self-centred Indian. The differences were relatively easy to explain, but it was more difficult to overcome the inevitable strains associated with daily living. In many ways education reflected the differing approaches to life. The Fijians were adapted to living in a settled hierarchical society. For them it was easy to go through the mechanics of a simple elementary education system and to leave school after no more than three or maybe four years. Schooling for most of them was not viewed as a means to upward social or economic mobility. Only the chiefly élite like Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna were expected to go on to Wanganui Collegiate in New Zealand, and from there maybe to Oxford.⁷ The Indians, by contrast, viewed education as the principal means of escape from the drudgery of farming and the way to acquire white-collar jobs. As the sons of indentured labourers in an alien land, young Indians had no tribal structure or ritual lands to fall back on in time of need. Their destiny in life was very much of their own choosing. If they worked hard at school, there was a remote chance that they might escape from the poverty and back-breaking labour of life in the sugar cane fields. Unfortunately, the striving of most Indians was interpreted by the Fijians as a single-minded devotion to financial gain, often by questionable means. Against this background, it is not hard to understand why many Indians grasped whole-heartedly whatever educational opportunities came their way, and why their overall educational attainments were markedly superior to those of the Fijians, especially at the secondary level.

During the 1930s the Government in Fiji could conceivably have done more for the education of the Indians — although the Stephens Report suggested that far more had been done than the Government was commonly given credit for — but it was concerned lest the Fijians objected. After 1945, determined efforts were made to improve educational opportunities for both races, but as Hayden has since remarked, for many years after the war a chill came into the air at the mention of doing more for the education of the Indians. Wartime memories remained vivid, and even now they are capable of being revived when the occasion demands. The struggle for independence in India also had political

⁷Interview with Hayden, Auckland, May 1973.

overtones in Fiji, and Indian politicians like Vishnu Deo were not averse to using education for wider political purposes.⁸ Such, then, was the social and political background against which educational development in the late 1940s and early 1950s needs to be judged.

The revised education plan aimed at the completion of projects already under way for the education of Fijians beyond the primary level and the establishment of parity of provision for the Indians. In addition, a sum of £58,000 was set aside as a fund for the re-establishment of building grants to voluntary agencies. Hayden has since remarked that during his term as Director of Education there was virtually no money available to do anything more than maintain the existing system. Recurrent expenditure, especially on teachers' salaries, was a constant worry and a major drain on resources. Nevertheless, some advances were made. In 1948 the Nasinu Teachers' Training College was established and the majority of teachers became civil servants. District Education Officers were also appointed, and they subsequently did much to improve relationships between local school committees and the Department of Education. The number of children attending school also rose steadily, despite acute financial and staffing difficulties. Between 1946 and 1953, primary enrolments increased from 41,000 to over 54,000 — an increase of 33 per cent. In the same period, the post-primary roll rose from 789 to 2276.

Unfortunately, the rise in the quantity of schooling was not matched by a similar improvement in its quality.⁹

⁸FDEF 24/18/46 Memorandum from the Director of Education to the Colonial Secretary, commenting on his interview with Sir Raghunath Paranjpye, Indian High Commissioner in Australia, who visited Fiji in April 1946. His visit was made the occasion for an expression of hostile Indian feeling towards the British for the alleged lack of facilities for Indian education in Fiji. See also FDEF 24/18/25-27 report of a meeting at Lautoka, where A.D. Patel and Swami Rudranand were using education for wider political purposes. Also FDEF 24/18/51 Memorandum from Davies to the Colonial Secretary, in which Davies complained of the misleading and inaccurate public statements made about education by Vishnu Deo.

⁹The reasons for the poor quality of education were outlined in various annual *Reports* of the Department of Education during the period 1947-53. What follows in the text is a synopsis of the main points.

By the time of Hayden's departure from Fiji in 1953, most children were still leaving school after four years which was little better than Stephens had reported in 1944. The reasons for the poor quality of schooling were clear enough. Throughout the first decade of the post-war period there was an acute shortage of competent and trained teachers, especially on Vanua Levu and the outer islands, and a lack of adequate supervision of the work of all teachers. The proportion of trained teachers began to improve in the early 1950s as the training program at the Nasinu Teachers' College got under way, but their level of general education still left much to be desired. Most teacher trainees had only a primary schooling behind them, so that much of their two year training program had to be used to extend their general education. The lack of girls who had received an extended education also meant a dearth of female entrants to the training college. The supervision of student teachers in the schools, and of practising teachers in general, was made very difficult both by the lack of suitably qualified personnel and by the nature of the territory. In the Northern District especially, reef-infested seas necessitated travelling in daylight, while wet weather throughout the territory made overland travel difficult and at times even hazardous. Each of the three education districts had an Education Officer and several organizing teachers to inspect class teachers at their work, but even so it was physically impossible to visit most schools more than once a year, and on some of the most remote islands teachers were fortunate if their schools were visited once in two years.

The poor quality of schooling was also attributed to the wide age range of the pupils in most junior classes, and to the frequency of overcrowded classes, especially in Indian schools. Other contributing causes included the lack of teachers trained in techniques of group work, the constant lack of teaching materials and classroom equipment, the poor health of many children, and the unsatisfactory physical conditions in many schools. For example, Fijian bures lacked artificial lighting and let in the rain, and many schools had poor sanitary provisions. It was also apparent that the routine maintenance of school buildings was often neglected by impoverished school committees. In the late 1940s many schools were forced to operate dual sessions in the junior classes to cope with the flood of new pupils, thus creating additional problems. Teachers were placed under extra strain, and older children were often unable to remain at school after the end of the first

session because they were required to escort their younger brothers and sisters home.

In Fijian schools especially, the quality of education, measured in terms of the average level of scholastic attainment, was adversely affected by the widespread prevalence of large, one-teacher schools. Most district schools had rolls of about seventy pupils and four or five classes, all under the supervision of one teacher who had little or no training in the instruction of composite classes. The more advanced classes in such schools presented their own distinctive problems. Senior pupils were normally few in number and were generally taught in a composite group by a teacher who was often unsure of the content of instruction at that level. This was particularly the case with older teachers whose own level of education was minimal. There was also a widespread lack of suitable class materials and textbooks, and the quality of English language teaching, upon which success at the post-primary level depended so heavily, was in most cases deplorably bad. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the majority of composite classes were reported to be working at the level of about class 4.¹⁰

The quality of work in many Indian schools was also adversely affected by the prevalence of petty quarrels and jealousies amongst school committee members. In theory, most teachers were protected from arbitrary or wrongful dismissal by virtue of their being civil servants, but life could still be made very uncomfortable for them if they fell foul of certain committee members, and this in turn inevitably affected their morale and work in the classroom. Frequent dissatisfaction with the quality of teachers' dwellings was another source of friction between many teachers and their respective school committees.

Post-primary schooling also suffered from an acute staffing shortage in the immediate post-war years, mainly because of the difficulty of recruiting New Zealand teachers.¹¹

¹⁰Department of Education, *Report for the Year 1950, FLCP* 33/1951, p.6.

¹¹New Zealand experienced a rapid increase in its post-primary school population after World War II as a result of a more liberal entrance policy to secondary schools following the abolition of the 'Proficiency' examination in 1936, and the raising of the school leaving age to 15 in 1944. During the 1950s, the shortage of teachers became acute.

The widely scattered distribution of the population also necessitated boarding schools, and living away from home often had a detrimental effect upon children's work. An inadequate grasp of the English language was probably the single most important reason for the poor quality of much post-primary work, but little could be done to remedy this defect in the short term. Indeed, the remote location of many primary schools intensified the problem, because the few teachers who did acquire a reasonable command of the language often lost it after several years in outlying areas.

The Ten Year Plan was designed primarily to extend educational opportunities as widely as possible and to promote greater efficiency in the complex administration of the schools. Little mention was made of the curriculum and the need for a thorough revision, but this was an aspect of education upon which Hayden tried to make some impression during his stay in Fiji. The omission of any specific recommendations for curriculum revision was one aspect of the Stephens Report which Davies had criticized earlier.¹² He was adamant that the most serious difficulty in the schools was the lack of a satisfactory curriculum related to local conditions. He also argued that the work in the schools suffered because the poorly-trained teachers had no guidelines on which to base their work. In advanced countries it was considered undesirable to narrow teachers' efforts to a fixed and detailed syllabus, but in a 'backward' country such as Fiji he considered it imperative that teachers be given a definite program of work and a detailed guide.

Despite financial and staff limitations, Hayden initiated a revision of the first four years of the primary curriculum in the late 1940s. This was reissued to the schools in 1950, but poorly-trained teachers generally require a great deal of assistance and guidance to make the most of curriculum changes, and such assistance was frequently not available because of the shortage of field staff. The revised plan for education drawn up in 1950 provided for the establishment of an Educational Research Institute to look into the questions of suitable selection tests and procedures and to examine teaching methods and curriculum content with a view to the ultimate production of textbooks and other classroom materials based on local needs and conditions. The Institute was started in 1952,

¹²Davies's comments on the Stephens Report (*FLCP* 18/1944).

but it ran into staffing difficulties and was finally disbanded in the mid-1950s when the money allotted to it ran out. However, it was responsible for the standardization of tests in arithmetic and English reading and comprehension, and these were used extensively in the schools.

Hayden also encouraged an emphasis on the improvement of schooling in the first two grades of the primary school. It was in those initial years that major improvements were needed in the quality of instruction if the overall standard of primary schooling was to be raised. Special emphasis was placed on the teaching of infant methods at the teachers' training college; organizing teachers were encouraged to spend much of their time and effort in helping practising teachers with method and content; a standard English Reader was adopted; and primers in Fijian and Hindustani were prepared for use in the schools. Hayden also abolished the Primary School Leaving Examination. In its place was substituted a certificate based on a school record card which was to be filled in by teachers from year to year, so that a detailed and composite record of achievement of each pupil could be built up. The idea was commendable, but many teachers found difficulty in filling in the cards. Finally, Hayden attempted to place greater stress on the agricultural content of schooling, and the primary schools' garden competition became an annual event.

Despite the financial and practical difficulties of the period, the early 1950s appear to have been a turning point in educational development in Fiji, a view strongly supported by Max Bay,¹³ a prominent headmaster and educational administrator in the Colony in the post-war years. He contends that by the end of Hayden's term as Director the quality of primary education was beginning to improve slowly. The output of trained teachers from Nasinu Teachers' College was starting to have some effect; the Education Officers had been working in the field for several years and they were gradually standardizing primary education; and the first four years of the primary curriculum had been revised. Bay suggests that evidence of an improvement in the quality of primary education could be seen in the enhanced standards of entrants to the Queen Victoria School in the mid-1950s, and in their subsequent attainments while at the school. As one of the first Education Officers to be appointed, and later as Principal of the Ratu Kadavulevu

¹³Interview , Auckland, May 1973.

Intermediate School for Fijian boys, which contributed pupils to the Queen Victoria School, Bay was in a unique position to judge the quality of education at that time.

Throughout his stay in Fiji, Hayden's most pressing and immediate problems were the provision of enough schools for the growing population and the control of recurrent expenditure.¹⁴ The building of new schools was a costly business, and the Government made it quite clear that its future role in education would be primarily to supplement private or voluntary effort;¹⁵ hence, the reintroduction of building grants in the revised education plan. In retrospect, the immediate post-war period appears to have been a frustrating time. So much needed to be done to enlarge and improve the school system, and yet so little could be accomplished. Moreover, for many of the problems affecting the quality of education there were no easy or quick solutions. The training of teachers was a time-consuming enterprise, and so was the dissemination of new educational ideas and techniques. The complex problems of finance were also understandably never far from the root of most education decisions; nor was the job of the Director of Education made easy by the constant demands, on the one hand from Indian politicians for greater spending on education, and on the other, the Colonial Treasurer's insistence that the colonial budget should be balanced at all costs. Yet for all the pessimism associated with the period, some solid progress was achieved. In 1946 there had been an urgent need to expand educational opportunities at the primary level and to consolidate an education system which had grown up in piecemeal fashion in the 1930s. By the time of Hayden's departure in May 1953, it could justifiably be argued that worthwhile progress had been achieved in both spheres.¹⁶

¹⁴Interview with Hayden. See also *FLCD* 13 Oct. 1950, p.220.

¹⁵*FLCD* 12 Nov. 1948, p.249. Statement by R.M. Taylor, the Financial Secretary.

¹⁶Though his activities do not fall within the confines of this study, it should be pointed out that during his stay in Fiji, Hayden spent much of his time and energy in organizing a community development project on the island of Moturiki. See Howard Hayden, *The Moturiki Scheme: A Pilot Project in Community Development*, London, 1954.

Chapter 8

The Lewis-Jones Report and its aftermath

Hayden was replaced as Director of Education by W.W. Lewis-Jones, who had served previously in Tanganyika, British Guiana and Kenya. During his three-year term, which was marred by a long period of illness, he managed to draw up a detailed report on education in Fiji in which he proposed several changes in Government education policy.¹ Unfortunately, he was unable to present his ideas to the Legislative Council in person, and the task fell to his deputy, J.G. Rodger, who arrived in Fiji early in 1955 after having served as a District Education Officer in the Gold Coast. Rodger was destined to succeed Lewis-Jones as Director and to remain in the post until November 1971, when he stepped down to allow an indigenous person to take over the position. Since then he has continued to occupy a senior administrative office in the Education Department. Perhaps more so than any other individual Rodger, in his characteristically unobtrusive manner, has been the guiding influence behind the shaping of educational policy in Fiji since the late 1950s.

Both Lewis-Jones and Rodger were strong supporters of the traditional British colonial policy of subsidizing voluntary agencies by grants-in-aid, and it is therefore not surprising that the policy was strengthened in the late 1950s and continued throughout the 1960s. There are signs that this policy may undergo modifications in the future, but Rodger maintains strongly that it was the only feasible way to promote education in Fiji throughout his period as Director.² The Government had limited funds at its disposal and an ever-increasing demand for primary and later post-primary schooling. The most effective way to make use of scarce resources seemed to be to link them to voluntary effort. Furthermore, quite apart from

¹Lewis-Jones: *Report on Education in Fiji*, FLCP 34/1955.

²Interview with Rodger.

financial considerations, Rodger and many others like him in the Colonial Education Service defended the grants-in-aid system on the grounds that it stimulated local initiative and interest in schooling.

The Lewis-Jones Report on education in Fiji was published in March 1955, which proved to be an opportune time as it coincided with an upward swing in the Colony's economic fortunes brought about by rising sugar prices. Hence, there was an expectation that more money would be made available for the expansion of the social services. The report was also timely in the context of post-war educational development. Almost ten years had elapsed since the end of World War II and despite the high hopes for educational progress present in 1946, subsequent events had been something of an anti-climax. It was true that enrolments had risen steadily, especially at the primary level, but the quality of schooling still left much to be desired and little had been done to promote post-primary education. In short, the Colony had been unable to finance any spectacular educational development, and the painstaking and time-consuming task of gradually getting the education system on its feet had hardly captured the public imagination.

Lewis-Jones was primarily concerned with the growing need to expand and diversify opportunities for post-primary or secondary education. In the introduction to his report, he pointed out that the main emphasis during the previous decade had been focused on primary education and that provision for post-primary education had not kept pace with the increase in primary enrolments. Moreover, he claimed that the Colony was short of young people with adequate schooling to enter the professions, government service, commerce, industry and agriculture. This was particularly the case with entrants to the teachers' college, and until the academic standards of potential teachers were improved, little could be done to improve the quality of primary schooling. Various mission and independent secondary schools had been opened since the war to meet the growing social demand for schooling beyond the primary level but, as Lewis-Jones remarked, they were finding the financial strain a heavy burden. Lack of funds prevented many voluntary secondary schools from obtaining qualified teachers, and in order to increase their revenue from fees, schools were forced to accept overcrowded classes. Many school buildings were also inadequate, and facilities such as laboratories and workshops were not provided. Lewis-Jones

was particularly concerned with the lack of variety in the courses available to pupils at the post-primary level. Almost all the schools offered academic or professional subjects. This was partly in response to popular demand — Indians in particular spurned any sort of technical or practical courses — but also because it was so much cheaper. Academic or literary courses required only textbooks, chalk and a blackboard, whereas technical subjects required expensive equipment, special rooms and constant supplies of raw materials. Science subjects were similarly placed. Laboratories and equipment were prohibitively expensive. Consequently science was either taught directly from a textbook or not at all. Competent teachers of technical and science subjects were also very difficult to recruit.

To overcome these problems, Lewis-Jones proposed that provision be made for non-government secondary schools to become eligible for recurrent grants-in-aid for tuition costs, subject to certain conditions. These included that each school should be managed by a Board of Governors and that the Director of Education or his nominee should be a member; that pupils should be admitted only if they were of a satisfactory educational standard; that classes were to be limited in size; that buildings and equipment should meet government standards; that the staff should be qualified and approved by the Director of Education; and finally, that the curriculum should also be approved. Subject to these provisos, Lewis-Jones recommended that grants to schools should be determined on a budgetary basis, i.e. the annual grants should amount to approved expenditure, less income from fees at approved rates or from other sources. Buildings and equipment grants of up to 50 per cent were also recommended for selected schools. Initially, Lewis-Jones hoped to extend grants to three schools per year, so that by 1960 there would be twelve fully aided secondary schools. Together with existing Government secondary schools, they would provide for an annual intake of 945 pupils or about 40 per cent of those satisfactorily completing the primary course.³ Ultimately, total secondary school enrolments were expected to increase to about 3300.

Lewis-Jones was also very keen to see provision in all secondary schools for a balanced series of courses

³J.G. Rodger, *FLCD* 7 Sept. 1955:126.

embracing academic, modern (general), technical and agricultural education. Indeed, approval of the curriculum in schools seeking government aid was to be made conditional on adequate provision of non-academic subjects. Lewis-Jones also recommended the establishment of a technical college in Suva to operate primarily as a day trade school, but with facilities for evening and day-release classes for those already employed in the building, engineering and electrical industries. To help overcome the shortage of competent teachers at the post-primary level, he advocated the training of teachers locally, to teach in the lower classes of the secondary schools. To ensure the academic quality of teacher-trainees in this category, and of those students wishing to go overseas for university study, he proposed the setting up at both the Suva Boys' and Girls' Grammar Schools of special two-year post-School Certificate courses, to be run on a multiracial basis.

The report also incorporated a proposal to abolish the long-standing Qualifying Examination after 1955, and to replace it with a Secondary Schools' Entrance Examination. All pupils completing the primary school course would sit the test, and the results would be used to select pupils for the various post-primary schools and courses available. In principle, this arrangement was very similar to the Eleven Plus Examination then widely used in England and Wales as the basis of selection for secondary schooling. Pupils selected for academic secondary work would embark on a four-year course leading to the School Certificate Examination. After two years at secondary school, all pupils would sit the Fiji Junior Certificate Examination, to be introduced in 1955. A very wide range of subjects was to be offered, and it was hoped that this examination would rapidly become the minimum requirement for entry to the teachers' college and to the clerical grades of the Civil Service. It would also provide a further means of eliminating secondary school pupils deemed unsuitable to proceed to advanced studies. Post-primary courses of three years' duration were also to be established in agriculture and the various trades. Lewis-Jones also proposed the setting up of a Board of Studies to advise the Director of Education on curricula at the secondary level, and a further reconstitution of the Board of Education, including a change of name to the 'Education Advisory Council'. Membership of the Council was to be enlarged to include a wide array of groups interested in education, and the Council's main function would be to advise the Director of

Education on such matters as the organization of educational facilities, courses of instruction, scales of school fees, and proposed legislation affecting education. Uncertainties associated with the building industry made it very difficult to make accurate financial estimates regarding capital expenditure to be incurred by the various proposals, but a tentative figure was set at £885,000.

The report received a favourable reception in London,⁴ and was duly presented to the Fiji Legislative Council for its seal of approval. In the ensuing debate, the main criticism seemed to be that the report laid insufficient emphasis on the further development of primary education.⁵ Rodger countered this by saying that it was a comparatively simple matter to sit down and prepare a report which transformed the whole educational system and satisfied all parties by including in it something to please everyone, but educational planning had to be realistic in terms of the availability of finance, building materials and teachers. There was little point in opening new primary schools, he argued, if there were no qualified teachers to staff them. Moreover, it was not possible in the short run to accelerate the supply of trained teachers because there were not enough candidates of the right quality offering themselves for training. He saw no likelihood of any change until post-primary education was expanded. In essence, Rodger was putting forward the same argument that Davies had used a decade before in defence of intermediate schools. However, Rodger hastened to point out to Council Members that despite the obvious stress being placed on post-primary schooling, well over one-third of the proposed capital expenditure was earmarked for the building or rebuilding of primary and intermediate schools. The Acting Financial Secretary warned the Council against voting for any additional spending on primary education, because it might overtax the Colony's ability to meet recurrent expenditure. He added that the proposed emphasis on post-primary education as a means of raising economic productivity through an enlarged supply of skilled manpower was in line with the recommendations of both the Government's Economic and Fiscal Review Committees. This point was reinforced by the Acting Colonial Secretary, who emphasized the growing importance attached by the Government to plans for enhanced economic growth. Seen in this light, he had no doubt that

⁴See Appendix H of the Report.

⁵FLCD 7-8 Sept. 1955:125-97.

the highest importance in education at that time should be accorded to technical and post-primary education.

The report was finally approved in principle with one amendment. During the course of the debate, H.M. Scott claimed that not enough emphasis had been placed on agricultural education and he successfully moved that a special committee should be appointed to look into the matter. The committee presented its findings to the Government in May 1956, and they were approved unanimously by the Legislative Council.⁶ The main outcome of the inquiry was the Government's decision to spend an extra £65,000 on expanding the Navuso Agricultural School, which was run by the Methodist Mission, and to contribute a recurrent grant of between £4000 and £6500 annually towards its upkeep. The committee's report also emphasized the need to expand the agricultural courses offered at the Ratu Kadavulevu School, to promote a greater concern for the teaching of nature study at the Nasinu Teachers' College, and to ensure regular refresher courses for practising teachers. The committee also reiterated a point that has been stated many times in developing countries. While primary education should be given a rural bias, no attempt should be made at that stage to impart instruction in the techniques of agriculture. The latter was, however, to be accorded an important place in the post-primary structure. The decision to aid the Navuso School was in line with the basic principle of subsidizing voluntary agencies and an extension of the main objective of the 1955 report on education.

The Lewis-Jones proposals met with mixed success. By 1960 provision for extending capital and recurrent grants-in-aid to selected secondary schools had increased substantially the range and quality of education offered in thirteen non-government schools, but the attempt to encourage a more broadly balanced series of academic and vocational courses in all secondary schools was less successful.⁷ Traditional attitudes towards education were firmly entrenched and most parents were still anxious to see their children receive an academic schooling. The thirteen grant-aided schools were obliged to offer a variety of academic

⁶*Report of the Committee on Agricultural Education, FLCP 18/1956.*

⁷Interview with Rodger. See also S.A. Sahib (1963:93). Educational reorganisation in the colony of Fiji.

and practical subjects, but almost all the numerous independent private schools that appeared in the late 1950s offered solely academic courses, most of which were of dubious quality.

By 1960 there were four secondary schools which offered specifically vocational courses in either technical or agricultural fields. A further thirty-one intermediate and post-primary schools were equipped to teach handcraft and/or home-craft subjects. These facilities catered for over 9000 children, but it was significant that only eleven boys offered craft subjects at the School Certificate level.⁸ Moreover, the new Fiji Technical Institute was still awaiting construction, as was the new Indian secondary school at Lautoka. The main difficulty was not finance but the restricted capacity of the building industry. Similar difficulties were to prevail throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

A new Education Ordinance was passed in 1960 (no.24 of 1960),⁹ which gave the Director of Education greater powers to promote and control the spread of schooling. One writer has suggested that it gave the Government the much-needed powers to ensure that some semblance of order should emerge 'out of the chaos which had reigned for the previous forty years'.⁹ Unfortunately, there was to be little evidence in the 1960s to suggest that the Director was in a position to enforce his powers in practice. The new ordinance also did away with the Board of Education and substituted the Advisory Council in its place. The Director of Education was expected to consult the Council on a wide variety of matters, but he was not bound by its advice.

By the end of the 1950s Fiji was clearly in the midst of a major expansionist phase in education brought about by several factors, including a rapid post-war growth in population, rising economic prosperity, and an ever-increasing belief on the part of Indians and Fijians alike that schooling was the means to a better life, preferably with a white-collar job. This fact had given rise to an unprecedented social demand for schooling at both primary and post-primary levels. Judged by rising enrolment figures, quantitative

⁸Department of Education: *Report for the Year 1960, FLCP* 29/1961, p.19.

⁹R.O. Sinclair: A descriptive and critical account of the educational services in the Crown Colony of Fiji with particular reference to developments in the years 1946-1960, p.27.

progress had been impressive, as illustrated in Appendices A and B. Since the end of World War II, primary enrolments had increased by almost 89 per cent. The rise had been especially rapid in the period 1955-60, during which the rate of increase had almost doubled that of the previous decade. Post-primary enrolments more than doubled in the second half of the 1950s. The general increase in enrolments was also reflected in the rapid rise in the number of primary and secondary schools. Between 1955 and 1960, fifty-five new primary schools and twenty-two new secondary schools were opened, the latter figure representing a doubling of the number of secondary schools in the Colony.

Closer analysis of enrolment figures reveals some significant trends. By 1960 most children were completing at least six years primary schooling, in contrast with what Stephens had reported in 1943. There was also a marked improvement in the age structure of primary school classes. For example, between 1955 and 1960 the proportion of children in class 6 in Fijian primary schools aged twelve years or younger rose from 37 to more than 64 per cent. Similarly, in class 8, the number of children aged fourteen years or younger rose from 40 to 78 per cent. The same trend was also evident in Indian primary schools. The proportion of Indian children enrolled in primary schools also rose steadily throughout the period 1946-60, and in 1959 they outnumbered the Fijians for the first time (see Appendix C). The proportion of Indian girls attending school also rose significantly. In 1946 they accounted for about 35 per cent of total Indian primary enrolments. By 1960 the proportion had risen to 44 per cent. The major breakthrough appeared to have occurred in the early and mid-1950s. In the first decade after World War II, the number of Indian girls enrolled in primary schools increased by about 6000, or 600 per year. From 1955 to 1960 the annual intake increased to over 900 per year. A significantly greater number of Indian girls were also staying at school longer by the end of the 1950s, as shown in Table 2. The change in enrolment patterns appeared to reflect the gradual liberalization in Indian social attitudes towards women in the 1950s.

At the secondary level there was a steady rise in enrolments throughout the period 1946-60, with Indians continuing to outnumber Fijians substantially (see Appendix D). The preponderance of males of both races was especially marked. In 1960 Fijian males outnumbered Fijian females by almost two to one (540 boys and 371 girls), while Indian

males outnumbered their female counterparts by well over two to one (2195 boys and 1012 girls). Overall, Indians constituted 56 per cent of all secondary (including technical and vocational) enrolments. Perhaps the most significant long-term trend of the late 1950s was the growing number of children who were completing the full eight-year primary course and then seeking entry to secondary education. It was this 'upward thrust' that was to generate increased social pressure for more secondary schooling in the early 1960s.

Table 2

Girls in Indian enrolments in classes 6, 7 and 8 in the years 1947, 1955 and 1960.

Year	Class 6	Class 7	Class 8
1947	280	165	179
1955	940	638	478
1960	1416	1186	976

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education. The figures refer to enrolments in schools classified as 'Indian', which excludes Indian pupils attending 'Mixed' schools.

Despite the impressive quantitative gains of the post-war years, the disturbingly high drop-out rates at both primary and secondary levels indicated that the quality of education still left much to be desired. Unfortunately, accurate and detailed statistics of the progress of various cohorts of children through the schools were not compiled. The only figures available are the total enrolments in each class or grade, and these include an indeterminate number of repeaters. Nevertheless, the gross enrolment figures do give some indication of the extent of drop-out, as illustrated in Table 3.¹⁰ The figures suggest that there was an overall drop-out rate of well over 50 per cent. The highest rate was experienced after the first year, which was in keeping with the experiences of most developing countries. First-year classes were generally large, and they were often

¹⁰Dr C.E. Beeby has remarked privately that the results appear to be similar whether one uses cohorts or raw class numbers.

entrusted to untrained or poorly-educated teachers. Predictably, another high drop-out point occurred after the sixth

Table 3
Primary school wastage 1953-60

Year	Class	Enrolments all races	Percentage drop-out
1953	1	12,498	100.0
1954	2	10,251	82.0
1955	3	9,754	78.0
1956	4	9,078	72.6
1957	5	8,642	69.1
1958	6	8,307	66.5
1959	7	6,324	50.6
1960	8	5,554	44.4

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education.

year, the stage at which most Fijian pupils either transferred to intermediate schools or left school. A similar exodus occurred after the completion of the eight-year primary course. The number of children enrolled in class 8 in 1960 totalled 5554, but the enrolment in form 3 in 1961 numbered only 2429, or about 44 per cent of the class 8 roll of the previous year. A further large exodus of pupils occurred after form 4, and only a trickle of between one and two hundred remained at school beyond form 5.

Various reasons were suggested by the Education Department for the drop-out rate.¹¹ Many children still started school at a comparatively late age, the average probably being about seven years. This was partly for financial reasons. Parents with large families often found it very difficult to find the money for school fees, and many

¹¹Department of Education, *Report for the Year 1960*, p.5.

children had to wait until they were seven or eight years old before their parents could afford to send them to school. Many parents also lived several miles from a school and were often unwilling to allow their young children to travel to school alone or unattended by adults, especially if the route was along a bush track which crossed streams liable to sudden flooding. In many Fijian district schools tuition was provided only up to the class 5 or 6 level. After that, parents were faced with the need to find extra money for boarding schools if their children were to continue their schooling, and this was generally beyond their means. Domestic duties kept many girls away from school, and it was often easier to leave school for good once one had fallen behind the rest of the class than to try to catch up again. Finally, cultural attitudes accounted for many Indian girls leaving school at an early age, especially as they approached puberty and had no option but to attend co-educational schools and be taught by male teachers.

At the secondary level, the quality of education was claimed to be poor because of the many private non-grant-aided schools which accepted pupils who had failed the Secondary Schools' Entrance Examination and whose teaching staff and general facilities in most cases were sub-standard. An indication of the poor quality of the third form intake at such schools is provided by Table 4, included in the Report of the Department of Education for 1960.

Admission to Government secondary schools was normally only granted to those pupils with a 50 per cent pass or more. Grant-aided schools were permitted to admit pupils with 40 per cent or more marks. Entrants to both types of schools were also required to conform to certain age limitations (a maximum age of fourteen years eleven months in government schools, and fifteen years eleven months in grant-aided schools). No such limitations were placed on independent schools. Hence they admitted many sub-standard entrants. Unfortunately, many independent secondary schools appeared to be primarily profit-making concerns rather than educational institutions. They sprang up spasmodically in the towns in the middle and late 1950s, and standards and conditions of work were often deplorable. Sahib, writing in the early 1960s, was particularly vehement in his condemnation of such schools.¹² He claimed that many classes were conducted in improvised sheds and stuffy rooms with

¹²Sahib, Educational reorganisation in the colony of Fiji, pp.90-91.

little regard for the canons of health and hygiene, while facilities such as libraries, laboratories and workshops were non-existent. He also highlighted the charging of exorbitant tuition fees and building-fund levies, the low academic standards of most of the pupils admitted, the widespread use of poorly educated and untrained teachers, and the fact that most of the schools were managed by *ad hoc* committees consisting for the most part of illiterate laymen. Inevitably, he claimed, there was a free play of power politics, clashes of vested interests, and stark nepotism.¹³

Table 4
Third form intakes 1954-60

Year of examination	Candidates (no.)	Passed (no.)	Admitted to form 3 of secondary schools* (no.)	Year of admission
1954	1198	214	1100	1955
1955	1622	266	1100	1956
1956	1961	468	1400	1957
1957	2123	601	1400	1958
1958	2456	527	1710	1959
1959	2710	664	2290	1960
1960	2758	619		

*Approximate figures only including some repeaters.

Source: Report of the Department of Education 1960, p.16.

The evidence contained in Sahib's study and the comments of several of Fiji's leading educational administrators in the late 1950s and early 1960s (especially Rodger, Bay and Moffett) strongly support the view that most independent secondary schools ruthlessly exploited parents and students alike, and that almost all of them would have been forced to close if the Director of Education had enforced standards as laid down in the Education Ordinance of 1960. The Department of Education allowed such schools to remain operating

¹³*ibid.*, p.94.

partly because they were purely private ventures and therefore did not constitute a drain on public funds, and partly also because of the view that even poor schools were better than none at all. Moreover, at the time the Government was unable to provide for any further increase in the provision of secondary schooling.

The standard of work achieved in the secondary schools in general, as judged by successes in various external examinations, appeared to improve in the 1950s, but the numbers who actually passed such examinations were few compared with the total number of secondary school pupils. Progress in the late 1950s is illustrated in Table 5. The increase by 1960, both in the number of pupils sitting external examinations and in those gaining passes, was largely attributable to the determined effort made by the Government to improve standards in selected secondary schools by awarding grants-in-aid in line with the recommendations of the Lewis-Jones Report. Nevertheless, the overall quality of the teaching force in both primary and secondary schools left much to be desired. As the Director of Education remarked in 1960: 'The number of children in school is growing faster than the number of trained teachers available to teach them, and the employment of untrained teachers is therefore on the increase ...'.¹⁴ In 1960 there were 2516 teachers in Fiji's primary and secondary schools, of whom 2038 were classed as 'registered' or trained; another 82 had undergone four-month emergency training courses in infant teaching; and the remaining 396 were classified as 'recognized' or untrained. The overall proportion of untrained teachers in the total teaching force had been much higher at the start of the 1950s. Then it declined, but after the mid-1950s it began to rise again as shown in Table 6 below. The growth in the number of untrained teachers was most apparent at the secondary level, which was to be expected in view of the very rapid increase in the number of secondary schools during the late 1950s. The trend is illustrated in Table 7. It was not only the increase in the number of untrained teachers that was causing concern in the late 1950s, but also the low educational standards of entrants to the teachers' college, despite the fact that applications for admission outnumbered those accepted by five to one for most of the latter part of the decade. As Table 8 indicates, there was a slight improvement towards the end of the 1950s, but there was still much room for improvement.

¹⁴Department of Education, *Report for the Year 1960*, p.23.

Table 5

Successes in external secondary school examinations 1956, 1960

Year	Total secondary school roll	New Zealand School Certificate		New Zealand University Entrance		Cambridge Overseas School Certificate	
		Sat (no.)	Passed (no.)	Sat (no.)	Passed (no.)	Sat (no.)	Passed (no.)
1956	2713	31	20	36	14	312	155
1960	5439	87	53	77	54	488	261

Source: Reports of the Department of Education.

Table 6

Proportion of untrained teachers in Fiji in the 1950s

Year	Teachers (total no.)	Untrained teachers (no.)	Untrained teachers (%)
1950	1556	367	23.5
1952	1695	336	19.8
1955	1708	217	12.7
1957	2055	316	15.3
1960	2516	396	15.5

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education.

Table 7

Growth in the number of untrained teachers in Fiji's
secondary schools in the 1950s

Year	Secondary teachers (no.)	Untrained secondary teachers (no.)	Untrained secondary teachers (%)
1950	105	10	9.5
1955	104	35	33.6
1960	251	87	34.6

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education.

Table 8

Academic standards of entrants accepted for teachers' college
1954, 1957, 1960

Academic qualifications on admission	1954	1957	1960
Passed University Entrance	—	—	3
Passed School Certificate	—	—	35
Completed four years post- primary education	4	52	7
Passed Fiji Junior Certificate	—	—	60
Completed two years post- primary education	11	36	9
Primary education only	69	10*	3
Totals	84	98	117

*These were either 'recognized' teachers or ex-servicemen and were thus much better material than the average class 8 boy or girl who formed the majority of the 1954 intake.

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education.

By 1960 the annual output of trained teachers from Nasinu Teachers' College numbered 109. A further eight teachers graduated in that year from the Corpus Christi Training College, the first to do so since the opening of this Roman Catholic institution in 1958. The combined output was hardly sufficient to cope with the burgeoning primary and secondary rolls, and there was no foreseeable short-term solution to the problem. Even if funds had been available to build another training college, there would have been a dearth of suitable applicants. In other words, the Education Department had no choice but to enter the 1960s knowing full well that it had little hope of avoiding a serious decline in the quality of schooling offered in many independent schools. The dilemma was familiar to Directors of Education in most developing countries in the 1960s.

The capital and recurrent costs of education in Fiji were also rising rapidly and giving cause for serious concern by 1960. Between 1946 and 1960 the net cost of education to the Government rose 800 per cent, with the most rapid increases occurring in the period 1954-60. The Director of Education voiced his grave concern at the spiralling costs of education in a speech on the Education Estimates for 1959, the first year in which net costs passed the £1 million mark.¹⁵ Bearing in mind the fact that private means contributed to at least one-third of the total cost of education, he went on to say that he was apprehensive lest social services outstripped the country's ability to pay for them. In the light of the rapid expansionist phase that education was passing through in the late 1950s, the Director could see no end to the constant increases that he would have to ask for year after year. His fears were shared by the Legislative Council's Fiscal Review Committee. In its report for 1958, the Committee argued that the direct returns received from social services in the form of fees should be increased and that further expansion of such services should be deferred until such time as the Colony was producing more income to enable it to pay for the services.¹⁶ 'At present', the Committee concluded, 'the community is getting a standard of services which is not justified by Fiji's economic circumstances'.

¹⁵FLCD 10 Dec. 1958, pp.502-3.

¹⁶FLCP 27/1958.

This view was strongly endorsed by the Burns Commission,¹⁷ which reported in February 1960 on the prospects for the economic development of Fiji. General educational questions did not come within the Commission's terms of reference, but it did consider the cost of education in relation to the Colony's overall financial capacity and development prospects. Compared with many tropical colonies, the Commission considered Fiji's educational provisions to be impressive, but it questioned whether the quality of education was improving along with the quantity. Bearing in mind that educational expenditure amounted to 14 per cent of the Colony's total recurrent budget for 1958, the Commission concluded that Fiji would be unwise to spend a still greater proportion of the Colony's resources on education in the immediate future. A Legislative Council committee set up in 1960 to look into the cost of medical and educational services reached similar conclusions.¹⁸ The committee estimated that medical and educational services were accounting for 31 per cent of the Colony's recurrent expenditure. In view of the rapid rate of population growth, the committee claimed that even to maintain existing standards of education it would be necessary to devote an ever-increasing percentage of annual expenditure to education. Unless economic productivity was increased or extra taxes were levied, more money could be made available only at the expense of other services rendered by the Government on behalf of the community, including those designed to increase economic productivity. The Governor, Sir Kenneth Maddocks, in his address to the Legislative Council in November 1961, also referred to the financial problems facing education and the Colony in general.¹⁹ He claimed that Fiji had made enormous quantitative progress in education since the end of World War II, in spite of a rise of 54 per cent in the total population between 1946 and 1960. During that time, he remarked, the number of children attending school on a full-time basis had risen by no less than 123 per cent, but as he took pains to point out, further progress would be dependent on the means to pay for it.

¹⁷*Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Natural Resources and Population Trends of the Colony of Fiji, 1959, FLCP 1/1960, p.109.*

¹⁸FLCP 38/1961.

¹⁹FLCD 24 Nov. 1961, p.7.

As Fiji entered the 1960s, finance was only one of the major problems facing its educational administrators. Equally important was the concern expressed over the quality of education, both in terms of the internal efficiency of the schools and the type of schooling offered. Ideally, the pace of educational development should be governed by the supply of trained teachers, buildings and equipment, and teaching materials. In practice, both in Fiji and elsewhere in the South Pacific, political and economic considerations could not be ignored, and during the 1960s they exerted a very strong influence on the nature and extent of educational development. In retrospect, Governor Maddocks was justified in asserting that Fiji had made impressive progress in education since 1945 — by all accounts education was in a primitive state in Fiji before the war — but for those people in close contact with the schools, the qualitative shortcomings were disturbing. Teaching was still very formal; rote learning was common; classes, especially in the junior part of the school, were large and often overcrowded; teaching materials and classroom equipment were in short supply; many local school committees were still a source of anxiety to the Education Department because of their lack of operating efficiency; and the curriculum, particularly at the secondary level, was still essentially very academic and tied to the requirements of external examination prescriptions. Moreover, the high rate of population growth of the post-war years was rapidly intensifying the pressure on the Colony's primary schools, and by 1960 the seemingly insatiable social demand for schooling was spilling over into the secondary schools. At no stage since the abortive Ten Year Plan had the country's educational administrators really had a chance to 'get on top' of their problems. Instead, they seemed forever to be resorting to *ad hoc* measures and expediciencies to tide them through endless emergencies brought about by a lack of trained teachers, inadequate school buildings and financial resources, and the vagaries of private enterprise on which they depended for the establishment of schools. In the circumstances it was well-nigh impossible for the Education Department to enforce with any rigour the many and varied regulations at its command. Instead, faced with the mounting tide of new enrolments at the primary level, the Department resorted to whatever measures would enable it to ride out the tide. This inevitably led to many inferior and impoverished schools, but at least it could be argued that they were better than none. To argue that the Education Department could have done otherwise is to ignore

the realities of the situation. As it was, many thousands of young children, and especially Indians, received little or no schooling in Fiji in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The supply of schools was dependent on finance and trained teachers, and both were in desperately short supply for most of the period. There was certainly no possibility whatsoever that the Government could have financed a system of state or public schools, as suggested by Stephens. In the circumstances, it was fortunate for all concerned that the voluntary agencies and the public in general were prepared to shoulder the burden of providing schools for the growing school-aged population.

By 1960 the disparity between Indian and Fijian enrolments at the primary level was no longer a serious problem, but the disparity in the educational attainments of the two races, especially at the higher secondary level, was a growing cause of concern. Slight progress had been achieved in the area of multiracial schooling with the setting up of pre-university classes at the Suva Grammar Schools, as recommended by Lewis-Jones, and the training of teachers of all races at Nasinu Teachers' College. The need to develop technical education had been recognised in the late 1950s, but the proposed new institute had still not been started, although a large Colonial Development and Welfare Grant had been approved for the project. By 1960 the sexual imbalance, especially in Indian primary enrolments, was also rapidly disappearing, but at the secondary level it remained a feature of both Indian and Fijian enrolments. Finally, the size of the Education Department's staff expanded greatly in the period 1946-60, as did the scope of its operations. In 1947 the total administrative establishment numbered thirty-six, including nine organizing teachers. By 1960 the Education Department employed a staff of eighty-nine. Moreover, the three education districts established in 1947 had become four by 1960, and the creation of a fifth was planned for 1961. Nevertheless, the Director of Education was still concerned about the lack of adequate contact between the Education Department's field staff and many outlying schools. Lack of regular inspection and consultation with teachers and local school committees was inevitably reflected in poor quality schooling.

Chapter 9

The early sixties and the Fifth Development Plan

In the 1960s the pace of educational growth quickened throughout the 'developing' countries of the world. This was mainly attributable to the growing wave of parental demand for schooling for their children brought about by an increasing recognition that people were not necessarily forever bound to the wheel. Education was seen as the means to achieving a richer quality of life. At the same time economists began to accord recognition to education and to emphasize it as a vital component in the promotion of national development. It was the writings of men like T.W. Schultz, W.A. Lewis, V.E. Komarov and John Vaizey that paved the way for the stress placed on human capital formation and manpower planning.¹ The late 1950s and early 1960s also saw the formulation of the 'Santiago', 'Karachi', and 'Addis Ababa' plans which provided broad quantitative targets for educational planners in the developing countries of South America, Asia and Africa respectively.² While there was no such plan for the South Pacific area, the various island territories all experienced a rapid development of their education systems during the 1960s. In Fiji the quickening pace of educational growth of the 1950s broke into a distinct gallop in the 1960s, despite the pessimism of the Burns Commission and the Monetary and Fiscal Review Committees. This was attributed to a further rapid population increase,³

¹For an introduction to the work of these and other economists on the economic importance of education, see *Readings in the Economics of Education*, Unesco, Paris, 1968.

²Whitehead, Problems of educational growth in underdeveloped countries, pp.9-35.

³The 1966 Census (FLCP 9/1968) showed that Fiji's population increased by 37.9 per cent between 1956 and 1966 (see Appendix F). The Fijian and Indian populations increased by 3.2 and 3.6 per cent respectively. By 1966, 45 per cent of the Fijian and 50 per cent of the Indian populations were under 15 years of age. Of the total population of 476,727, children under 15 years comprised 47 per cent.

a favourable and sustained rate of economic growth which Fiji shared with other countries, a further marked upswing in the social demand for education, especially at the secondary level, which the Government was reluctant to oppose, and the Government's firm commitment to the belief that educated manpower was an essential component in the political, economic and social growth of the Colony.

In the early 1960s national development planning in Fiji took on a new and more dynamic perspective in keeping with the trends elsewhere in the 'developing areas' of the world. Henceforth, as the Governor, Sir Derek Jakeway, remarked, the Colony's overall objective would be to gear the national education system as closely as possible to the need for trained manpower at all levels.⁴ Planning on a national basis to promote economic and social growth theoretically started with the Ten Year Plan of the immediate post-war period. Subsequently, there were three other five-year plans covering the periods 1956-60, 1961-65, and 1964-68.⁵ Each of these plans consisted essentially of capital development budgets for the public sector of the economy. With the exception of the last of these plans, they were heavily oriented towards the social and infrastructural sectors of the economy. The Fifth Plan, commonly referred to as DPV, covering the years 1966-70, was a departure from previous ventures.⁶ It was drawn up within the framework of a more comprehensive view of the economy and its problems, and a more integrated program resulted. Its successor DPVI, covering the years 1971-75, was an even more ambitious attempt to co-ordinate the expansion of the various sectors of the economy.

The rapid growth of education in the 1960s was accompanied by an array of familiar problems including the accentuation of the qualitative deficiencies of the school system. Long-term planning was very difficult and for most of the decade the Department of Education could do little more than continue to provide a series of *ad hoc* arrangements to tide the territory over successive problems. In 1965 the Director of Education (Rodger) was moved to remark that the education system was growing so fast that ideas which seemed adequate for Fiji's needs a few years

⁴FLCD 27 Nov. 1964, p.469.

⁵*Fiji's Sixth Development Plan 1971-1975*, p.5.

⁶FLCP 16/1966.

before were not only no longer adequate, but would be even less so by the time they were implemented in a few years' time.⁷

The speed and extent of educational growth in Fiji in the first half of the 1960s can be judged from the graphs in Appendices A and B. Primary school enrolments rose by over 25 per cent, which was similar to the rate of increase in the preceding five-year period. Secondary enrolments slowed down in comparison with the rapid surge of the late 1950s, but they still rose by 30 per cent, with the result that by 1966 the total roll was almost 8500. If all students in teachers' colleges, and those enrolled in technical and vocational courses are included, total combined primary and secondary enrolments increased by more than 27 per cent to over 108,000 during the period 1960-66. By 1966 the Colony employed over 3300 teachers, an increase of 30 per cent in five years. The cost of education also rose rapidly, although in real terms the percentage of government expenditure allocated to education remained fairly constant, as illustrated in Appendix E. By 1966, gross government expenditure on education amounted to almost \$4.7 million, an increase of 52 per cent in six years. Recurrent costs rose even more rapidly to almost \$3.9 million, an increase of 62 per cent over the same period. This was partly accounted for by a series of measures introduced in 1965 to reduce the cost of education to parents and voluntary agencies. These included a reduction in the contribution made by school committees towards trained teachers' salaries from 25 to 10 per cent; reductions in tuition and boarding fees at Government primary schools and in boarding fees at Government secondary schools; and the remission of fees in Government secondary schools and their replacement by a free-place scheme for both Government and aided secondary schools, by which 695 pupils were initially to be awarded free or partly free places at a cost of about £20,000. In 1966 a further three secondary schools were added to the grant-aided list, bringing the total to sixteen. The number of educational institutions in Fiji also increased from 616 to 689 between 1961 and 1966. This figure included a third teacher training establishment, the Fulton Missionary College, run by the Seventh Day Adventist Mission, a new high school at Lautoka, and the new Derrick Technical Institute in Suva. In keeping with the increasing

⁷FLCD 8 Dec. 1965, p.504.

responsibilities of the Department of Education, the number of local administrative districts had risen to six by 1966.

Unfortunately, however, successive annual reports of the Department of Education still highlighted a variety of qualitative problems including the high drop-out rates between classes 5 and 8 in the primary schools, the lack of adequate provision for technical and vocational training, the employment of a growing number of untrained teachers, the poor quality of English teaching in most schools, the large and increasing number of pupils being admitted into secondary schools who had failed to pass the entrance examination, and, finally, the wide disparity between the educational attainments of Indians and Fijians.

Table 9, which compares enrolments in class 5 with those in class 8 three years later over the period 1956-66, shows that the crude wastage rate, which does not differentiate those pupils repeating grades or cases of accelerated promotion, was still a major cause of concern, but the Department of Education could derive some satisfaction from the fact that the rate of wastage had dropped by almost a half, despite an increase in class 5 enrolments of over 25 per cent. The Department of Education offered no reasons for the reduction in wastage at the upper primary level, but it probably reflected the increasing value being placed on education by Fijian and Indian parents alike. Moreover, the general improvement in the economic prosperity of the Colony may also have meant that parents were finding it less of a financial burden to keep their children at school longer. It was also becoming increasingly apparent that higher educational qualifications were being demanded for a wide variety of jobs. The teachers' colleges, for example, were not accepting entrants without secondary schooling and the same applied in a wide variety of Government positions.

At the secondary level, enrolments were characterized by a high drop-out rate after form 4 and also after form 5A, as shown in Table 10. The figures also show the preponderance of boys at every level of the secondary schools, and especially at the level of 5B, and above. The Director of Education outlined what he considered to be the main reasons for 'too few pupils getting through to the top' in a letter addressed to the Suva Chamber of Commerce, which had earlier complained that the return on education was poor

Table 9
Crude wastage rates in classes 5 to 8 during the period
1956-66

Year	Class	Roll number	Wastage	Percentage
1956	5	8221	3422	41.6
1959	8	4799		
1957	5	8642	3088	35.7
1960	8	5554		
1958	5	9103	2808	30.8
1961	8	6295		
1959	5	9028	2686	29.7
1962	8	6432		
1960	5	9628	2775	28.8
1963	8	6853		
1961	5	9658	2336	24.2
1964	8	7322		
1962	5	10,100	2296	22.7
1965	8	7804		
1963	5	10,299	2281	22.1
1966	8	8018		

Source: Report of the Department of Education 1966, p.15.

for the large expenditure incurred.⁸ The Director attached major importance to the wide geographical scatter of the Fijian population, which meant that the average Fijian primary school was very small — so small in fact that only one in ten had sufficient class 8 pupils to justify a separate class 8 teacher — and hence the majority of Fijian pupils in the upper primary grades were taught in composite classes. 'Composite classes are all very well if the teacher is unusually competent', remarked the Director, 'but the average Fijian teacher is not unusually competent, and his children's chances of doing well in the Secondary Schools Examination are therefore jeopardized'. He also remarked on the substantial number of children with good marks in the Secondary Schools Entrance Examination who did not go on to secondary school, presumably because of their parents' inability to pay school fees, especially if, as was often the case, boarding fees were an additional expense. The Director also claimed that too many bright pupils were leaving school immediately after passing School Certificate

Table 10

Pupils enrolled in each form of the secondary schools
1963, 1966

Form	1963			1966		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Form 3	1412	1014	2426	1881	1478	3359
Form 4 ^a	1554	1036	2590	1924	1356	3280
Form 5B	414	197	611	533	306	839
Form 5A	448	157	605	461	228	689
Form 6B	89	30	119	186	64	250
Form 6A	23	4	27	38	11	49
Totals	3940	2438	6378	5023	3443	8466

^aForm 4 rolls are higher than form 3 rolls because of pupils repeating form 4 in order to obtain the Fiji Junior Leaving Certificate.

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education for 1963 and 1966.

⁸FDEF 24/23 — 11/89.

instead of going on to the sixth form. 'The reasons are various, but mainly financial — either they have got to earn money to pay school fees for younger brothers and sisters, or they are tempted by the high initial salaries now being offered to School Certificate holders in both the public and private sectors of the economy ...'. In the light of what he had said about the failure of many able youngsters to go on to secondary school, he could have added that the high drop-out rate after form 4 was also a reflection of the poor quality of many third form entrants. By the end of their fourth form year it was clear that many pupils had no chance of passing the School Certificate examination and so they left school. The poor quality of teaching and overcrowded classes and lack of equipment in many secondary schools also contributed to the drop-out rate.

In his letter to the Chamber of Commerce, the Director of Education also referred to the 'academic bias' of most secondary schools. He stated that they were trying to make 'academic' school leavers out of material which, for the most part, was wholly unsuited for admission into academic secondary schools. He admitted that it was very difficult to persuade pupils and their parents that they were not fitted for academic courses, and even more so to persuade school committees to provide expensive equipment like typewriters and sewing machines, adequate land for agricultural training, and smaller classes for practical courses. Nevertheless, he was sure that a shift in emphasis in secondary schooling was necessary if it was to be geared to the Colony's manpower needs. The number of pupils entering the secondary schools each year was adequate in his opinion, but because of the relatively low quality of many entrants far too few satisfactorily completed a full secondary course and emerged with a worthwhile practical or academic qualification.

The number of untrained teachers in the schools, particularly at the secondary level, continued to grow in the first half of the 1960s as school rolls rose steadily. By 1966 there were 779 untrained staff in the schools. Of the 358 teachers in secondary schools only 188, or 52 per cent, were university graduates, and of them only 70 per cent had a professional or training qualification in addition to a degree. Of the non-graduates, 85 were untrained, and 65 of them were employed in private non-grant aided schools.⁹

⁹Figures derived from the Department of Education, *Report for the Year 1966*, p.33.

Potentially perhaps the most serious problem, not only for the long-term growth of education in Fiji but also for the future social, economic, and political life of the territory, was the persistent and widening gap in the educational attainments of Fijians and Indians at the secondary level. The extent of the problem can be gauged from the following figures. In 1963 there were 1698 Fijian and 1609 Indian candidates for the Secondary Schools Entrance Examination. Of those, only 288 Fijians scored 50 per cent or more compared with 618 Indians. These figures were partly attributable to the poor quality of teaching in the higher classes of many primary schools, both Indian and Fijian, but they also reflected the point made by the Director of Education concerning the large number of composite classes at the upper levels of the majority of Fijian primary schools. Three years later, in 1966, the pass rates for both groups had improved significantly, but the disparity between the two races had widened still further. Of the 2535 Fijian candidates, 669 or approximately a quarter of them passed. By comparison, 2603 Indians entered for the examination and 1315 or half of them passed. The educational 'gap' widened still further, especially in terms of gross numbers, at the respective levels of the Fiji Junior Certificate, School Certificate, and the University Entrance examinations, as illustrated in Tables 11, 12 and 13. In terms of relative performance there appeared to be little difference between the two races at the School Certificate level. The Director of Education concluded from this 'that if only we could get much greater numbers of Fijians up to that level we would be well on the way towards solving the problem. The trouble quite obviously lies at the upper primary and lower secondary levels and it is there that counter-measures must be concentrated'.¹⁰

The Department of Education's annual report for 1966 attributed the poor educational achievements of the Fijians to a variety of causes. The most important related to the geographical scatter of the Fijian population already mentioned. Three adverse effects were claimed to stem from this. First, the size of the average Fijian primary school was about half that of the average Indian primary school. Nearly half the class 8s in Indian primary schools qualified for a separate teacher, whereas in 1966, six out of seven Fijian primary schools had class 8s so small that their teachers had to be shared with one, two, and sometimes

¹⁰*ibid.*, p.6.

Table 11
Fiji Junior Certificate examination results 1963-66

Year	Fijians			Indians		
	Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed	%
1963	426	159	37.3	1019	452	44.3
1964	435	135	31.0	1182	455	38.5
1965	576	166	28.8	1201	520	43.3
1966 ^a	718	179(289)	24.9(40.2)	1462	700(800)	47.9(60.2)

^a In 1966 a 'C' Certificate was introduced for the first time, and the figures in parentheses include those pupils gaining 'C' Certificates. The figures not in parentheses refer to grade 'A' and 'B' passes only, and are thus comparable with those of earlier years.

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education for 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966.

Table 12
School Certificate (Cambridge Overseas and New Zealand Combined)
examination results 1963-66

Year	Fijians			Indians		
	Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed	%
1963	105	67	63.8	402	246	61.2
1964	172	116	67.4	422	285	67.5
1965	139	83	59.7	516	345	66.9
1966	172	112	65.1	607	384	63.3

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education for 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966.

Table 13
University Entrance examination results 1963-66

Year	Fijians			Indians		
	Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed	%
1963	31	8	25.8	59	29	49.1
1964	32	12	37.5	59	24	40.7
1965	41	17	41.5	68	45	66.2
1966	45	16	35.5	106	61	57.5

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education for 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966.

as many as three lower classes. For several years the Department of Education had tried to persuade neighbouring Fijian villages to combine the upper classes of their primary schools, but as the Director of Education had remarked at a meeting of the Fijian Teachers' Association in 1964, the Department's efforts had met with little success.¹¹ Apparently Fijian parochialism had proved to be far stronger than expected and the exercise had bogged down from the start.

The second main effect of the far-flung nature of the Fijian population was the difficulty of providing adequate inspection and supervision of the schools. Fijian primary schools were scattered over fifty-five different islands, many of them remote from the mainstream of life, and it was impossible for the field staff of the Department of Education to visit them regularly or as frequently as the more readily accessible Indian primary schools. The main problem was sea transport. About 130 Fijian schools could be reached only by sea and the Education Department's sole, small and very old vessel was not allowed to travel to the outer islands. Furthermore, there was no immediate prospect of any replacement vessel. In order to visit the outlying schools at all, field staff had to travel by commercial shipping — an irregular and inconvenient arrangement.

The third and final effect of the scattered nature of the Fijian population concerned secondary schooling. For those Fijian children who did qualify to go to secondary schools, boarding facilities were almost a necessity, but until 1965 boarding fees in Government secondary boarding schools were far beyond the reach of the average Fijian. The reduction of fees and the free and partly-free place scheme introduced in 1965 were designed to overcome the difficulty.

There were other factors not related to the geographical distribution of the population which also militated against Fijians performing well in the Secondary Schools Entrance examination. In most Fijian schools there was a shortage of textbooks and essential school equipment which was apparently more pronounced than in Indian schools. The Director of Education commented that 'It may be that the average Fijian's "thirst for education" is less pronounced

¹¹FDEF 14/3 — 111/11.

than that of the average Indian; certainly his purchasing power is less'.¹² The Director also claimed that one of the main causes of shortages of equipment in rural Fijian schools was the all-too-prevalent though fully understandable tendency to charge purely nominal tuition fees or even none at all, and to depend on the school's financial requirements being met by the proceeds from donations and fund-raising functions, a practice which had not always proved successful. The less favourable home conditions of the average rural Fijian child also gave rise to a lack of academic achievement:

Few children in Fiji enjoy ideal home conditions but more so than those of other races, Fijian children suffer from inadequate lighting at night, comparatively long distances between home and school, and — more important, perhaps — inadequate transport facilities (if, indeed, any at all) to get them to school, with the result that far too many Fijian children start the school day already physically exhausted

The desperate shortage of Fijian primary teachers with appropriate academic qualifications also contributed to the poor quality of Fijian primary schooling. A high proportion of Indian class 8s were taught by teachers who had passed School Certificate, but few of the teachers in charge of the Fijian class 8s had done likewise. Furthermore, there were no signs of any solution to the problem. 'There is, indeed,' said the Director of Education, 'an appalling dearth of Fijian male teacher-training applicants with any recognisable qualifications at all'. To overcome the problem Indian teachers were being posted to take charge of the upper classes of what were essentially Fijian primary schools.

At the secondary level, one of the main factors retarding the progress of many Fijian pupils was thought to be the replacement in Fijian secondary schools of qualified and experienced expatriate teachers by inexperienced Fijians. School principals could give more of their time to helping, guiding and supervising the work of these younger and inexperienced teachers only if they had extra administrative assistance and if their schools were fully staffed, but neither of these conditions appeared likely to be achieved in the near future.

¹²Department of Education, *Report for the Year 1966*, p.7.

The Director of Education saw no obvious explanation for the low pass rates achieved by Fijians in the University Entrance examination. It might be, he suggested, that the sixth forms of Fijian schools were taught by expatriates on short-term contracts, whereas there was normally much more 'permanency' in the staffing of non-Fijian schools. It might also be that Fijians in the sixth forms of Fijian schools like Adi Cakobau and Queen Victoria were not subject to any racial competition, which was regarded as a healthy and beneficial feature of work in multiracial schools. A recent comment by Hayden, mentioned in an earlier chapter in connection with a similar problem during his directorship, may also be relevant. He stressed the fact that most Fijians lived in a settled hierarchical society which was still relatively intact. As such, it was easy to go through the mechanics of a simple education system knowing full well that sooner or later one would enter upon a traditional life centred on the village and farming. The 'completely organised life' of the Fijian contrasted markedly with the individualism of the Indian. The latter came from a tradition in which a major aim in life was to use education as a means of escape from the 'bullock patch' and the drudgery of rural life. This incentive and drive were seemingly lacking in the Fijians. By the mid-1960s it is true that times had changed and Fijian leaders were aware of the need to extend higher educational opportunities throughout Fijian society, but social attitudes ingrained over many decades are not altered in a day nor, for that matter, is the complex interdependence of the tribal community and its communal outlook on life.

Clearly, there were no easy solutions to the 'Fijian educational problem'. The Director of Education hoped ultimately to eliminate the problem of small upper primary classes by reducing the length of primary schooling to six years. In the meantime, he proposed to continue with efforts to achieve more amalgamations of upper classes in Fijian primary schools, to improve and extend the techniques of multi-class teaching, especially for Fijian teachers, to continue appointing Indian teachers to Fijian schools and, lastly, to appoint an extra visiting teacher to each of the six education districts as from the start of 1967, primarily for work in the senior classes of Fijian primary schools. At the secondary level, it was hoped to expand the size of both the Adi Cakobau and Queen Victoria schools, to improve the salary structure for trained graduate teachers, to improve in-service courses for teachers, and to increase

substantially the provision of funds for secondary school building grants. As might have been predicted, improving the educational achievements of the Fijians was to be a major aim of the 1966-70 Development Plan.

The rapid expansion of schooling in the late fifties and early sixties heightened the problems associated with the long-standing lack of adequate supervision of the everyday running of the schools by the Department of Education, despite the creation of additional education districts and the employment of more field staff. The scattered and often remote locations of so many schools and the inherent difficulties of travel seemed to create insurmountable problems. Moreover, the morale of Departmental field staff was not strengthened by remarks like those passed by S.M. Koya, an Indian Council member, who has subsequently become leader of the Federation Party. He claimed that the Department's field staff were not doing enough to help the committees running the schools.¹³ Their activities, he said, were purely confined to staff matters, to checking the curriculum and speaking to the management boards on the question of extensions to the roll. He suggested that the Education Department officers should offer greater assistance to those people who went out collecting money through the assignment of cane crops and the holding of bazaars and social evenings.

District Education officers also had to contend with considerable outside influence in the running of local educational matters. For example, the District Education Officer in Ba complained to the Director of Education that the transfer of teachers in his district was often subject to the interference of school committees, members of the Legislative Council and other influential persons, all of whom undermined his discipline.¹⁴

Local school committees also worked under very difficult conditions, especially in rural locations, where lack of money was a chronic worry. Some indication of the range of problems and concerns expressed by local school committees can be gauged from the contents of a letter written to the

¹³FDEF 18/2 - (T.C.)/79 Extract from the Adjournment debate in the Legislative Council, 1 Nov. 1963.

¹⁴*ibid.*, 18/2 - (T.C.)/96 District Education Officer, Ba to the Director of Education, 31 Mar. 1964.

Minister for Social Services by the manager of the Indian Shantiniketan Pathshala school.¹⁵ He complained of the dearth of secondary educational opportunities for rural Indians whose parents could not afford to send their children to Suva or Nausori, of the poor accommodation for teachers in rural areas, which resulted in frequent staffing shortages, and of poor school libraries. He then spoke of the poor water supplies at his school — 'The children have to drink dirty water and they become sick' — and of the many rural schools that lacked sufficient school furniture. Moreover, in winter, rural roads were often closed by bad weather, with the result that teachers asked for transfers or left school early on normal working days. Finally, he mentioned how hard it was to get school fees from poor parents. Apparently almost 70 per cent of the children had not paid last year's school fees. The parents were poor and their crops had been totally destroyed in last year's floods and he didn't know how to demand fees from them. He could also have mentioned the constant difficulty of getting trained teachers and providing them with suitable accommodation and the continued necessity for many schools to operate double sessions.

The 1966 Census confirmed the fact that about 6300 children in the Colony were still not receiving any form of schooling. Previously when members of the Legislative Council had raised the question of the large number of children of primary school age not attending school it had been possible for the Department of Education to point out that many children did not start school until they were eight or nine years old and that many left prematurely at the age of nine, ten or eleven. Hence, it was argued that most children did attend school for some period of their childhood. The 1966 Census confirmed the Director of Education's suspicion that the method hitherto used to calculate the inter-censal estimates of the size of the 6-13 year age group resulted in an underestimation of at least 5 per cent. The Census showed that there were in fact 111,240 children in this category compared with the official estimate of 105,000 arrived at a year earlier.

This disclosure heightened the long-standing debate between those who believed that the Colony's prime educational aim should be compulsory primary schooling for all and those who advocated a more balanced distribution of the country's

¹⁵*ibid.*, 18/19/5 n.d.

resources between different educational levels. In view of the fact that the majority of the 6300 children not attending school were Indians, it is not surprising that Indian spokesmen were foremost in their support for compulsory schooling. The Director of Education agreed that it should be the Colony's long-term objective, but as a more immediate and practical aim he advocated the provision of schools for all those who wanted them. 'There are still a lot of children who cannot get into schools', he claimed, 'and who do want to go to school; and I do think we should fix them up first before we go in for compulsory education'.¹⁶

The Government's reliance on grant-aided and private schools at the secondary level also created problems in terms of the distribution of educational opportunities and the efficient utilization of accommodation. This point was commented upon in 1965 by the Department of Education's newly appointed planning officer.¹⁷ He claimed that in 1964 many secondary school classes were under strength, especially at the fifth form level and above. This was clearly wasteful at a time when there was a great demand for secondary schooling, and he suggested that some form of zoning or secondary school catchment areas might be introduced along with stricter government control of entry to secondary schools. However, as was pointed out by another officer of the Education Department, any form of zoning was next to impossible as long as most schools were independent.¹⁸ Moreover, until such time as the schools were all run by the government and education was free, educational variations were bound to persist, and parents quite naturally would wish to reserve the right to send their children to the schools of their choice.

The nature and scope of teacher training within Fiji also came under critical review in the early 1960s as greater demands were put upon the system. Despite the existence of three training colleges in the Colony, the vast majority of teachers were still trained at the Government college at Nasinu. For example, in 1966 ninety-one teachers graduated from Nasinu compared with seven from

¹⁶FLCD 28 Sept. 1960, p.211.

¹⁷FDEF 58/1/1.

¹⁸*ibid.*, 58/1/2.

Corpus Christi and nine from Fulton.¹⁹ At the Education Officers' conference in 1963, Nasinu College was criticized on two main counts.²⁰ First, the quality of instruction was questioned. It was claimed that lectures in most subjects were akin to ordinary lessons with the students acting as pupils, and that little was mentioned about teaching methods and 'tricks of the trade'. The second major criticism concerned the rundown condition of the college buildings.²¹ It was generally agreed that they were grossly inadequate as well as old. Both criticisms were justified, but at the same time it was true that the college had operated in difficult conditions since the war. When first established, it had taken over the original site and buildings of the Queen Victoria School, and for many years great difficulty was experienced in attracting students with adequate scholastic backgrounds. Hence much of the 'training course' had to be devoted to extending the general education of the students. The college also experienced constant difficulties in attracting and retaining well-qualified expatriate staff. The Fifth Development Plan (1966-70) provided for the rebuilding of the college but this was not to be completed until the start of 1973. During the mid-1960s there was also talk of a second government teachers' college being built at Lautoka, but nothing eventuated because of a lack of money.

The increased emphasis placed by the Government upon education as an economic investment in the mid-sixties also heightened the problem of the non-academic primary school-leaver. As A.D. Patel, the Minister for Social Services, said to the Legislative Council in 1964:

... our biggest problem is the problem of the child who has completed his education up to Class 8, and failed in the Secondary Entrance Examination. If that child is not going to gain entrance to any secondary school, he becomes both a social and an economic misfit.²²

¹⁹Department of Education, *Report for the Year 1966*, p.27.

²⁰FDEF 18/2 - (T.C.)/31.

²¹*ibid.*, 18/2 - (T.C.)/44B.

²²FLCD 10 Dec. 1964, p.629.

He went on to stress the need to make primary education more practical and not merely a stepping stone on the ladder of academic education. This would involve revising the syllabuses for classes 7 and 8 and introducing more practical subjects 'which would give the student a training in some subject that will help him in gaining his livelihood after leaving the school'.

The idea was not new, but public demand that primary education be a ladder to secondary education, allied to the high costs of introducing practical or vocational training, had prevented any major headway since the 1940s. Moreover, there was a strong feeling both in the Education Department and amongst the public at large that the primary school was not an appropriate place to impart specifically vocational training. Most children were thought to be too young to be trained as farmers or tradesmen. Furthermore, the wide age range in primary classes was gradually being reduced and the older children once commonly found in classes 7 and 8 were disappearing. The idea of a substantial vocational component in primary education had been voiced quite strongly during Stephens's visit in 1944, but he had rejected it on the grounds that the first requirement was a sound general education on which to build. Once that had been acquired, then employers could provide their own training more cheaply and efficiently than the schools. Instead of doing as Patel suggested, the Director of Education advocated reducing the primary school course to six years and introducing Middle or Junior secondary schools which would 'follow a syllabus specifically designed to produce more competent citizens'.²³ The Director's ideas were subsequently included in the Fifth Development Plan.

Education and Fiji's Development Plan 1966-70

Fiji's Fifth Development Plan included the most comprehensive program for educational development since World War II.²⁴ Nevertheless, in spite of the obvious and deep-seated qualitative deficiencies in the school system, the program of development envisaged for the latter half of the 1960s was still geared essentially to a further expansion

²³*ibid.*, p.638.

²⁴*Fiji Development Plan 1966-70*, vol.4, p.6.

of all aspects of the education system with special emphasis on secondary and vocational education. Measures were included to improve the quality of schooling but they tended to be overshadowed by the persistent social demand for more, rather than better, primary and secondary schools. Some indication of the extent of this demand for schooling can be judged from the fact that the educational planning for DPV was based on a projected 27 per cent increase in primary enrolments and a 50 per cent increase in secondary enrolments, based on 1965 figures. These estimates represented an overall increase of 29 per cent in pupil numbers during the second half of the 1960s. In fact, both primary and secondary enrolments were to exceed these estimates. By 1970 the primary roll had increased by 29 per cent to over 121,000, while secondary numbers totalled almost 16,000, an increase of 125 per cent — one and a half times greater than the original estimate. The combined increase amounted to over 36 per cent.

DPV included five basic objectives at the primary level:

1. to provide schooling for all those 'who wanted it';
2. to reduce the cost of education to parents and so reduce wastage;
3. as a corollary of point two, to increase government involvement in the provision and maintenance of schools;
4. to improve the quality of schooling; and finally,
5. to hand over many existing government schools to voluntary committees.

No attempt was to be made to provide for compulsory education at the primary level, but as the Director of Education had remarked earlier, it was the Government's aim to ensure that facilities existed for those who really wished to attend school. The Government placed major importance on plans to reduce the cost of education to parents. It was widely believed that most of the drop-outs in schools were caused by parents' inability to pay school fees or the need for children to go out to work to help support the family. Hence the decision to reduce fees in *all* schools as and when such reductions became financially possible. It was also planned to abolish contributions from school committees towards teachers' salaries and to issue gradually to all

primary schools, free of charge, approved textbooks, readers and certain items of equipment. However, as the Director of Education pointed out, these measures would not mean fee-free schooling.²⁵ School committees would still have to meet maintenance costs on existing schools and provide a substantial part of the cost of new buildings, furniture and equipment. Building costs were a particularly onerous burden for most school committees, especially in a time of rapid expansion, and DPV had little encouragement to offer in that sphere. It was estimated that Fiji would need about 230 additional classrooms per year during the period of the Plan, but owing to rising building costs the Government did not envisage that it would be able to offer building grants to schools in excess of 20 per cent of the total material outlay. Thus the school committees would have to provide 80 per cent of the cost of building materials and the full cost of labour. It was not surprising, therefore, that many schools improvised with temporary or make-shift accommodation and that the Director of Education spoke of the need to explore the possibilities of developing standard mass-produced prefabricated structures. The increase in government spending on education at all levels necessarily involved the state in more extensive participation in the planning and maintenance of the school system. This trend was to continue in the late sixties and may eventually help pave the way to the creation of a genuine system of public or state schools. Various measures were proposed to improve the quality of primary schooling, including the expansion of the recently introduced system of refresher courses for teachers; the running of special in-service courses for teachers of the English language; the gradual replacement of existing English class readers by a course more suited to Fijian life and conditions; revisions of various subject syllabuses; and the production of local handbooks in all subjects.

Finally, there was also provision for the handing over of some Government primary schools to local school committees. The Director of Education firmly believed that the provision of primary education was not a matter for the central government but for local authorities, supported by generous financial assistance from the Government.²⁶ In part, the Director's views stemmed from his personal belief that

²⁵*ibid.*, p.3.

²⁶FLCD 26 July 1966, p.758.

co-operation between parents and the schools was much stronger in voluntary than in Government institutions, but he was also concerned with a number of apparent anomalies created by the existence of Government schools and also by what he thought to be their adverse effect on parental attitudes towards their children's schooling. The two main anomalies were the remission of fees in cases of extreme hardship, which did not apply to the 87,300 children who attended non-Government schools, and the fact that the maintenance of Government schools was to a large extent undertaken by the Public Works Department, whereas private schools had to bear their maintenance costs out of school fees. One could sympathize with the Director's point of view, especially bearing in mind his English background and the practical difficulties confronting him at a time when it seemed as if Fiji's need for more secondary and vocational education should take precedence in receiving whatever Government funds were available. Moreover, the anomalies that he referred to did appear to accord a privileged position to parents of children attending Government schools. Nevertheless, viewed in the long-term perspective of Fiji's educational development, it is the contention of this study that the creation of a system of state schools is preferable to the continuation of the predominantly voluntary system with all its obvious shortcomings. Seen in this light, the Director's proposal to hand Government schools over to private control did seem contrary to the Colony's future interests and one could readily sympathize with Koya, the outspoken Indian Member of the Legislative Council, who condemned the proposal.²⁷ He argued that, as the Government became more progressive in its ideas and more socially conscious, it ought to look seriously at the state of education and take an ever greater responsibility upon itself to educate the children and build schools. This view was not new — the Indians had been advocating a state system of schools since the 1930s — but as the education system expanded and the scope of the Education Department's responsibilities increased, so the logic of Koya's argument was strengthened. By 1970 the Director's policy had made little headway; the Government still operated twenty-six primary schools, a decrease of three on the 1965 total.

At the secondary level there were also five major objectives:

²⁷FLCD 25 July 1966, p.711.

1. to create a system of Middle Schools;
2. to expand the number of fifth and sixth form places;
3. to improve teachers' salaries;
4. to improve the quality of schooling; and finally,
5. to make a special effort to upgrade the quality of Fijian educational achievement.

The idea of creating Middle Schools was the most innovatory aspect of the educational proposals of DPV. As suggested earlier, the idea appears to have been the Director of Education's personal solution to several long-standing problems. These included the poor quality of teaching in the senior classes of many Fijian district primary schools, the premature primary school-leaver, and the excessive academic bias of most secondary schools. The proposal to establish the new type of school was coupled with the idea of reducing the length of primary schooling from eight to six years, a change which had taken place in many countries since the last world war. The Department of Education claimed that there was growing evidence that all except the academically bright children felt an increasing sense of boredom as they progressed through classes 7 and 8, and that for most children who left school for good after class 8 there was little doubt that the academic bias of the syllabus in the upper primary school was ill-designed to equip them to play an effective part in the life of their country. It was also true that early school-leavers constituted a serious social problem. Many of them were unemployed and their future prospects were bleak. Accordingly it was recommended that a start be made during DPV towards implementing a six-year primary course. Once the scheme was fully operative a child would have two options open upon completion of primary schooling:

- (1) If he wanted to undertake a full secondary academic or technical course up to or beyond School Certificate, he would sit the secondary school entrance examination during his class 6 year. If successful, he would enter the secondary school of his choice at form 1 instead of form 3.
- (2) If he was not interested in, or failed to gain admission to, a full secondary course he would automatically be admitted to a Middle School and undergo a two-year (form 1-2) - or eventually a four-year (form 1-4) course specially designed to provide a more practical training.

The course of work to be followed in Middle Schools was to be essentially practical although it was envisaged that there would be a variety of types of Middle School, depending on the needs of the locality. For example, in urban areas it might prove desirable to add academic streams to help adjoining secondary schools with insufficient space. It was also realized that Middle Schools would be expensive to build and to staff, especially as they would require woodwork and homecraft facilities, and it might be necessary for many of them, particularly in rural areas, to be constructed and managed by the Government. It was also suggested that wherever possible they should be built as day schools.

The attempt to encourage provision for more non-academic courses at the secondary level, which was at the heart of the 'Middle School' idea, was also to be pursued by other means. The Government proposed to offer special building grants for additional 'practical' facilities in schools and to make certain minimum facilities for vocational work a prerequisite for those secondary schools likely to be added to the grant-aided list during the duration of DPV. It was also hoped that the reorganization of the Fiji Junior Certificate examination, which took place in 1965, and which henceforth allowed candidates to offer up to four 'practical' subjects, would also encourage a swing away from predominantly academic course offerings.

The reluctance to pursue technical or vocational subjects at the secondary level was and still is a world-wide problem. It reflects the traditional belief, firmly implanted in developing countries by a long period of colonial rule, that education is the principal means of escape from manual labour. Moreover, no amount of persuasion will break down that belief until the alleged value or worth of technical qualifications is borne out by the salary structure and social status accorded to skilled tradesmen and technicians in comparison with their academically educated fellow countrymen. Perhaps the dilemma facing most developing countries, including Fiji, is best illustrated by an experience related by Dr C.E. Beeby.²⁸ Early in his career as Director-General of Education in New Zealand he sat in a Maori village in the North Island trying to persuade the Maori chiefs of the value of establishing technical courses in the local district high school. The Maoris listened attentively but Beeby's efforts were unsuccessful. Their

²⁸Beeby, *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*, pp.30-31.

ideal of an educated man was based firmly on the 'pakeha' or white man's academic image, which had been transmitted to them by the early missionaries and by successive waves of European settlers. As Beeby recounts:

I retired, defeated, when an old chief, having shrewdly elicited that I had myself taken Latin, clinched the argument with, 'And look where you got to!' The proper reply still eludes me.

In Fiji, the attempt to introduce more vocational work into the secondary schools was to have some success, but the problem still remains essentially unresolved.

The Fiji Government attached major importance to plans to expand fifth and sixth form facilities because they were seen to hold the key to the Colony's economic and social development and the program of localization or replacement of expatriates. Precise manpower requirements by 1970 were not known with any degree of accuracy, but it was clear that even if the 1970 targets of 900 passes in the School Certificate examination and 300 passes at the University Entrance level were to be achieved, the demand for such people would greatly exceed the supply. To increase fifth and sixth form places, it was planned to provide grants to schools to build or extend science laboratories, libraries, and classrooms suitable for advanced studies. It was also expected that the number of pupils passing the secondary schools entrance examination would increase sufficiently to enable the Government to extend the grant-in-aid scheme to a further three hitherto unaided secondary schools each year up to 1970.

The salaries of graduate secondary teachers were also to be increased. During the early 1960s, their scale of remuneration lagged well behind that of other branches of the public service, and because of establishment problems a secondary teacher had no guarantee, however good he might prove to be at his job, that he would progress to the maximum point on the salary scale. The Government accepted the fact that unless well-qualified and experienced staff were attracted to secondary teaching and retained, the money invested in secondary education as a means of promoting national development would be wasted. It was estimated that an additional twenty trained graduate teachers would be needed annually if the projected secondary enrolment totals were to be achieved by 1970, and at the same time the teacher/pupil ratio was to remain at about fifteen to one

in Government schools and to improve to about twenty to one in aided schools, and twenty-five to one in unaided schools. Achievement of these targets was not to be expected unless salaries were increased and more students studying at tertiary institutions abroad could be prevailed upon to take up teaching as a career.

At first glance the teacher-pupil ratios appear quite low when judged by New Zealand or world standards, but one must bear in mind that such figures are averages and they can be misleading. While it is true that many senior secondary classes in Fiji's schools are small by comparison with schools in other countries, the same is not true of classes in the first two years of the secondary course. Moreover, to some extent the size of fifth and sixth form classes in Fiji was artificially low in the mid-1960s because of the high drop-out rate at the end of form 4. It is also worth noting that since DPV was drawn up teacher/pupil ratios have widened appreciably owing to increasing enrolments at the third form level and the greater number of pupils staying on beyond form 4.

Various measures were also proposed in DPV to improve the general quality of secondary schooling. These included a greater concentration on improving the standard of English teaching in third and fourth forms; the introduction of 'new approaches' to the teaching of subjects like mathematics and general science; the provision of additional library and laboratory facilities in Government and aided secondary schools; the appointment of additional sixth form teachers; and the reorganization of the system of refresher courses for teachers to cater for longer and more frequent courses in all subjects. The last point was considered essential if the methods and content of teaching were to be upgraded.

Finally, the problem of Fijian secondary education was singled out for special attention because it was claimed that drastic measures were required if enough well-qualified Fijians were to be produced to occupy a balanced proportion of senior positions in the public and private sectors of the economy. To highlight the problem, the Department of Education pointed out that in 1965 Indian girls outnumbered Fijian boys by three to two in secondary schools. The main causes of the problem have already been outlined, as well as its long-standing nature, and DPV could only offer a number of partial solutions in the short term. These included the amalgamation of small neighbouring schools

wherever possible; the establishment of form 1 and 2 facilities in some existing secondary schools; the creation of a network of Middle Schools; and the greater use of air travel and the acquisition of a larger vessel to enable the Department of Education to improve its services to outlying Fijian primary schools. More drastic remedies were needed for the main problem of how to cater for approximately 150 very small schools in the outer islands and the hinterland of Viti Levu, where amalgamation was geographically impractical; where classes 7 and 8 would continue to be small because the communities they served were small; and where the children would, for many years to come, continue to be deprived of access to Middle or secondary day schools.

The suggested solutions proved to be both controversial and expensive to implement and it is not surprising that few of the ideas were put into effect. It was suggested that the Adi Cakobau school for Fijian girls should be developed into a full seven-year, double stream entry secondary school, and that the Queen Victoria school should be converted into an 'intermediate' boarding school for Fijian boys in forms 1 and 2 only, with about six streams in each form, giving a total roll of about 360 pupils. It was also recommended that the school should be relocated. Sited as it was some fifty miles from Suva, at the end of a tortuous, badly-surfaced road, it was isolated from the mainstream of everyday life in the Colony and for this reason difficulty was experienced in attracting competent staff. To cater for senior Fijian pupils, it was proposed to establish a new quadruple-entry secondary school, providing a five-year course from form 3 to form 7, alongside the Government Teachers' College at Nasinu. It was envisaged that the school would have a roll of between 500 and 550 pupils, with boarding facilities for about two-thirds of that number. The boarding places were to be allocated to those Fijian boys who would have attended the Queen Victoria School. Day school facilities were to be open to pupils of all races. While the logic of these ideas was commendable in the light of the basic problem of how to upgrade Fijian educational achievements, it hardly made allowance for the traditional image of the Queen Victoria School as the apex of the native Fijian school system. Partly for this reason and also on grounds of cost the proposals have never been implemented. One further recommendation was made on the subject of Fijian schooling and that was the appointment of bursars to cope with non-professional administrative affairs. It was pointed out that most principals of Fijian secondary schools were

required to attend to a multitude of administrative matters, especially where schools were run in conjunction with large hostels and farms, with the result that they were unable to devote their time and energy to helping young and inexperienced teachers.

DPV also included proposals for the expansion of technical and teacher training, an increase in the staff of the Department of Education, and the creation of a special testing unit. Technical education was to be developed by enlarging the scope of courses offered at the recently completed Derrick Technical Institute; by extending handcraft and homecraft facilities in existing primary schools; and by the establishment of full secondary technical schools at Ba, Nadi, and Nausori. The expansion of teacher training was complicated by the world-wide trend towards a three- instead of a two-year course. If Fiji was not to postpone the introduction of three-year training indefinitely and sufficient trained teachers were to be produced to meet enrolment estimates for the late 1960s, it was considered necessary to increase the output of teachers from Corpus Christi, the Roman Catholic training college. Accordingly, grants-in-aid were proposed, to be paid to the college to offset additional building and recurrent costs incurred in any expansion. The Director of Education was also anxious to introduce a three-year training course in 1969 and to upgrade the basic entry qualification to a pass in the School Certificate examination rather than the Fiji Junior examination. Looking ahead to the 1970s, he emphasized the need to start the construction of a second Government training college in 1971, especially as DPV made no allowance for reducing the existing shortage of trained teachers. He also stressed the complexity of planning for the future supply of teachers and the need to review the situation afresh each year. A switch from two- to three-year training would inevitably reduce the output of trained teachers in the short run, while the natural wastage of existing trained staff through retirement and other reasons would necessarily increase in the future. At the same time the possibility of compulsory education in the 1970s would increase the demand for teachers and a new training college would take a minimum of about five years before it began to produce teachers, assuming a two-year building program and a three-year training program. On the credit side it might be possible to devise ways of using existing facilities more effectively, while the probable introduction of secondary teacher training in a future university institution would also offer a range of new possibilities.

DPV also recommended the creation of up to ten additional senior administrative positions in the Department of Education to provide for adequate supervision and direction at a time when it was envisaged that many new schools would be started and new ideas introduced. The necessity for reliable selection procedures, especially at the commencement of secondary education, was also emphasized and with it the need for a special testing unit. Financially, DPV provided for an overall increase in the recurrent costs of education of approximately 40 per cent by 1970. Projected capital expenditure, of which educational projects formed a substantial part, totalled £2 million.

The educational component of DPV constituted a comprehensive effort to grapple with the rising tide of social demand for more schooling while at the same time attempting to gear educational growth to economic manpower needs. It was essentially a blueprint for future growth, but it contained no guarantee that all the measures would be implemented during the period of the Plan or at any future stage. Much would inevitably depend on Fiji's future economic growth, which was highly dependent on world sugar prices. The Legislative Council approved DPV in principle but reserved the right to approve individual capital projects as they came up for consideration in the annual Estimates. As far as the Department of Education was concerned, the basic problem seemed to be how to avoid losing control of the school system at a time of rapid expansion of enrolments at both primary and secondary levels. This was no easy task in a situation where the Government was traditionally dependent on voluntary initiative and effort to establish new schools. As the Acting Director of Education remarked to the Colonial Secretary in March 1959, he was in general opposed to the opening of new schools by minor agencies, but he had no weapon 'other than gentle persuasion' with which to implement his view.²⁹ The general public was primarily intent on seeing more schools established. It was the unenviable task of the Department of Education to try to ensure some balance between the quantity and quality of the schooling that was provided.

The problem was clearly uppermost in the mind of the Government when a further educational ordinance (no.36 of

²⁹FDEF 24/25/37. Memorandum from Acting Director of Education to the Colonial Secretary, 11 Mar. 1959.

1966) was framed in 1966, to replace that of 1960. Patel, the Member for Social Services, emphasized that the primary intention of the new legislation was not to introduce any fundamental changes in education policy or practice but to extend the powers of the Director of Education to restrict or control more effectively the opening of new schools.³⁰ Under the new ordinance the Director was to be empowered to decline approval for new schools in areas where adequate facilities already existed, in order to reduce the fragmentation of schools and undesirable local competition. The Director was also to be empowered to impose such conditions on new schools as he saw fit or to refuse registration to existing schools not meeting minimum standards. He was also to be responsible for approving any extension of a school's range of classes. It was also significant that the new ordinance was to omit the phrase 'it shall be the duty of the Director to promote education in the colony and the progressive development of the schools'. Patel supported the omission on the grounds that it was not an accurate reflection of the true nature of Fiji's education system. By far the greater number of schools in Fiji were not run by the Government and the Director of Education therefore had no direct administrative control of or responsibility for them. He acted, said Patel, only in a supervisory capacity in respect of the registration or recognition of schools and the maintenance of standards. This statement highlighted the basic dilemma which faced the Education Department. To what extent could it enforce its statutory powers in the face of arguments that any schools were better than none? If the recent proliferation of junior middle schools in the urban areas is any yardstick, then the Director of Education has rarely exercised his powers to prevent the establishment of new schools, however undesirable or inappropriate they might appear to be.

³⁰FLCD 13 July 1966, pp.380-1.

Chapter 10

The Education Commission and the Sixth Development Plan

Educational development intensified in Fiji in the second half of the 1960s as primary and secondary enrolments continued to rise steadily in the wake of rising economic prosperity and social demand. Regrettably, however, there was little or no lessening in the disparity between the quantity and quality of education, principally because of the acute shortage of trained teachers that prevailed throughout the period. Constitutional progress was also rapid and culminated in the granting of independence in October 1970, exactly 97 years after the signing of the original Deed of Cession. The University of the South Pacific was opened in Suva in 1968, thereby marking what was perhaps the most significant post-war educational development in the South Pacific region, and two years later the report of the Fiji Education Commission was published,¹ the first full-scale review of the education system since the Stephens Report of twenty-five years earlier. Finally, late in 1970, the educational component of Fiji's Sixth Development Plan was approved in principle.

The Fiji Education Commission

It was in December 1968, largely at the request of the Director of Education and his senior administrative staff, that the Fiji Government agreed to appoint an Education Commission with wide terms of reference to review the school system and to make recommendations for future education policy. During the preceding decade the pace and extent of educational development had increased steadily — but so had the cost, as the Governor pointed out in his

¹*Education for Modern Fiji*. Report of the Fiji Education Commission 1969. FLCP 2/1970.

address to the Legislative Council in March 1968.² He stated that the estimates for recurrent expenditure on education in the coming year would not only be greater than for any other social service, but also greater than ever before in the history of Fiji. Moreover, the educational targets of DPV would make still further demands on the Colony's finances in the years ahead. As the members of the Education Commission were to state in their report, 'it was becoming increasingly apparent that education in Fiji had arrived at a crossroads'.³ There was a growing public demand for free and universal primary education as well as for more and better secondary schooling and a greater emphasis on practical and vocational training. The need for widespread curriculum reform at all levels was also acknowledged. At the same time, there was a serious shortage of trained teachers and signs of instability and dissatisfaction within the teaching profession. The disparity between the educational attainments of the Fijians and Indians was also assuming a growing political importance as the day of independence loomed nearer and the need to replace expatriate civil servants with indigenous personnel became more urgent. Finally, a decision had to be made as to the future role of the new university in the overall development of education in Fiji.

The Director of Education was acutely aware of the need to make some far-reaching policy decisions in the near future which would require substantial increases in government expenditure on education. This was the main reason why he wanted a commission. As he remarked to Professor O.H.K. Spate, who subsequently served on the Commission, 'We feel that such costly decisions have got to be taken in the very near future and that there will be more chance of Government's providing the necessary money if the recommendations come from an outside body'.⁴ The Director was also concerned to ensure that he and his staff were not getting into a rut in their planning for future development. He emphasized this point in a memorandum to the Secretary for Social Services in which he stated that he and his chief advisers rarely found time to read and digest all that was going on

²FLCD 29 Mar. 1968, p.9.

³*Education for Modern Fiji*, p.9.

⁴FDEF CF 5/40/13 Rodger to Spate, 3 Dec. 1968.

in education elsewhere in the world.⁵ Moreover, he pointed out that the hierarchy of the Education Department had been in Fiji a long time; his thirteen years' service being the shortest of the top six men in the Department, hence the value in some independent assessment of Fiji's educational development. The Fijian Affairs Board was also instrumental in bringing pressure to bear on the Government to appoint a commission. It was particularly disturbed by the relatively poor educational attainments of Fijians, and as early as April 1968 passed a resolution recommending that the Government appoint a commission to look into the matter.⁶

After discussions with Colonial Office officials it was agreed to appoint a commission consisting of six people, but to exclude Australians and New Zealanders on the grounds that they had traditionally been involved in the development of education in Fiji and might not provide the strictly impartial viewpoint that was sought. Subsequently, however, Professor Spate was included at the specific request of the Fijian Affairs Board, in view of his comprehensive report on the Fijian people compiled in 1959.⁷ Initially, Sir Arthur Lewis, the retiring Chancellor of the University of Guyana, was approached to head the commission but ill-health and prior commitments prevented him from accepting and it was eventually headed by Sir Philip Sherlock, the Secretary-General of the Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes. The other members of the commission were G.S. Bessey, the Director of Education in Cumberland; Paul Chang Min Phang, Chief Inspector of Schools in West Malaysia; Professor Arthur J. Lewis, Chairman of the Department of Educational Administration, Teachers' College, Columbia University of New York; Margaret Miles, Headmistress of Mayfield School, a large comprehensive co-educational school in Putney, London, and Professor Spate, Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra. The commission visited Fiji in late 1969, and its report was published early in 1970.

From the outset the commission strongly emphasized the popular view that education was an investment of national importance, but it also warned against allowing the continued

⁵*ibid.*, CF 5/40/8.

⁶*Education for Modern Fiji*, p.vi.

⁷Spate, *The Fijian People*.

unplanned expansion of schooling prompted by social demand, with its inevitable decline in standards and lack of matching employment opportunities for school-leavers. No country could meet all its educational needs at once, said the commission, so priorities had to be determined. It was the ordering of these that was seen by both the Director of Education and the Education Commission to be the crux of Fiji's educational problems in the late 1960s.

The majority of the commission's report was concerned with ways in which the quality of education in Fiji could be improved. It was argued that the rapid and at times spectacular expansion of schooling in post-war Fiji had not been matched by a comparable improvement in its quality. In other words, Fiji was caught up in the familiar quantity/quality dilemma characteristic of educational development in most developing countries in the post-war years.⁸ More specifically, the report discussed the education, training and conditions of service of teachers, curriculum reform, examinations, language difficulties, and administrative problems at both school committee and Department levels. The commission also looked into the subjects of free and compulsory education, the Fijian educational problem, multiracial schooling, and the future development of secondary education.

Education, training and conditions of service for teachers

The calibre of the teaching force is probably the single most important determinant of the quality or efficiency of any education system. It was Fiji's misfortune to suffer from a chronic shortage of trained and well-educated personnel to staff its schools throughout the post-war years. By 1968, there were 917, or one in four, teachers in the schools who were untrained compared with about one in six in 1960.⁹ Furthermore, in 1968, 2578 of the country's 3161 primary school teachers, or more than 81 per cent, had not completed a recognized secondary school course. It is true that the qualifications of the trainees at Nasinu

⁸For an extended analysis of this dilemma see Whitehead, *Problems of educational growth*, 1971.

⁹Department of Education, *Report for the Year 1968*, p.12.

Teachers' College improved during the 1960s as illustrated in Table 14 but, as the Education Commission pointed out in its report, the improvement in the quality of students was not accompanied by any appreciable increase in the number recruited. The failure to increase substantially the supply of trained teachers throughout the 1960s was a major omission. As far back as 1957, there had been talk of building a second Government teachers' college, but nothing eventuated. In part it was the perennial shortage of finance, but it was also argued that the number of students with acceptable qualifications seeking entry to teaching was strictly limited. Hence there seemed little point in building a new college if the quality of trainees was not acceptable. At the secondary level there were no training facilities for teachers in Fiji until the start of diploma courses at the University of the South Pacific in 1969. Traditionally, Fiji relied heavily on New Zealand teachers recruited under the Scheme of Co-operation to staff its secondary schools, but this source was totally inadequate to cope with the flood of new enrolments in the 1960s. Consequently the number of untrained secondary teachers employed increased from 87, or one in three, in 1960 to 199, or approximately one in two, in 1968. As might have been expected, a large proportion of them were to be found in the unaided schools.

The Education Commission viewed the quality and supply of teachers as a key issue and duly recommended that it be given the highest priority in planning for the next development plan. The Commission was particularly concerned to see the level of general education of prospective teachers substantially upgraded as well as that of teachers already in the schools. They also emphasized strongly the need to ensure that teachers of junior classes were well educated. It was a fallacy, they argued, to believe that one could safely place one's weakest teachers in the early primary classes on the assumption that the stronger teachers at the upper end of the school would somehow compensate. The commission recommended that eventually both primary and secondary teacher training should be conducted at the university level, though it recognized that such an objective was not realistic in the short term. Meanwhile, the commission wished to see entry to Nasinu College restricted to those students with School Certificate and a pass in English.

The need for fluency in the English language was vitally important if the general quality of teaching was to

Table 14
Qualifications of student teachers at Nasinu Training College, 1960-68

Qualification	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Passed University Entrance	3	—	1	1	—	2	—	—	4
Passed School Certificate	35	35	39	24	23	29	60	53	61
Completed four years' secondary	7	5	2	4	5	21	22	16	22
Passed Fiji Junior	60	67	60	47	62	27	35	38	32
Completed two years' secondary	9	2	3	11	1	16	10	7	—
Primary only	3	3	1	2	2	—	—	—	—
Totals	117	112	106	89	93	95	127	114	119

Source: *Education for Modern Fiji*, p.30.

be improved. In May 1969 the Principal of Nasinu College stated that English was the most difficult subject for all students and that a lack of fluency in the language affected work in all other fields of study.¹⁰ Moreover, an inability to read English fluently restricted a student's reading and thereby condemned him to a very narrow field of ideas. Greater facility with the English language, he argued, was also essential if teachers were to feel confident enough to adopt less formal teaching methods and encourage a greater degree of pupil participation in the classroom. The Commission endorsed these views and called for revised study programs for students at the College, with the emphasis on teaching them to think rather than merely to copy down information for future use. An upgrading in the quality of staffing appointments was also recommended.

The Commission strongly supported the idea of three-year training programs for primary teachers, but it was critical of the Education Department's plans for coping with the teacher-supply problem in the years ahead. Even allowing for an increase in the intake of trainees to Nasinu, a new training college at Lautoka, and an expansion of the training program at the new university, it still seemed clear that untrained teachers in substantial numbers would need to be employed for many years. Some idea of the magnitude of the school system to which Fiji was moving can be seen from the fact that it was estimated that by 1985 almost 6000 teachers would be needed compared with about 3750 in 1969. The commission viewed the continued employment of unqualified teachers with grave alarm — 'The net effect will be to perpetuate the present low quality of education' — and suggested that perhaps it was necessary for the citizens of Fiji to ask themselves whether they really could afford as much education as was planned for the 1970s. If the answer was no, then ways would need to be found to stem the rising tide of educational expectations. If the answer was yes, then enough trained teachers would have to be produced or the resources invested in education would be wasted on mis-education. The commission concluded that further detailed study of the teacher-supply problem was needed and that a special planning committee should be set up to deal with the question.

¹⁰FDEF 23/66/2 Notes on Primary Teacher Training in Fiji. See also 'Teacher Training in Fiji', *Pacific Islands Education* no.52, May 1969, pp.51-8.

The commission also attached major significance to conditions of service for teachers because of their effect on recruitment, morale, and length of service. As the Director of Education subsequently remarked, the starting point in improving the quality of any education system 'which cannot be stressed too strongly, is an efficient and contented Teaching Service — a fact which policy reviewers tend to overlook'.¹¹ It was clear that teaching was well down the list of students' occupational choices because of the low social status of teachers. The commission was also informed that many excellent teachers left the service because of poor working conditions: 'it was said that if there were enough jobs available there would be a mass exodus from the teaching ranks'. Large classes and a desperate shortage of classroom equipment and materials also did nothing to improve morale. At the secondary level in particular, the poor management of many private school committees was held responsible for the widespread discontent and numerous resignations of staff. In its report (pp.80-1), the commission listed no fewer than thirteen points regarding teachers' conditions of service which were thought to merit serious examination.¹²

¹¹FDEF 4/43/107 Rodger to A.J. Child, Department of Education, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, 30 Jan. 1973.

¹²These were:

- (a) Teachers' salaries are low compared with those paid for other positions requiring similar qualifications;
- (b) inequities exist between teachers in the Civil Service and other Civil Servants in such matters as pay, extra benefits, and opportunities for advancement;
- (c) very nearly a quarter of teachers are outside the Civil Service;
- (d) there is a great spread in teachers' salaries, some privately-employed Licensed Teachers receiving as little as \$6.00 a month;
- (e) salaries are based on academic qualifications gained prior to a training course, rather than on the length and level of that course;
- (f) there is a disparity in the salaries paid to primary and secondary school teachers with identical qualifications.

The extent to which teachers withdrew from the profession and their reasons for doing so can be judged from the Department of Education's returns of May, 1968.¹³ During 1967, 207 teachers (or almost 7 per cent of the teaching force) were listed as having left the profession. The main reason for withdrawal appeared to be transfer to another district, which accounted for 155, or 5 per cent, of all teachers. Presumably most of these were women accompanying their husbands. Other reasons listed and which individually accounted for only small numbers of teachers, included maternity and health factors, death, change of employment, retirement, inefficiency and misconduct, further training at home or abroad, emigration and an unspecified category. Only seven teachers were recorded as having resigned for unstated reasons, which may have included dissatisfaction with working conditions. This figure hardly constituted a mass exodus, but perhaps, as the Education Commission suggested, it was the lack of alternative employment which kept many teachers in the schools.

For historical and racial reasons the teachers of Fiji are organized into two separate bodies, the Fiji Teachers' Union, composed mainly of Indians, and the Fiji Teachers' Association, the Fijian counterpart. Both bodies made representations to the Education Commission, but the Commissioners felt that the divided nature of their ranks weakened their influence as a collective force. There had been talk of amalgamation from time to time but the major stumbling block had been the insistence of the Fiji Teachers'

¹² (continued)

- (g) when he reaches the top of the scale for his grade, a teacher may stay 'sitting on the maximum' for several years before promotion to the next grade;
- (h) pension provisions are inadequate;
- (i) women teachers are forced to resign (and be taken on as temporaries) on marriage;
- (j) there are no adequate provisions for study leave;
- (k) there is no clear-cut way to handle teachers' grievances;
- (l) housing facilities are often inadequate; and,
- (m) the inspectorial type of supervision is inappropriate.

¹³FDEF 58/15/12 Teacher Wastage Return, 31 May 1968.

Union on having a politician, who was not a teacher, as its president.¹⁴ The Fijian teachers objected to this naked use of a teachers' organization as a political pressure group, and while it is true that the Fijian teachers plus dissident Indian teachers could probably have outvoted those Indians who supported a politician as president, no one had yet been prepared to run the risk. To overcome this and related problems, the Education Commission recommended the formation of a combined Teachers' Consultative Council to look into the grievances and conditions of service of teachers in general. Concern was also expressed at the different types of teachers: primary and secondary teachers were treated separately; most but not all teachers were in the Civil Service; while the committee system led to great variations in terms and conditions of employment. To cope with this problem, the commission suggested the formation of a United Teaching Service. Finally, the commission strongly advocated the institution of a regular program of in-service refresher courses to provide teachers, especially in outlying areas, with opportunities to further their professional knowledge. The Department of Education had made a start in this direction in 1968, when an Education Officer was appointed with special responsibilities in this field, but much still remained to be done.

Curriculum, examinations, and the language problem

The quality of education in any country is dependent to a large extent on the nature and content of the curriculum followed in the schools. In Fiji, the commission felt the curriculum lacked relevance to the local environment and to local needs, and that its chief objective was to pass examinations. This was especially seen to be the case at the secondary level, where pupils advancing their studies had up to three external examinations to sit. It was inevitable in such circumstances, the commission concluded, that preparation for examinations became the preoccupation of both teachers and pupils alike. Furthermore, external examinations were claimed to exert a cramping influence on the development of the curriculum, which was in turn criticized as being narrow in range and scope and seemingly

¹⁴*ibid.*, 14/3 - 111/60A K.B. Cunningham to the Attorney-General, 16 May 1967.

designed to transmit factual knowledge rather than to provide for creative, all-round development.

The Education Department had long been conscious of the need to overhaul the curriculum at both primary and secondary levels, and steps had already been taken to tackle the problem when the Education Commission drew up its report. In 1968 a Curriculum Development Unit was set up within the Department of Education, largely as a result of advice and encouragement from the Fourth Commonwealth Education Conference held at Lagos and the Director of the United Kingdom-based Curriculum Renewal and Development Overseas Organization (CREDO), who visited Fiji early in 1967.¹⁵ Towards the end of 1968 work began on the task of revising curricula and providing the necessary supporting texts for primary and junior secondary classes. At the time of the Education Commission's visit to Fiji, the Education Department was also negotiating to set up a secondary school curriculum unit at the University of the South Pacific.

The Education Commission was anxious to ensure that the revised curriculum was thought of in terms of the different stages of educational development of children rather than in terms of different types of school. It also stressed the importance of adequate books and instructional materials in all schools to enable teachers to implement new curriculum ideas. Above all, it was claimed that teachers needed to be given the chance to vary their teaching methods and to get away from the 'chalk and talk' technique which had such a deadening effect on classroom work. The commission also expressed the hope that Fiji would dispense as soon as possible with reliance on examinations set outside Fiji and establish its own examinations board.

The language problem, or to be more precise what medium of instruction to use in schools, had existed since the 1920s, and remained crucial in determining the quality of instruction and educational achievement. In the years between the two world wars Fiji followed the widespread colonial practice of employing the local vernaculars in the first four years of primary schooling. Thereafter, if competent teachers were available, there was a gradual changeover to instruction in English. As Sir Murchison Fletcher had remarked to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1931, he considered

¹⁵ Interview with Rodger.

that the language best known and understood by the child on his entry into school life was educationally the most effective medium for preliminary instruction.¹⁶ Stephens was keen to see more extensive use made of English, but he also realized the practical difficulties associated with a lack of competent teachers. The commission thought likewise. There was no disputing the fact that it was necessary for the people of Fiji to be conversant in English if they were to understand the wider world in which they lived, but there was little profit to be gained from trying to impose it on the schools against their will or without competent teachers to teach it. Ultimately, the commission hoped that the need for English would become manifest to all and that the public would, in turn, exert pressure on primary schools to teach it. At the secondary level, there was seemingly no alternative to the use of English.

Administration

The efficiency and scope of the administrative services provided by the Department of Education was also recognized by the commission as an essential component of effective educational growth. Since the mid-1950s the scope of the Department's responsibilities had grown enormously, but there had been a constant shortage of adequate staff owing to lack of money and the absence of suitable personnel. Moreover, the policy-making function of the Department had increased as the school system expanded. It was also clear that the Department's senior administrative staff did not have a high regard for the general competence of most school committees when it came to the framing of educational policy. In 1967 the Assistant Minister for Social Services had remarked to that effect,¹⁷ while in its submission to the Education Commission the Department of Education had stated that the controlling authorities of most private schools were not possessed of much educational expertise, and were not expected to, and did not in practice contribute much to the shaping of educational policy.¹⁸ The Education

¹⁶FEF 18/- Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 2 Jan. 1931.

¹⁷FDEF 18/2 - 11/112 Minutes of Education Officers' Conference 1967.

¹⁸*ibid.*, CF 5/49/1 The Education Department: its structure and relationships with other organizations. Paper for the Education Commission, 2 Sept. 1969, p.5.

Department also questioned the need for the Education Advisory Council, arguing that during the period of direct colonial rule it had been useful as a means of introducing an element of democracy into official decision-making, but since 1956 it had been a purely advisory body and its practical functions had been limited mainly to advising on the allocation of school building grants.

The commission sympathized with the Education Department's request for more staff and recommended a separate Minister for Education in view of the vast development expected in the future, and also a strengthening of the Department's field staff. The commission also recommended the replacement of visiting teachers by educational advisers, whose function would be to act as a bridge between the Department of Education in Suva and the schools. Their primary task was envisaged as 'the friendly and scholarly exchange of ideas and the shared assessment of problems and solutions'. It was hoped that this move would free teachers from a feeling of control exerted over them by Department officials. The commission also thought that the Advisory Council should be retained, but that its composition and functions should be revised and extended.

The commission was especially concerned with the committee system of school management and its effects on the quality of primary schooling. Due recognition was paid to the commendable tradition of self-help and local initiative associated with the work of the committees, but the commissioners were unanimous in recommending that the system should be phased out gradually and replaced by a network of public or government schools. They pointed out that the grant-in-aid scheme on which the committee system depended was based on the principle of 'to those that have more shall be given'. This had resulted in a lack of uniformity in school standards and seemingly chronic financial problems for most school committees. It was evident that many school committees were unable to raise the quality of schooling offered, not just because of the large number of children wanting education, but because there was not enough money to run the school. Many schools fell into arrears with their salary contributions to the central government because of parents' inability to pay school fees. As a result, such schools were automatically disqualified from much needed building grants. 'Thus', concluded the commission, 'the low quality of schools in deprived areas has in the past tended to be self-supporting'. Irregularity of income and a heavy

load of debt were claimed to have a depressing effect on educational development. Moreover, in many schools friction between teachers and committee members was common. It was also clear that the committee system led to great disparities in educational provision from one area to another because so much depended on the energy and resources of each committee. The grants-in-aid system also had one other major disadvantage. By providing an inducement to local initiative, it incorporated an inherent capacity for rapid growth. This was evident in the post-war period during which Fiji managed to provide schooling for a remarkably high proportion of children but, as the commission pointed out, 'It made it very difficult for the Education Department to exercise effective control in planning the development of education'.

The commission also believed that the eventual introduction of fee-free education, which was already being seriously considered as an educational goal for the Sixth Development Plan, would necessitate the Government's assuming complete responsibility for the buildings, staffing and maintenance of primary schools and so render the existing committee system obsolete. Moreover, the majority of school committees were willing, and indeed anxious, to allow the Government to take over the control of their schools. The commission suggested phasing out the committee schools on the basis of area plans 'which would also provide for the development of new schools, and where necessary for the amalgamation of neighbouring schools'. Any school wishing to remain independent should be allowed to do so, but it would henceforth be deprived of Government financial support. However, whether aided or not, independent schools should be permitted to charge fees to cover running costs.

Free and compulsory primary schooling

The commission's concern with the growth of a state or public system of schools was related in part to the wider issue of whether or not Fiji should introduce free and compulsory schooling, a suggestion which had been included in the commission's specific terms of reference as the outcome of a fiery and at times acrimonious and emotional debate on the subject in the Legislative Council in January 1969.¹⁹ The question has been of major political

¹⁹FLCD 29 Jan. 1969, pp.82-110.

importance in many developing countries during the past decade, especially as educational opportunities have been expanded and the level of social aspiration has risen. Generally speaking, the costs involved in such a move have daunted all but the most idealistic. The Nigerian experience of the 1950s illustrated what can happen when a government is forced to implement a policy without the necessary financial means to sustain it.²⁰ In Fiji the demand for free and compulsory education first gathered strength in the late 1950s. Predictably, it was the Indians, the most articulate section of Fiji's population, who were foremost in making such demands, but the Government, mainly it would seem because of a lack of money and trained teachers, made no move to meet their wishes. The outright rejection of the idea by the Burns Commission in 1959 sparked off renewed discussion which continued intermittently until the debate of 1969.

The subject was raised in the Legislative Council in connection with the Education Ordinance of 1960, and it was clear then that attitudes varied from a deep but despairing sympathy to outright rejection.²¹ Something of a climax on the issue was reached early in 1969, however, when Mrs I.J. Narayan, the Federation Party's Member for Suva and its spokeswoman on education, moved in the Legislative Council that a beginning should be made in the direction of making primary education free and compulsory throughout the country and that a Commission should be appointed at an early date to frame definite proposals.²² In supporting the motion she attacked former colonial administrators for their reluctance to commit the Government to a more adventurous education policy. She also condemned the Education Department's stated aim of providing education for all those who wanted it. It was now the duty of the State, she argued, to ensure that no child was deprived of the right to receive education because of the parents' inability to pay school fees. She also emphasized the importance of universal education as a means to promote economic growth and racial harmony in Fiji. In foreshadowing the argument that there were not sufficient trained teachers to introduce universal primary schooling, she claimed that untrained teachers were

²⁰See D.B. Abernethy, *The Political Dilemma of Popular Education*.

²¹*FLCD* 28 Sept. 1960, pp.192-211.

²²*ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1969, p.82.

already a permanent feature of the education system so 'where is the harm if we have some more untrained teachers'. She was also confident that the community in general would respond favourably with donations and other forms of help to ensure sufficient school buildings. She concluded her remarks by exhorting the Government to act and to adopt an entirely new approach to educational problems.

The Minister for Social Services, claimed that the Government already endorsed the principle of free education, but pointed out that ways had to be found to implement such a policy. He also stated that two weeks previously the Government had announced that it was going to appoint an Education Commission to examine the school system. He then successfully moved that the possible introduction of free and compulsory education should be included in its terms of reference. Succeeding speakers expressed concern at the cost of implementing free and compulsory schooling and emphasized the need for balanced educational growth. The Minister for Commerce and Industry warned against crash programs for mass education and instanced the oft-quoted passage from Arthur Lewis's paper 'Education and Economic Development' in which he said:

Since the poorer Governments cannot provide a full superstructure of education which goes with having one hundred per cent of children pass through primary schools those who make compulsory primary education their first priority are asking for trouble and usually get it. Their budgets are strained by teachers' salaries, their towns are distraught by the influx of primary school graduates seeking clerical jobs and their lives are harassed by irate parents demanding secondary, university and other superior training to which similar priority has not been accorded.

In winding up the debate, Mrs Narayan reluctantly agreed to the amendment, but remained adamant in her criticism of the Government's educational policy. 'This Government', she said, 'wants to go on with what has been handed down to them by their colonial predecessors'.

When the Education Commission investigated the subject the cost was their foremost consideration. The commission was provided with two documents bearing on the issue. The first was a survey conducted by the Bureau of Statistics into capital expenditure by non-government schools in Fiji

during 1967-68.²³ Information was based on returns from 325, or 49 per cent, of the 659 schools to whom questionnaires were sent. The estimated total revenue received by all private schools, excluding government grants, was about \$1,693,400. Of this sum, school fees accounted for \$1,222,100, or 72 per cent of the total. Predictably, the percentage of revenue coming from school fees was much higher in the unassisted schools (about 87 per cent) than in the grant-aided schools where it was about 68 per cent. For all non-government schools, donations amounted to 9 per cent and 'other sources' for 18 per cent of their total revenue in 1967. 'Other sources' included fund-raising activities such as bazaars, lotteries and loans.

It was also estimated that non-government schools collectively spent about \$1,489,000 in capital purchases or almost \$13 per pupil. Of this sum, about 58 per cent appeared to be spent on school buildings, 16 per cent on residential quarters, hostels, etc., 9 per cent on furniture and equipment, and 17 per cent on other assets. These figures gave both an indication of the extent of voluntary effort in education and an idea of the likely cost should the Government decide to shoulder the burden.

The second document put before the Education Commission was a paper prepared by the Secretary for Social Services.²⁴ It outlined the likely costs involved in the introduction of free and compulsory education. If all tuition fees were abolished, the cost to the Government was estimated to be in excess of \$1 million annually, plus the cost of teachers' salaries, capital costs, textbooks and stationery, transport, school lunches, uniforms, and attendance officers. The total recurrent cost to Government of making primary education free but not compulsory, in addition to existing expenses, would in 1968, have been about \$1½ million. The same document also pointed out that it was doubtful whether the abolition of tuition fees or fee-free education would enable school committees to abolish all fees as they would still require finance to pay for the maintenance of buildings, the upkeep of grounds, water and electricity, and

²³Fiji. Bureau of Statistics. A Survey of Capital Expenditure by Non-Government Schools in Fiji 1967-68.

²⁴FDEF CF 5/40/1 Free and Compulsory Primary Education: Possible Introduction. Paper prepared for the Education Commission by the Secretary for Social Services.

the servicing of loans for capital works. However, a reduction in the length of the primary school course to six years and a reduced birth rate would help to offset costs quite considerably. Finally, it was asserted that free, compulsory education could not be implemented without employing greater numbers of untrained staff with an almost inevitable decline in the quality of schooling.

It would seem that both documents grossly underestimated the true costs if the Education Commission's report is accepted as accurate. It stated that the Central Planning Office had quoted a figure of \$2.5 million as the additional cost to Government if free primary education had been introduced in 1969, without raising the quality of the schools above existing Government primary schools. The commission concluded that much as it sympathized with the almost universal demand for free and compulsory education, it could not recommend its immediate introduction. The reasons stated were the lack of suitably qualified teachers to carry the increased load, the lack of extra classrooms and housing for teachers, and the high cost of such a policy, which would inevitably divert funds from other educational needs of even greater urgency. It is perhaps indicative of the political pressures placed on governments in the formulation of their education policies that when the commission's report came to be considered by the Fiji Government, the recommendation not to introduce free and compulsory education immediately was one of the few that was rejected.

The Fijian educational problem

An inquiry into the educational problems of the Fijians was specifically written into the commission's terms of reference. When Spate wrote his report on the Fijian people, he stated that 'Among the specifically Fijian problems which I greatly regret I was not able to explore ... this of education is the most important and the most difficult'.²⁵ In the interval between the appearance of Spate's report and the inquiry of the Education Commission, the magnitude of the problem intensified. As the *Fiji Times and Herald* commented in May 1970:

²⁵Spate, *The Fijian People*, p.97.

Fijian education is a problem which has been in existence for a long time, but it has emerged into full public view only in the past few years. The main reason for this is the growth of internal self-government, with the accompanying localisation policy in the Civil Service (p.2).

The commission highlighted the disparities in numbers between Fijians and Indians in professional and managerial positions. In education, for example, it was stated that there was a much higher proportion of Indians who were secondary school teachers. Moreover, it was also very difficult to find suitably qualified Fijians for responsible administrative positions and to maintain a reasonable intake of Fijian men at Nasinu Teachers' College. The disparities between the two races in the percentages and gross numbers passing various public examinations were also outlined, as well as the reports from overseas universities which spoke of the often depressing performances of many first-year Fijian students. This did not appear to be due to any lack of intellectual ability, but to difficulties in adjustment; especially in developing good study habits and the productive use of free time. Gibson, the long-standing Council member, wrote to the Education Commission commenting on the alleged 'lack of drive' amongst Fijian students as compared with Indians, and hence the disparity in educational achievement between the two races.²⁶ He mentioned attitudes to homework as an obvious case in point.

When it came to an assessment of the more tangible factors hampering Fijian educational development, the commission reiterated the points made by the Director of Education in his annual report for 1966 as outlined earlier. Beyond these readily identifiable and tangible factors, the commission felt there was a complex of intangibles arising from history and the traditional Fijian life style:

... most observers of Fijian life (and this includes Fijian observers) seem to agree that the people are much better ... at bursts of energy in the face of some exciting task or emergency than they are at long-continued steady slogging at humdrum jobs. There seems also to be a tendency to enthusiasm for new

²⁶FDEF 53/29/2 H.B. Gibson to the Secretary, Fiji Education Commission, 5 Sept. 1969.

approaches, with undue expectations followed by undue discouragement when the pay-off is not so good or so quick as had been hoped these traits, given the historical and social environment, are entirely natural, but changes in attitudes deeply rooted in tradition are notoriously slow and difficult, for peoples as for persons.²⁷

The commission also suggested that the unavoidable emphasis on boarding schools for Fijian secondary students had its own perils including a tendency to encourage a slow rate of maturation. The abrupt change from the discipline of the secondary school to the permissive atmosphere of the university was also considered to be a significant factor in the difficulty of adjustment. The undeniable charm of young Fijians also had its pitfalls. As one person put it to the commission: 'As soon as he gets to Auckland, somebody puts a rugby ball in his hand and that's the first year ...'. The commission also felt that Fijian students suffered from lack of competition because most of them stayed in an almost exclusively Fijian environment with no external standards to measure themselves by until it was too late. Finally, the commission suggested that perhaps an aspect of language was a further contributing cause of the Fijian educational problem. It was pointed out that English and Hindi were both Indo-Aryan languages with certain basic similarities, whereas the Fijian language was quite distinct. Since there was no doubt that the structure and pattern of language seriously affected the manner of thinking, and schooling in Fiji was based on Western styles of thought, it was believed that the Fijian might be suffering a significant disadvantage.

There appeared to be general recognition, the commission concluded, that some special measures were needed to help the Fijians to close the educational gap between themselves and the other races of Fiji. Clearly, many of the more general measures advocated to improve the overall quality of education would benefit the Fijians. These included curriculum reform, improvements in the calibre and supply of teachers and their conditions of service, especially in rural areas, any pre-school facilities that might be developed, the establishment of junior secondary schools, and the extension of free and assisted places at the secondary

²⁷*Education for Modern Fiji*, p.69.

level. However, the commission felt that more specific help to bridge the gap should be provided by the granting of scholarships. The commission agreed with the Fijian Affairs Board that the Government should allocate 50 per cent of its scholarship funds exclusively to Fijians on a 'parallel block' basis, i.e. that Fijians should compete with Fijians, and Indians with Indians for their own quota of scholarship funds. It was also recommended that this provision should be for a period of nine years, with a preliminary review after six.

There is no simple solution to the Fijian educational problem. The commission examined the subject in detail, but it could hardly be expected to discover anything significantly new. The recommendation regarding scholarships had already been mooted by the Education Department. The problem clearly involves a variety of broader social and cultural considerations which educational administrators are unable to influence in the short term. Even with the best of motives, there are obvious limits to what can be done in the immediate future to overcome language barriers, geographical isolation, and 'lack of appropriate drive'. The Maoris present a similar problem in New Zealand. It is not that Maoris or Fijians are inherently any less 'intelligent' than Europeans or Indians, but rather that their cultural values and traditional life styles do not accommodate easily to European educational ideals and practices, whereas those of the Fiji-born Indians do, with the result that they have steadily been reaping the benefits for the past two decades.

Multiracial schooling

This was another long-standing and contentious issue that the Education Commission was asked to investigate. Separate schools for each of the three main racial groups had been a traditional feature of the education system since its inception, and even Stephens, outspoken as he was on many issues, made no suggestion for the widespread introduction of multiracial schooling. Instead, he merely commented to the effect that the few multiracial schools that were in existence appeared to be working satisfactorily and expressed support for the wider development of the principle. Both Stephens and Davies were well aware of the practical difficulties associated with the introduction of multiracial schooling which stemmed from the nature of Fiji's population

distribution and the strong racial antagonism generated during World War II.

Attitudes towards multiracial schooling remained negative throughout the late 1940s and for most of the 1950s, there being little or no effort made by either of the two principal races to integrate either by intermarriage or by economic and social co-operation. If anything, cultural differences were strengthened by the rapid growth of the Indian population, which tended to make the Fijians feel threatened in their own land. The economic ascendancy of the Indians was a further source of anxiety to the Fijians, while the system of indirect rule, by which the British Government dealt with Fijian affairs, also increased the isolation of the Fijians from the rest of the population.

Both in and out of Fiji, much has been said over the past two decades about the extent of racial antagonism in the territory. When Lord Robbins visited the Colony in 1960, he prophesied that Fiji would be another Cyprus.²⁸ To date, his prediction has not come true. Similarly, as the day of independence approached in October 1970, there was talk of the possibility of racial riots and of the likely racial struggles in the political arena. Again, these forebodings of doom have not eventuated. Instead, the immediate post-independence period has been marked by a determination on the part of Indians and Fijians alike to avoid open racial hostility and to think and act for the benefit of Fiji as a whole.

It was in the late 1950s and the decade that followed that the subject of multiracial schooling became a substantial issue. By 1958 there were twenty-one 'racially mixed' primary schools, according to the Education Department's criteria.²⁹ To qualify, a school had to have at least 25 per cent of its pupils drawn from a race other than that dominant in the school. Furthermore, most secondary schools were theoretically open to pupils of all races. In June 1959 the Governor, Sir Kenneth Maddocks, spoke out strongly in favour of greater efforts to build a genuinely multiracial society in Fiji. He instanced racially segregated

²⁸FLCD 2 Dec. 1966, p.112.

²⁹FDEF CF 5/40/1 Racial Integration in Schools. Paper prepared for the Fiji Education Commission by the Secretary for Social Services.

schools, in particular, as agencies which emphasized and consolidated cultural differences and prevented the development of mutual understanding that resulted from working, playing and growing up together. He went on to say:

I would like to see the principle accepted in future development plans that new schools that may be built with Government funds, or with Government assistance, should be multiracial in character. What I wish to stress today is the need to recognise the goal to which our efforts must be constantly directed — that of a genuine multiracial community.³⁰

His remarks met with a cool reception from the Fijian Council members. They expressed anxiety, which was widely felt by other members of their race, about the possible effects of abandoning the Fijian language as the medium of instruction in Fijian primary schools, and about the harm that might be done to the Fijian culture and way of life by admitting non-Fijians to Fijian schools. S.K. Sikivou, the Deputy Director of Education remarked:

I feel that we must not be too hasty about mixing the people up. The Fijians have a culture But take away the Fijian culture and what do you have? We see so many young people in the streets of the commercial centres today who do not have any culture. They look like Fijians but they behave like nobody. That is what I am afraid of We have not been asked whether that sort of idea would appeal to us, to mix up children at primary school level. I say here and now, without fear of contradiction, that I am voicing the opinion of many Fijians that it would not appeal to us

His fellow member, Ravuama Vunivalu, voiced similar sentiments including an oblique remark unmistakably referring to anti-Indian feeling which stemmed from the bitterness of the war years:

That the Fijian traditional organisation will be disturbed if this idea is put into practice there can, I think, be little doubt. Changes in such things as tradition must be allowed to come with time, when the

³⁰FLCD 17 June 1959, p.147.

people are ready for it psychologically and ask for it I am, Sir, very grateful to his Excellency for extolling us to incline towards regarding ourselves as Fijians in the broader sense of the term. But to do that we will have to satisfy several presuppositions. We are presupposing first of all that the change will not be in name but the change must be a union of interests. We are presupposing a commonsense obligation to the Colony in times of peace and in times of war. We are also presupposing a common and undivided loyalty to Fiji. Until these presuppositions have been met, I do not think any such ideas can succeed.

The Indians, on the other hand, expressed warm support for the Governor's remarks. This was hardly surprising as the Indians had nothing to lose and everything to gain by endorsing efforts for greater racial harmony. While they continued to be denied any substantial rights to land ownership, they necessarily felt that their ultimate future in Fiji was in doubt. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to feel that at times Indian spokesmen made statements with *Hansard* in mind, as Hayden suggested of them in the immediate post-war years.

The Director of Education was content to let the passage of time bring about changes which he felt no amount of words could force upon people: 'Multi-racial education ... will come in the normal course of events but I cannot help feeling that it is something that ought to be encouraged slowly rather than forced on people'.³¹ He then illustrated the extent to which the multi-racial principle was already operating in Fiji in 1960. Of the 20 European primary schools, 9 had non-Europeans on their rolls; of the 166 Indian primary schools, 53 had non-Indians enrolled; while of the 325 Fijian primary schools, 83 had non-Fijians attending. The relatively low proportion of non-Fijians in Fijian schools was mainly due to the fact that so many of the schools were situated in remote areas where there were no non-Fijians living. The Director concluded from these figures that the situation was much more promising than that which existed in the mid-1950s and he saw no reason why it should not continue to improve of its own accord.

Apart from geographical and emotive reasons, there was one other major cause of racially segregated schools and

³¹ *ibid.*, 8 Dec. 1960, p.526.

that was the medium of instruction. As long as the primary schools taught in a variety of languages, it was impracticable for children of all races to attend them. What was needed was some common medium of instruction (such as English), in all schools, but as the Director of Education repeatedly said, while the long-term aim was to make English the medium of instruction throughout the school system, for various practical reasons it would be a long time before it became accepted practice throughout the Colony.

In January 1965, A.D. Patel, the Minister for Social Services, convened a public meeting in Suva of the managers of non-government schools, to debate the idea that all schools should be open to children of all races, with each community being nevertheless allowed to give preference to children of a particular race or creed. Patel spoke of the need to think more in terms of the nation rather than along traditional racial lines.³² It was necessary, he avowed, to learn the art of living together and this should begin from the bottom. The time had come, he believed, to open the doors of all schools to all children.

Once more the idea was not well received by many Fijians and the motion to endorse the Minister's ideas was defeated by 90 votes to 73.³³ Jonati Mavoa spoke of the fear of the Fijian people that their children would be moulded by other people.³⁴ The Fijian School Managers agreed with the principle of multiracial schools, he said, 'but at the primary level it should not be hastened. It should be introduced at a higher level and government should build, staff and equip such schools'. His colleague Josefa Joti said that Fijian education was still in an embryonic stage in comparison with other races. Only recently, he claimed, had the Fijians realized the importance of education. He feared that if all schools were opened to all children, Fijian schools would be flooded with children of other races and Fijians would be unable to compete successfully. He, too believed that, given time, the multiracial

³²FDEF 18/19/4 Minutes of the Primary School Managers' Conference held at the Suva Town Hall, 7-8 Jan. 1965, p.1.

³³*ibid.*, CF 5/40/1 Racial integration in schools. Paper prepared for the Fiji Education Commission by the Secretary for Social Services, 3 Sept. 1969, p.4.

³⁴*ibid.*, 18/19/4 Minutes of the Primary School Managers' Conference Jan. 1965, p.4.

concept would develop of its own accord.

Opposition to multiracial schooling was by no means confined to the Fijians. Some Indian religious groups were every bit as zealous to protect their cultural identity, even to the extent of refusing to consider changing the racial names of their schools. This reaction was caused by a suggestion made by the Director of Education that certain schools with distinctly racial names should consider changing them to something more in keeping with the wider community. The Manager of the Wainibokasi Sanatan Dharm School in Nausori commented on the proposal as follows:

Your suggestion of changing the name [of the school] is unacceptable for the reason that the non-Indians have not contributed towards its establishment nor is there any chance of a contribution from others in future. These schools are symbols of the society which has built them.

Sikivou probably made an accurate summation of the state of feeling on the multiracial question in the mid-1960s, when he claimed that while opposition to multiracial schooling was not as strong as formerly, the political climate did not favour the introduction of major changes in the running of the well-established racial schools. He was of the opinion that religious differences, which were closely related in many instances to racial distinctions, presented perhaps the most difficult problem to be overcome in creating common public schools.³⁵

From the mid-1960s onwards, the political life of Fiji became increasingly centred on the struggle for power between the two rival political parties, both of which claimed to be the advocate of a genuine multiracial society. In December 1966 Koya, by then a prominent Federation Party spokesman, claimed that it was time that the Government formulated an educational policy based on national lines: 'We have had enough in this country of racial antagonism There is one thing the British Government in this colony failed to do and that is to bring races together, and we are now paying for it...'.³⁶ In reply, the Member for Social Services said that the Government intended to press on steadily, tactfully

³⁵FDEF 58/2/20 Comments on Proposed Middle Schools, pp.2-3.

³⁶FLCD 2 Dec. 1966, p.1109.

and with some concern for the sensitive human issues involved in its policy of promoting multiracial schooling. 'Our aim is not compulsion', he said, 'but persuasion'. In the debate on the proposed university some months later, he referred to the venture as a positive step forward in the Alliance Party's declared aim of building a racially integrated society.³⁷

When the Education Commission considered the multiracial issue, it was presented with a paper prepared by R.W. Baker, the Secretary for Social Services, who was also the Secretary of the Education Commission.³⁸ Baker traced the history of the subject since World War II and also highlighted the legal position. Fiji's 1966 Constitution included two provisions relating to education. In section nine it was stated that:

Every religious community shall be entitled, at its own expense, to establish and maintain places of education and to manage any place of education which it wholly maintains; and no such community shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for persons of that community in the course of any education provided at any place ...

Section thirteen provided protection from discrimination on grounds of race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed. Subject to certain exceptions, no law was permitted to contain discriminating provisions, and no person might be treated in a discriminatory manner by any public officer. There was, however, nothing in the Constitution to prevent privately owned schools restricting admission on grounds of race, colour or creed. The Department of Education's regulations relating to the establishment and registration of schools stated that:

While a registered or recognised school may, when selecting pupils for admission give preference to pupils of a particular race or creed, no pupil should be denied admission solely on grounds of race or religion.

In theory, this meant that all schools were open to all children but, as Baker pointed out, in fact many were

³⁷*ibid.*, 21 Mar. 1967, p.64.

³⁸FDEF CF 5/40/1 Racial integration in schools.

not. Furthermore, with the exception of the Levuka Public School and perhaps Suva Grammar and Natabua High School, Government secondary schools were amongst the most racially exclusive of all in the colony. Baker outlined the historical and practical reasons for the growth of segregated schools and stressed the language problem. He also emphasized the Fijian fear that any acceleration of school integration on multiracial lines would widen the educational gap between Indians and Fijians still further. Despite various obstacles, he claimed that it remained the Government's objective to encourage racial integration in the schools wherever possible: 'The Education Department has been pursuing this policy to the extent it has considered feasible within the limits of its available resources, and to the extent it has considered it to be acceptable to public opinion at large'.

The Education Commission placed a major emphasis throughout its report on the building of a sense of national consciousness in Fiji and argued that this could best be fostered by bringing together children of different ethnic and cultural origins. By sharing a common schooling, they would learn to understand and accept each other. However, despite these commendable statements, the commission was unable to offer any practical suggestions to overcome the various difficulties associated with the implementation of such a policy, except for placing a greater emphasis on the teaching of English and its eventual adoption as the medium of instruction in all schools. In other words, the commission did little more than endorse the principle of multiracial schools and the existing policy of the Department of Education. Perhaps there was little more it could have done. Certainly no legislation was going to force people to change, overnight, attitudes and prejudices built up over generations. In selecting language as the central problem, the commission avoided the politically sensitive issue of race relations and concentrated instead on something that could be studied objectively and be considered a genuine educational concern.

Secondary education

For the future political, social and economic growth of Fiji, the commission attached the highest importance to the development of appropriate forms of secondary education. Despite the rapid growth of the previous decade, the commission noted that expansion had been haphazard and that the

Government had played only an indirect and minor role in establishing schools. Of the fifty-seven secondary schools in existence in 1969, forty-nine had been founded by voluntary agencies, and of these twenty-three were unaided by the Government. Moreover, almost all secondary schools were academically biased, despite the obvious fact that academic courses were manifestly unsuited to the needs and abilities of the majority of pupils. They were also situated in urban areas, to the obvious disadvantage of the majority of children who lived outside the towns. The commission expressed sympathy for the idea of junior secondary schools, but warned that they would be costly and that the siting and staffing of them might create problems. The commission also foresaw a major difficulty in selling the concept of junior secondary schools to the public. It pointed out that when the idea of such schools was first discussed in connection with DPV, it was explicitly stated that if, on leaving his six-year primary school, a pupil was not interested in or failed to gain admission to a full secondary course he would automatically be admitted to a middle school and there undergo a two-year or eventually a four-year course especially designed to provide more practical training. As a result, the commission concluded that the junior secondary school might already be regarded as a second-best institution. Deep concern was expressed lest this idea gain ground, especially as it had been envisaged that junior secondary schools would primarily be sited in rural areas. Adverse public attitudes to such schools could well widen the gap between the 'haves' of the urban areas and the 'have nots' in the villages. In the first draft of the commission's report, the idea of introducing junior secondary schools was rejected.³⁹ By that time, however, the planning for the educational component of the Sixth Development Plan was well under way and the Department of Education was very anxious that the commission should approve of junior secondary school development. Consequently, the original draft of the commission's report was referred back to it for further consideration. The upshot was that the commission grudgingly agreed to recommend that six junior secondary schools should be built in carefully selected rural areas.

The commission favoured a broadly-based set of subjects for all pupils at the secondary level, especially in the early years, and strongly opposed the idea that 'practical'

³⁹Interview with Rodger.

or 'vocational' courses should be provided for those not clever enough to undertake a traditional academic course. This was thought to be especially important in the case of junior secondary schools. Much of their success, it was contended, would depend on a 'broad and liberal syllabus and on good teacher education'. In short, two general principles ought to be borne in mind. First, specialization, whether in the academic or technical sense, should ideally begin as late as possible in each student's career, and second, any selective process for specialist courses should not have a stultifying effect on the curriculum for the rest of the pupils.

The commission was understandably concerned at the large and growing number of unaided secondary schools which tended to cater mainly for pupils who failed to do well in the Secondary Schools' Entrance examination, and the hope was expressed that a further five or six such schools could be added to the aided list each year for the next five years. Thereafter, it was hoped that junior secondary schools and aided secondary schools would between them eventually eliminate the need for unaided schools. The commission also gave strong support to the general idea of expanding technical or vocational education to meet future manpower needs.

The commission made no attempt to calculate the cost of its numerous recommendations, but they were not expected to be an intolerable burden provided they were phased in over a reasonable period of time. Most of them were purposely and of necessity couched in broad terms and it was left to the educational planners in Fiji to expand them into a detailed program. The ultimate choice of short- and long-term priorities was a matter for the Government and people of Fiji to decide.

When the commission's report was published, public and official reaction to it was minimal, partly because the commission had spent only three weeks in Fiji, and also because the report first appeared as a Legislative Council paper, few of which were ever read by the general public. Moreover, the report appeared at a time when the planning of the educational component of the next major development plan was well advanced. This meant that many of the commission's recommendations were already foreshadowed. Consequently, there was never any debate on the commission's report in the Legislative Council, although there was a long

discussion of the educational section of DPVI.

Several former senior administrative officers in the Department of Education have unofficially expressed the view that much of the commission's report was unrealistic and that it read a little too much like a university textbook on educational planning in developing countries.⁴⁰ Whether or not this was so, the report did highlight the need to improve the quality of education at a time when the social demand for more schools was making a strong impact on the political scene. The commission's report also endorsed most of the ideas that the Education Department was trying to persuade the Government to include in DPVI, including the need to strengthen and expand teacher training and the importance of curriculum revision, both costly items to put up to the Government for priority rating in the face of strong demands for free and compulsory schooling. Only on the controversial subject of junior secondary schools did the commission and the Education Department have a strong difference of opinion. Fortunately, this was resolved so that the overall effect of the commission's report was an endorsement of the Department's policies, which had been the Director of Education's original intention in pressing for an inquiry. As might have been predicted, the commission's recommendations that the expansion of primary schooling should be slowed down and that compulsory education should be delayed were not greeted enthusiastically by many politicians and it was not surprising that they were subsequently found to be unacceptable as planks of the ruling Alliance Party's education policy for the early 1970s.

Education and the Sixth Development Plan

Shortly after the declaration of independence in late 1970, Fiji adopted its Sixth Development Plan 1971-75. It was the most ambitious and comprehensive planning exercise ever undertaken in the territory and was designed to shape the social and economic growth of the early 1970s. The plan provided for a total public capital investment of approximately \$75 million, almost double the amount of DPV. Education was allotted slightly less than \$8 million. The program for educational development was in no way intended as a blueprint to be rigidly adhered to but was designed rather

⁴⁰This point was expressed strongly by McGrath and supported by Rodger, Moffett and Bay.

as a guide for the Government on how education could best promote the future social and economic progress of Fiji. The extent of its implementation would inevitably depend on the availability of adequate finance and manpower.

Between 1966 and 1970, primary enrolments rose from 99,000 to 121,000, an increase of over 22 per cent. Secondary academic enrolments rose even more steeply from about 8500 in 1966 to nearly 16,000 in 1970, a rise of 88 per cent. Total post-primary numbers, including technical and vocational enrolments, rose nearly as much from approximately 9500 to 17,300, an increase of about 82 per cent. Rising social demand for more education was the main reason for the spectacular growth rates. This in turn was linked to the reduction in the rate of wastage and the improved holding power of the primary schools. More children were completing the basic primary course at an earlier age than hitherto, and as a result there was a growing demand for further education, a situation akin to that in New Zealand primary schools in the 1890s. In other words, given favourable economic conditions there is a natural tendency for an education system to grow at its upper end and this was happening in Fiji in spectacular fashion. The social demand for education was also encouraged by the Government's successful efforts during DPV to reduce the cost of schooling to parents and to make primary education available for all those who wanted it. By 1970 the Government had assumed a major responsibility for the recurrent costs of voluntary schools. It paid 100 per cent of trained teachers' salaries; grants were made towards the salaries of untrained teachers; and the supply of free textbooks had been greatly increased. In addition, 87 per cent of children aged six to thirteen years were attending school in spite of the substantial increase in population during the 1960s. However, despite these advances, the Government readily admitted that the quality of primary education still left much to be desired and that the rapid increases in enrolments had not been matched by a proportionate increase in Fiji's teacher training capacity. Consequently, 24 per cent of all primary teachers were still untrained in 1970. Moreover, the length of training had not been increased from two to three years as the Director of Education had originally hoped.

At the secondary level, major increases had been achieved in fifth and sixth form rolls in the late 1960s and the Government had assumed a much greater responsibility for meeting the recurrent costs of many aided secondary

schools, but no progress had been made on the reorganization of salaries for secondary teachers, while the idea of 'Middle Schools' had been shelved in 1967 for financial reasons.⁴¹ However, the roll of the Derrick Technical Institute had grown steadily, although the proposed technical high schools were not built because of the undesirability of making a sharp distinction between 'academic' and 'practical' education. The training of secondary school teachers had also started with the opening of the new university in 1968.

The educational objectives of DPVI formed part of the Alliance Party's education policy, which it was hoped would be achieved some time in the mid-1980s. The policy consisted of eight basic objectives:

1. provision to enable every child to have at least ten years of education up to form 5 (the first six of them compulsory), with a further two years of education for those whose form 4 performance indicates that they are able to cope at the higher level;
2. a marked improvement in the quality of the intake into teachers' colleges and in the quality of the teacher-education program generally;
3. the staffing of all primary schools wholly by trained teachers and the achievement of an acceptable pupil:teacher ratio in all primary and secondary schools;
4. a marked improvement in the quality of primary and secondary education, partly by (2) and (3) above, partly by an increase in the supply to schools of books, teaching aids and equipment for the teaching of science and craft, and partly by a continuing reform of curricula and examinations;
5. the institution of fee-free education, first for classes 1-6 and then for forms 1-4 and a marked reduction in fees at fifth and sixth form level;

⁴¹*Fiji's Sixth Development Plan 1971-1975*, p.189. See also FDEF 58/2/40: Minutes of a meeting held in the office of the Member for Social Services, 17 May 1967, to discuss Middle School development.

6. a marked improvement in the education of Fijians, in order to redress the present imbalance between the educational attainment of Fijians and that of other races;
7. the further orientation of technical and vocational education towards the manpower requirements of the economy;
8. the eventual assumption by Government of full financial responsibility for all schools which are willing to hand over these responsibilities.

While it is evident that a strong emphasis was placed on improving the quality of education, it is perhaps even more significant to note that the overriding accent on quantity was still present. Despite the 1969 Education Commission's main charge that successive governments had put the quantity before the quality of education, the social pressure for more schools still seemed to be the paramount concern of the country's politicians. Even a change in government, which seems a very remote possibility at the present time, would probably result in few if any basic changes in education policy. It is conceivable that the Indian-dominated Federation Party might reduce the accent on closing the educational 'gap' between the two principal races and also pursue more vigorously a policy of abandoning the committee or voluntary school system in favour of a system of public or government schools, but there is little else in the Alliance Party's education program that would give rise to serious political conflict.

To achieve the long-term aims and especially the idea of a basic ten years' schooling for all young people in Fiji, it is imperative to control and reduce the rate of population growth. Fortunately the trends of recent years are encouraging. The 1966 Census returns indicated a marked slowing down in what had been a very rapid growth of population in the 1950s. Since then, family planning programs have gradually been having an effect. Estimates prepared for DPVI showed that, even allowing for 100 per cent attendance of all six to eleven year olds from about the mid-1970s onwards, there should be a gradual slackening off in the demand for additional primary schooling. The problem of providing adequate accommodation at the form 1-4 level will remain most difficult, however, 'as the aim here is to persuade every child to stay at school for 10 years'. In 1970 the form 4 roll represented about 40 per cent of the

class 1 roll of ten years earlier. By the mid-1980s it is hoped that the drop-out rate of about 60 per cent will have been eliminated, as outlined in Table 15.

Table 15
Forms 1-4 rolls, 1959-84

Year	Forms 1-2 Roll	Forms 3-4 Roll	Total Forms 1-4	Quinquennial increase
1959	11,124	3,355	14,479	
1964	15,866	5,487	21,353	6,874
1969	22,283	10,228	32,511	11,158
1974	31,800	16,500	48,300	15,789
1979	31,910	23,220	55,130	6,830
1984	31,380	30,720	62,100	6,970

Source: *Fiji's Sixth Development Plan 1971-1975*, p.191.

The Government was fully aware that measures to improve the quality of education would only be successful over a prolonged period of time. Consequently, the full impact of measures designed to improve the quality and supply of teachers, and reforms of the curriculum and the examination system were not expected to have their full impact until the mid-1970s. Examination reform was to be entrusted to a special Board with the recommendation that the Secondary Schools' Entrance, School Certificate, and University Entrance examinations should be abolished. Instead, it was proposed to retain the Fiji Junior Certificate, but in amended form, and introduce a Sixth Form Certificate.

The introduction of fee-free schooling depended wholly on the availability of recurrent budget funds. It was hoped to abolish tuition fees at the class 1-6 level as soon as possible, but it was not expected that this would be achieved by the end of DPVI; however, it was hoped that by then the remission of fees would be running at a sufficiently high level to ensure that no child need be denied a primary education because of parental inability to pay tuition fees. It was also pointed out that the abolition of tuition fees would not obviate the need for school committees to continue to charge fees to cover such items as school furniture, building maintenance, and their share of the capital cost of new buildings.

If the enrolment of children aged six to eleven years approached the 100 per cent mark by the mid-1970s as expected, the Government thought it might then be possible to introduce compulsory primary education. On the subject of Fijian under-achievement, the Government referred to a variety of measures that were contemplated, but it was also pointed out that they could succeed only if Fijian parents were imbued with the same determination that their children should 'get on' as was displayed by parents of children of other races. Finally, the Government did not intend to hand over any more of its schools to private management, nor did it intend to absorb any non-government schools during the period of DPVI. Although there was implicit in the Government's eighth and final educational objective the idea that most schools would eventually come under state control, no attempt was to be made to implement the policy in the early 1970s. Instead, the Government proposed to assist in every possible way to improve the quality of all schools under their existing management.

DPVI included proposals for a start to be made on the creation of a network of junior secondary schools and the absorption of classes 7 and 8 of the primary schools into the secondary schools as forms 1 and 2. More secondary places were also to be provided by creating fifth and sixth form colleges at Labasa, Natabua (Lautoka) and Nasinu, and by adding additional sixth forms to several existing secondary schools. At the time when DPVI was published there were nine junior secondary schools already in existence and a further eight were scheduled to open in 1971. Between them, these seventeen schools were to form the nucleus of a new system. All such schools, except for the one to be used as a demonstration school by the university, were to be non-government concerns, but they were to be heavily subsidized by the State. Besides expanding the number of secondary schools receiving state financial assistance, the Government also hoped to increase the volume of aid so that by 1975 the full approved salary bill of each aided secondary school would be met by the State. Building grants were also to be made available on an increasing scale, especially for providing and improving facilities for senior classes, craft teaching, forms 1 and 2, and the erection of teachers' living quarters. A major emphasis was also planned for technical education. It was hoped to provide for craft work in every secondary school and to implant in pupils a sound and progressive attitude towards agriculture through the teaching of science rather than by the traditional

method of practical farm work. Capital expenditure on technical education was expected to total about \$1,225,000, or 15 per cent of the total educational investment of DPVI.

By the early 1980s it was hoped to have eliminated the need for untrained teachers in all schools and to have established a basic teacher:pupil ratio of one to thirty. To achieve this, Nasinu Training College was to be rebuilt and enlarged and a new training college was to be built at Lautoka, in north-west Viti Levu. Higher grants were also to be paid to schools employing better qualified teachers. A greatly expanded program of in-service training for teachers was also envisaged for the 1970s. Finally, supreme importance was attached to the development of the teacher education and training program at the new university in Suva as the source of supply of teachers for Fiji's growing system of secondary schools.

DPVI also included proposals for sweeping administrative changes. It was intended to replace the six existing education districts with sixteen smaller units designed to coincide with the recently established district development areas, and to expand the number of district education officers. In the long term, it was also hoped to replace visiting teachers with a corps of educational advisers as suggested by the Education Commission. Meanwhile, visiting teachers were to cease writing inspection reports on teachers as from the end of 1970. Henceforth, reports on assistant teachers would be written by head teachers, the District Education Officers being responsible for reports on teachers being considered for promotion. Secondary teachers were to continue to be inspected by the secondary inspectorate located in Suva.

When DPVI was debated by the Fiji Parliament shortly after the granting of independence, Jonati Mavoa, the Minister for Social Services, referred to several points of policy on which the Government and the recent Education Commission disagreed.⁴² The first concerned the controversial view of the commission that every effort should be made to slow down the rate of expansion of primary education until an adequate supply of qualified teachers was available. Looked at from a purely educational viewpoint, Mavoa agreed that the idea had merit, but he stressed that the Government was firmly committed to the belief that every child had a

⁴²FLCD 11 Dec. 1970, p.207.

right to education and it was determined to make this possible. He claimed that the reduction in the birth rate in the mid-1960s and the proposed teacher-training program would probably solve primary school enrolment problems by the mid-1970s. While the Government was no doubt sincere in its beliefs, it does appear that political pressure for more schooling now rather than later was the paramount factor in determining policy. Nevertheless, to be fair to the Government, there was strong support for its stand, including a resolution from the Fiji School Principals' Association which endorsed the Minister's aim.⁴³

The ruling Alliance Party also disagreed with the Education Commission's recommendation that the introduction of fee-free primary schooling should be accompanied by the phasing out of the traditional committee system of school management. By tying the proposals together, Mavoa suggested there could be delays in getting rid of school fees and the Government wanted to abolish them as soon as possible.⁴⁴ Moreover, he added, the Government did not have the finance to implement such a move at that time and it would also jeopardize the tremendous help and interest, both financial and physical, that was obtained from non-government schools. However, the Minister did state that it was the Government's long-term aim to establish a wholly state system of primary schools:

Eventually, of course, we must aim at a wholly state system of primary education even though in doing so, we will almost certainly deprive ourselves of the tremendous help at this stage that the private organizations are giving

What the Government wanted was to introduce free primary education as soon as possible and to treat the consideration of the nationalization of primary schools as a separate and less urgent issue.

The Government was also anxious to expand secondary education a good deal faster than recommended by the Education

⁴³FDEF 53/29/24 Comments on the recommendations of the Fiji Education Commission for submission to the Minister for Education from the Fiji Principals' Association, 21 May 1970, p.3.

⁴⁴FLCD 11 Dec. 1970, p.209.

Commission. Consequently, it rejected the commission's view that only a further five or six secondary schools should be added to the grant-aided list during the period of DPVI and that the degree of financial assistance to secondary schools should be retained at its existing level. Mavoa stressed that the commission had argued on behalf of quality rather than quantity throughout its report. While he saw the logic of this standpoint, he and his Government were convinced that faster progress could be achieved without any major reduction in the quality of education offered. It was at the secondary level, the source of much needed manpower, said Mavoa, that more financial aid to parents was required. Accordingly, in 1971, the Government proposed to increase salary grants to aided schools from 60 to 70 per cent, to add a further ten schools to the aided list, and to raise the provision for free and partly free places in secondary schools from \$120,000 to \$260,000 – an increase of 116 per cent.

Finally, Mavoa outlined why the Government opposed restricting the growth of junior secondary schools as recommended by the Education Commission. He pointed out that if the Government's basic aim of providing ten years' basic education for all children was to be achieved in the foreseeable future, it would be essential to provide for the tremendous expansion of form 1-4 facilities. Moreover, he claimed that the Government regarded the junior secondary school as the key to reducing existing disparities in the provision of secondary education in urban and rural areas and between Fijians and other races. It was also true that the junior secondary school idea had first been mooted under the title of Middle Schools in DPV, and that fund raising had already resulted in authorization for six schools to start operating in 1970.

The end of the decade signified no particular milestone in Fiji's educational growth, but it did coincide with the onset of political independence and this inevitably had important implications for future educational development. The British colonial administration was understandably cautious in its approach towards the expansion of schooling. Educational development is a costly enterprise and colonial administrators were well aware of the many competing claims for limited resources. Moreover, it was hardly in the interests of their long-term career prospects to promote policies which were obviously beyond the Colony's resources or contrary to accepted colonial practice. Only people like Stephens

were in a position to deliver stinging attacks on colonial policy and to recommend far-reaching changes. It is true that colonial officials were given a great deal of autonomy in their day-by-day decision making — the practice was a traditional feature of British colonial rule — but clearly there were limits to the availability of funds and manpower resources. There was also a local governor and his executive to be convinced before new and expansionist policies were implemented.

The onset of political independence in Fiji inevitably intensified the social pressure on the Government to adopt a bolder initiative in education and this is reflected in the Government's current educational program. In 1969, Mrs Narayan remarked that education in Fiji was 'geared to a colonial set up' in which the Government 'lacked courage' to take decisive steps.⁴⁵ Since independence this charge could hardly be levelled at the ruling Alliance Party as it attempts to grapple with the country's host of educational problems.

⁴⁵*ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1969, p.83.

Chapter 11

Independence and the early seventies

If the pace of educational development in Fiji gathered momentum in the early 1960s, it had broken into a headlong gallop a decade later, but the basic qualitative shortcomings within the schools remained. In 1973 primary school enrolments totalled almost 134,000, a 76 per cent increase since 1960. During that time Indian enrolments increased at a much faster rate than those of the Fijians. This was partly attributable to a more rapid rate of population growth but also to the fact that there was a greater degree of leeway to make up initially. By the early seventies there was little or no difference in the numbers of each sex enrolled at the primary level as a whole or in each of the individual grades. In 1973 Indians comprised 53 per cent and Fijians 42 per cent of all primary school enrolments. These figures reflected the changing racial proportions of Fiji's population.

Secondary enrolments rose even more rapidly during the same 13-year period. Table 16 shows how academic secondary schooling expanded from the mid-1960s. By 1973 Indians and Fijians constituted 60 and 33 per cent respectively of the total secondary roll. The marked imbalance in favour of the Indians highlighted the traditional importance attached to education by the Indian community and the extent of the 'Fijian educational problem'. Moreover, despite a substantial increase in Fijian secondary enrolments since the early 1960s, the gap between total Indian and Fijian secondary enrolments had widened. The proportion of girls of both races enrolled at the secondary level also increased appreciably in the late 1960s, and more of them are now staying on to the fifth and sixth forms and then proceeding to the University of the South Pacific.

Technical and vocational education has also expanded rapidly in recent years. In 1973 enrolments at the Derrick Technical Institute totalled almost 3000 despite the transfer

Table 16
Expansion of academic secondary schooling 1966-73

Year	Number of schools	Fijians and other island races		Indians		Europeans		Chinese		Total		Grand total
		M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	
1966	49	1,375	1,313	3,279	1,787	217	209	152	134	5,023	3,443	8,466
1969	55	2,204	2,289	5,074	3,256	300	275	219	178	7,797	5,998	13,795
1971	73	2,917	3,022	6,334	4,791	315	312	211	192	9,777	8,317	18,094
1972	87	3,507	3,690	7,096	5,728	314	327	206	211	11,123	9,956	21,079
1973	95	4,117	4,291	7,729	6,605	299	341	214	184	12,359	11,421	23,780
Percentage increase 1966-73		199.4	226.8	135.7	269.6	37.8	63.2	40.8	37.3	146.1	231.7	180.9

Source: Annual Reports of the Department of Education.

of the full-time secondary technical course to Suva Grammar School in 1972. Furthermore, by the end of 1973, eighty-seven secondary schools and twenty-four primary schools were equipped to teach industrial arts and/or home economics. All told, 29 per cent of Fiji's total population was attending school full-time in 1973, compared with 16 per cent in 1946. While these figures reflect the steady growth of schooling in post-war Fiji, they also indicate the high proportion of young people in the population, a characteristic that Fiji shares with many developing countries, and one which inevitably exerts a heavy tax burden on the working or productive sector of the population. The rise in the number of educational institutions operating in Fiji since World War II is also noteworthy. In 1946 there were 450 schools of various types. Since then the figure has risen to more than 750. A detailed analysis of the types of schools and the wide array of controlling bodies responsible for their operation on fifty-five different islands in 1973 is shown in Table 17.

In 1973 the cost of education exceeded \$14,000,000 — at face value an increase of 87 per cent on the comparable figure for 1970. However, this figure was grossly inflated by the world-wide inflationary tendencies of the past decade. In real terms, educational spending rose during the 1950s from about 9 to 16 per cent of total Government expenditure. Since then it has fluctuated between 16 and 22 per cent (see Appendix E). Clearly the cost of education has substantially increased in real terms since World War II and promises to continue to do so as the Government progressively reduces the direct costs of education to parents. In addition to Government expenditure on education, there is also a substantial contribution from the private sector. At the present time there is no accurate recording of this amount but the Bureau of Statistics in Suva estimated that in 1971 about \$4,000,000 was spent on education by non-government agencies.¹ The pattern of government expenditure in the last decade highlights the growing emphasis that is now being placed on secondary and technical education. Whereas primary education traditionally accounted for well in excess of 60 per cent of total recurrent costs, this figure had

¹Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, *Report for the Year 1972*, p.5.

Table 17
Educational agencies and types of schools operating
in Fiji in 1973

Controlling body	Primary	Secondary	Tech. voc.	Teacher training	Total
Education Department	25	6	4	1	36
Committee	473	44	6	—	523
Catholic Archdiocese	35	8	2	1	46
Methodist Church in Fiji	18	8	3	—	29
Diocese of Polynesia	6	1	—	—	7
Seventh Day Adventist Mission	9	3	—	1	13
Marist Brothers	2	1	—	—	3
Assemblies of God Mission	2	1	—	—	3
Sisters of St. Joseph de Cluny	—	1	—	—	1
Brethren Assemblies	3	1	—	—	4
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints	1	—	—	—	1
Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji	12	6	—	—	18
Fiji Muslim League	11	6	—	—	17
Then India Sanmarga Lkya Sangam	22	5	—	—	27
Dakshina India Andhra Sangam	4	1	—	—	5
Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji	—	1	—	—	1
Civil Aviation Administration	1	—	—	—	1
Fiji Sugar Corporation	2	—	—	—	2
Emperor Gold Mining Co. Ltd	1	1	—	—	2
Fijian Affairs Board	1	1	—	—	2
Medical Department	1	—	—	—	1
Social Welfare Department	1	—	—	—	1
Society for Intellectually Handicapped Children	2	—	—	—	2
Crippled Children's Society	3	—	—	—	3
Y.W.C.A.	—	—	2	—	2
Y.M.C.A./S.Y.C.	—	—	1	—	1
Private	3	—	5	—	8
Total	638	95	23	3	759

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, *Report for the Year 1973*,
p.2.

fallen to less than 45 per cent in 1973. Conversely, recurrent expenditure on secondary education rose from 21 to 31 per cent between 1960 and 1973. Since 1968, the new university has also made substantial financial inroads into Government spending. In 1973 it consumed nearly 9 per cent of total educational expenditure.

Perhaps the single most important factor contributing to the rising cost of education in Fiji was the Government's decision, first incorporated in DPV, to reduce the cost of education to parents. From figures prepared by the Education Department, it appears that the cost of the program rose from approximately \$273,000 in 1966 to almost \$2,000,000 in 1972. Since then the introduction of fee-free schooling in the first three classes of the primary school has substantially increased that sum.² An indication of the types of financial assistance provided by the Education Department between 1966 and 1972, and the amounts involved, are shown in Table 18.

Some of the reasons for the substantial increases in expenditure under certain items include the remission of fees grants introduced in 1968, the abolition of salary contributions from primary schools in 1970, the raising of teachers' salary grants in aided secondary schools from 50 to 60 per cent, the introduction of grants for untrained or licensed teachers in 1968, which was increased in 1970 from \$30 to \$240 per teacher, and the increase in reserved teacher grants in 1969 from \$400 to \$480 per year. There were also major increases in the late 1960s in the costs of free places in secondary schools, recurrent grants to secondary schools, and in primary and secondary school building grants, which increased nearly tenfold. Since 1970, the payment of grants to junior secondary schools, which rose eightfold in two years, and grants for science and technical equipment, basic science equipment, school transport, libraries and basic educational equipment have added to the sum of Government expenditure.

²The Minister of Education recently announced that the cost per head of Government grants designed to reduce the cost of education to parents was expected to increase from \$8.70 in 1971 to \$16.50 in 1975. *News from Fiji*, vol.28 (50), 11 Dec. 1974, p.264.

Table 18
Government financial aid aimed at reducing the cost of education to
parents 1966-72
(\\$)

Item	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972*
Licensed teacher grants	—	—	14,326	12,489	162,597	193,162	183,000
Remission of fees in non-government schools	—	—	40,322	93,453	43,222	104,037	110,000
Remission of fees in government schools	5,396	6,312	15,612	17,243	16,672	18,875	20,000
Write off of fees	5,317	6,789	362	7,266	1,898	595	2,500
Reserved teacher grants	28,794	32,510	40,304	35,739	38,368	37,891	38,500
Free issues of textbooks, etc.	—	1,540	43,348	29,772	54,771	75,585	81,000
Hostel grants	—	—	—	19,999	27,403	32,789	—
Building grants	49,800	123,899	236,157	238,991	450,000	454,169	409,320
Free and partly-free places	49,514	59,135	79,812	105,281	124,424	235,051	300,000
Grant-aided secondary schools	134,084	155,938	190,182	233,186	293,876	447,068	600,000
Junior secondary school grants	—	—	—	—	10,000	87,008	87,030
Grants for science and technical equipment	—	—	—	—	14,867	44,804	40,200
Basic science equipment	—	—	—	—	—	23,793	22,000
School transport subsidy	—	—	—	—	—	5,265	5,000
School libraries	—	—	—	—	—	12,511	30,000
Education equipment	—	—	—	—	—	1,524	15,000
Totals	272,905	386,123	660,425	793,419	1,238,098	1,774,124	1,943,550

*N.B. 1972 figures are estimates only.

Source: Fiji Department of Education Correspondence Files, 18/21/12 (Appendix).

From a quantitative standpoint, Fiji has undoubtedly achieved remarkable educational progress in the past decade, but a closer inspection of the school system still reveals long-standing qualitative short-comings. As the Director of Education remarked in 1970:

There is much we can be proud of in our educational system; but we still have a very long way to go before we can, with a clear conscience, refute the [Education] Commission's main charge against us — that we have put quantity before quality.³

The poor quality of schooling was reflected in the high proportion of untrained and/or inferior teachers found in the schools, the continued wastage of premature drop-out at both primary and secondary levels, the poor condition of many school buildings and the lack of adequate basic teaching equipment, and also by the declining overall performance of senior pupils in external examinations.

In 1973 the education system provided employment for 5323 teachers of whom 1474 or almost 28 per cent were untrained. The problem was most acute in the secondary schools, as was to be expected in view of the very rapid growth in that sector. Table 19 provides a summary of Fiji's teaching strength in 1973. Forty-five per cent of secondary teachers and almost 24 per cent of primary teachers were untrained. Moreover, despite the completion of the rebuilding of the Nasinu Teachers' College late in 1972, there was still no firm indication in 1974 when the proposed new teachers' college at Lautoka would be built. Hence the problem of untrained primary teachers is likely to persist at least until the 1980s. At the secondary level the position is also unclear. The teacher-training program at the University of the South Pacific has made a promising start, but the very rapid expansion of secondary schooling in the last five years, which shows no signs of slowing down, threatens to upset the calculations for meeting the teacher supply problem as envisaged in DPVI. Furthermore, the strain imposed on the secondary school system by the upsurge of enrolments in recent years is being reflected in higher pupil:teacher ratios. Between 1966 and 1971 the ratio

³FDEF 23/66/10A Rodger to the editor, Fiji Teachers' Journal, 9 Apr. 1970.

Table 19
Trained and untrained teachers in Fiji's schools 1973

	Primary	Secondary	Technical	Teacher Training	Total
1. Trained teachers in Government service	3,060	390	74	29	3,553
2. Trained teachers in non-Government service	102	156	26	12	296
3. Untrained (licensed) teachers including volunteers	985	447	41	1	1,474
Total	4,147	993	141	42	5,323

Source: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, *Report for the Year 1973*, Table 11A.

Table 20
Crude primary school wastage rates 1966-73

Year	Class	Roll	Year	Class	Roll	Raw wastage no.	%
1959	1	12,469	1966	8	8,018	4,451	35.7
1960	1	12,607	1967	8	8,720	3,887	30.8
1961	1	12,516	1968	8	9,370	3,146	25.1
1962	1	13,129	1969	8	10,147	2,982	22.7
1963	1	14,109	1970	8	11,096	3,013	21.3
1964	1	14,843	1971	8	11,930	2,913	19.6
1965	1	16,293	1972	8	13,153	3,140	19.3
1966	1	16,504	1973	8	13,657	2,847	17.3

Source: Education Statistics Table 9B.

declined from 26.5:1 to 27.3:1.⁴

The educational standards of entrants to Nasinu Teachers' College rose during the 1960s, but the Principal of the college was still moved to comment in 1972 on the poor quality of many Fijian applicants and at the dearth of Fijian males seeking entry. In many cases, he stated, the college was still obliged to accept Fijians with two subject passes only at the School Certificate level and a mark of 30 per cent in English.⁵

Wastage still constituted a serious problem in the primary schools, but, as Table 20 illustrates, it was progressively reduced during the 1960s. The decline was probably due to the Government's efforts to reduce the cost of education to parents. This conclusion is borne out by the comments of District Education Officers, which seemed to substantiate the view that economic reasons continued to be at the heart of the drop-out problem.⁶ As the District Officer in Ba stated, in most cases of premature withdrawal of children from school, the reason was that parents found it difficult to cope with the payment of school fees and the high rates of building funds charged by local committees.⁷ He added that long droughts also aggravated the problem. In many cases parents who could not afford to pay school fees for all their children, educated their older children for a few years and then stopped them going to school so that the younger ones might get some schooling for a few years. The need for extra labour in the sugar growing areas at certain times of the year also caused many older children to leave school prematurely, a problem that was accentuated when the parents were suffering from ill-health, as was frequently the case. The difficulties of travelling long distances to school over rugged terrain, as in the interior of Viti Levu, especially in bad weather, also discouraged many children from attending school and they often

⁴Gordon Rodger, *Fiji Education: some facts and figures*, p.3.

⁵*Fiji Times and Herald*, 18 Feb. 1972, p.20.

⁶A similar conclusion was reached in a study of Suva children. See J. Austin and J. Harré, Report on children not attending school in Suva.

⁷FDEF 58/9/31 Memorandum from District Education Officer, Ba, to Acting Director of Education, Pupil Wastage in Primary Schools, 28 May 1968.

left in spite of the wishes of their parents. The District Education Officer in the Eastern Division also claimed that frequent parental movement in search of employment resulted in many pupils leaving school before their time.⁸ Children were often entrusted to relatives, but when the school fees were not forthcoming from the parents the children were taken away from school. Lack of proper control of many children by their parents or guardians was also cited as a reason for children staying away from school. Parents were also inclined to withdraw their children from school if they were found to be slow learners or academically below average. Irregular school attendance also led to poor levels of scholastic attainment 'making repetition necessary in the eyes of Head Teachers'. Unfortunately, research elsewhere into the causes of wastage suggests that repetition of classes in itself constitutes one of the major causes of drop-out.⁹ The District Education Officer in Lautoka mentioned that reduced or delayed sugar cane payments also created an inability on the part of many parents to pay school fees.¹⁰ He also claimed that in his district there was often a lack of class 1 places and an inadequate distribution of schools. At the secondary level the causes of premature withdrawal were similar, with the added factor that the low academic calibre of many third form pupils caused them to repeat classes and eventually to drop by the wayside.¹¹

Despite the overall improvement in the retention rates at the primary level during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the number of children of school age not attending school in any given year is still a major cause for concern and an aspect of the school system avidly seized upon by the Government's political opponents. In 1973 it was estimated that approximately 8400 six to thirteen year olds were not in schools. This figure constituted between 6 and 7 per cent

⁸*ibid.*, 58/9/30 Memorandum from District Education Officer, Eastern, to Acting Director of Education, Pupil wastage in primary schools, 22 May 1968.

⁹See 'Problem of educational wastage at the first level of education in Asia', *Bulletin* of the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia, 1(2) Mar. 1967, p.26.

¹⁰FDEF 58/9/26 Memorandum from District Education Officer, Lautoka, to Acting Director of Education, 14 Mar. 1968.

¹¹*ibid.*, 58/8/7 Notes on wastage at the secondary level, 7 Nov. 1966.

of the estimated number of children in Fiji in that age group. The Department of Education was able to point out that most of these children could be accounted for. Some 1100 of them were six or seven year olds who were likely to gain admission to class 1 at the age of seven, eight or nine in or after 1974. This left some 7300 children, most of whom would have been to school for varying periods but who would have left before reaching the age of thirteen. It was the existence of this latter group that repeatedly provided support for those who advocated compulsory as well as free education. Compulsory education would involve regular attendance which would in turn affect many other children nominally registered as at school. By reducing absenteeism it was likely that wastage would be greatly reduced.

The performances of senior secondary pupils in external examinations has also become a matter for serious concern over the past few years and a symptom of the poor quality of education offered in many secondary schools. While it is true that the number of pupils presenting themselves in external examinations has increased substantially, the relative proportion of them passing has declined. For example, the pass rate for students sitting the New Zealand School Certificate has dropped from 43 to 34 per cent in the period 1969-73. As Table 21 indicates, the decline in the Fijian pass rate has been more marked than that of the Indians. The drop in pass rates is partly explained by the introduction of single subject passes which has resulted in almost double the number of students entering for the examination in the past five years, many of whom are clearly not of the required academic calibre. A further contributing factor is that many pupils now sit the examination after three rather than four years' secondary schooling, as was traditionally the case. At the University Entrance level, the drop in pass rates has been even more marked since 1966 as indicated in Table 22, although it should be noted that the number of students sitting the examination in the mid-1960s was very small and probably constituted something of an élite group in comparison with current examinees.

The explanation for the low pass rates is not obvious. In theory, the weaker academic candidates should have been weeded out by the School Certificate hurdle. One is forced to conclude that the difference between fifth and sixth form work is greater than is popularly imagined and that the quality of much sixth form teaching is suspect. The greater sophistication demanded in the use of English may also be a factor to be reckoned with.

Table 21
New Zealand School Certificate results for Fiji students 1966-73

Year	Schools presenting candidates (no.)	Candidates and passes (no.)							
		Fijians		Indians		Others		Total	
		Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed
1969	38	487	223	45.8	1,414	545	38.5	2,156	928
1970	41	528	210	39.8	1,604	484	30.2	2,379	829
1971	45	765	243	31.8	2,016	618	30.7	3,097	1,021
1972	50	871	227	26.1	2,095	736	35.1	3,330	1,143
1973	49	1,075	338	31.4	2,586	843	32.6	3,970	1,372

Source: Annual Reports of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

Note: For the purposes of this table, a pass in the examination is regarded as a pass in four subjects, including English (minimum 30%), with three other subjects (minimum 50%) and an aggregate of not less than 180 marks.

Table 22
New Zealand University Entrance examination results for Fiji students 1966-73

Year	Schools presenting candidates (no.)	Candidates and passes (no.)							
		Fijians		Indians		Others		Total	
		Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed
1966	8	45	16	35.5	106	64	60.4	214	109
1967	12	88	22	25.0	200	78	39.0	373	138
1968	17	80	23	28.7	281	87	30.9	450	157
1969	17	131	44	33.6	404	132	32.7	665	240
1970	20	202	45	22.3	501	167	33.3	870	278
1971	23	224	55	24.6	585	146	25.0	951	255
1972	25	252	63	25.0	684	225	32.9	1,087	346
1973	26	202	58	28.7	709	232	32.7	1,038	352

Source: Annual Reports of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

The drop in examination pass rates has also been experienced in the Fiji Junior Certificate sat after form 4. Table 23 provides a summary of pass rates in the past five years. The falling pass rates are probably attributable to the fact that many secondary schools take pupils into their third forms who have failed to pass the Secondary Schools' Entrance examination and the proportion of such pupils is increasing. A further reason is the fact that the majority of the untrained and poorly qualified secondary teachers are to be found teaching in third and fourth form classes.

The rapid growth in the number of secondary schools and declining academic standards were the subjects of a Departmental memorandum written by Rodger, in his capacity as Director of Education.¹² He urged much tighter control by the Government over the opening of new schools, especially in view of the ever-growing sums of money which the Government was 'pumping' into the non-Government schools. He also claimed that in many cases District Development Committees gave in too readily to sectarian considerations and recommended new schools when it would have been better to add extra classrooms to existing ones. Furthermore, the frequent necessity for the Education Department to overrule advice tendered by advisory bodies at 'grass-roots' level resulted in ill will and a sense of frustration. Rodger was also keen to see much tighter control exercised over facilities provided for intending pupils, including satisfactory provision for the teaching of science, handicrafts and home-craft subjects. Once a school was permitted to open in temporary sheds, he claimed, the management all too frequently lost interest in providing permanent facilities. Experience had shown that in the case of a secondary school permitted to open in advance of the construction of practical facilities, promises to provide such facilities in time for the second year rarely materialized, with the result that the academic bias in the schools continued unabated. Rodger was also anxious to ensure that ministerial refusals to allow the opening of new schools were not subsequently reversed 'on non-educational grounds'. This concern clearly suggests that influence was not unheard of in affecting Government decisions. He was also very critical of the way in which the Government had allowed the rapid proliferation of junior secondary schools in urban areas. He claimed that only a quarter of the junior secondary schools operating in 1972 were in fact even remotely geared to provide the sort

¹²FDEF 18/21/91 Notes on the opening of new schools.

Table 23

Fiji Junior Certificate results 1969-73

Year	Schools presenting candidates (no.)	Candidates and passes (no.)									
		Fijians		Indians		Others		Total		Passed	%
		Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed	%	Sat	Passed		
1969	55	1,534	917	59.8	2,965	1,865	62.9	466	377	4,965	63.6
1970	57	1,698	890	52.4	3,268	1,803	55.2	474	349	5,440	55.9
1971	65	1,942	1,055	54.3	3,598	2,180	60.6	490	411	6,030	60.5
1972	74	2,258	1,172	51.9	4,152	2,193	52.8	412	352	6,822	54.5
1973	84	2,938	1,405	47.8	5,037	2,447	48.6	420	329	8,395	49.8

Source: Annual Reports of the Ministry for Education, Youth and Sport.

of education they were originally intended for, and only a quarter of the teachers employed in them had been specifically trained for the job they were trying to do. He concluded that the encouragement given to local committees to establish junior secondary schools in urban and semi-urban areas had been a mistake. Moreover, many of the existing junior secondary schools were not being used to their fullest extent — 'the total combined roll of the 22 Junior Secondary Schools operating in non-urban areas in 1972 was some 3000 less than their optimum capacity'. He levelled the same criticism at many of the secondary schools. Of the fifty-four non-Government secondary schools operating in 1973, only twenty-five were operating at the optimum size of 350.

Rodger was also keen to restrict entry to form 5 to able students, and to provide enough form 5 places for well-qualified pupils coming from the fourth forms of junior secondary schools. He was particularly anxious to ensure that the interests of children in remote rural areas were safeguarded, especially as they would need boarding facilities. He pointed out that already in 1972 the fifth form roll was 300 greater than that anticipated in DPVI for 1975. He attributed the decline in pass rates at the School Certificate level to the admission of pupils into form 5 with inadequate academic backgrounds and the spreading too thinly of qualified fifth form teachers so that even able students had suffered.

In theory, the admission of pupils to form 5 was under fairly strict control. No pupil was eligible for a free or partly-free place in form 5 of a Government, aided, or unaided school, unless he had obtained at least a grade B pass in the Fiji Junior Certificate examination. In Government schools, no pupil was normally admitted into a fifth form without at least a grade B pass, while no grant-in-aid was payable to aided schools in respect of fifth forms consisting wholly of students who failed to gain at least a grade B pass. However, as Rodger pointed out, in practice the existence of unaided classes in aided secondary schools not only militated against the control of grants to schools with fifth forms but also led to a substantial waste of Government funds. This was because it was impracticable to attempt to ensure that classrooms built with the aid of building grants, or equipment provided with the aid of recurrent grants, were not used by students in unaided classes, or that Government or aided teachers were not

employed even on a part-time basis teaching unaided fifth forms. It was not practical at this late stage, said Rodger, to eliminate unaided classes from aided secondary schools. Indeed, at the third and fourth form levels it could be argued that such classes were a logical step towards the Government's declared policy of providing ten years of schooling up to form 4 for every child. At the form 5 level it could also be argued that schools were at least keeping children off the streets for a further year. On the other hand, it was also fair to point out that to provide ten years of schooling for every child would put Fiji to the fore in any list of so-called developing countries. Indeed, very few developed countries provided for compulsory education beyond the age of 15. Hence, it was reasonable to argue that all pupils should not be sponsored beyond form 4.

As the demand for secondary education has intensified it has become apparent that chances of access to a secondary school vary from one part of Fiji to another. There has always been an urban/rural discrepancy in this respect, but the issue is now more complex and could prove to be politically important in the future. In 1971 the Department of Education conducted a survey into the origins and movements of the 1971 form 3 intake into secondary schools, based on returns sent in by principals in February, 1971.¹³ Of the total intake of 6759 students, about 600 were unaccounted for because of the failure of some schools to send in returns. From the survey it was concluded that on a national basis seven out of ten form 3 pupils found places in their own areas, but there were considerable regional differences. For example, nine out of ten pupils in Suva were accommodated in local schools, but at the other extreme, only four out of ten pupils were able to attend local schools in the Sigatoka area. The survey also highlighted a considerable movement of pupils between the Sigatoka, Nadi and Lautoka areas, and to and from the Eastern Division. Four out of ten pupils in the Sigatoka area went to Nadi and Lautoka secondary schools. Similarly in Lautoka, five pupils in ten found third form places in local schools while the rest went to Nadi and Ba schools. Four pupils in ten from the Nausori area also found school places in the Suva area. In the Eastern Division, four pupils in every ten had to travel outside the area to find secondary school accommodation.

¹³*ibid.*, 58/6/75 Research notes on the origin and movement of the 1971 form three intake, 6 Jan. 1972.

The drop-out rate between class 8 and form 3 also varied from region to region. In 1971 the third form intake amounted to 56 per cent of the 1970 class 8 roll. Of those that left school, 2100 or about 70 per cent came from Suva and Nausori schools. Similarly, only one in three pupils in class 8 in 1970 in the Eastern Division secured a form 3 place in 1971 in contrast with the two out of three who did so in the Western Division.

The rather gloomy qualitative picture of education in Fiji is relieved to some extent by the rapid growth of technical and vocational courses in the past decade and by the extensive curriculum reform which is currently being undertaken by the Department of Education and the United Nations. The growth of technical and vocational education coincided with the development of the Derrick Technical Institute in the early and mid-1960s. The Institute was originally established to provide for craft and office courses for students from Fiji, but by the end of the 1960s it had developed into a centre for higher level technical training for the South Pacific area along the lines originally envisaged by Derrick and Harlow in the early 1950s.¹⁴ Throughout the sixties the range and number of courses offered at the Institute grew rapidly. By 1970 over forty different courses were being offered, and in 1972, total enrolments reached a record figure of 3455, despite the transfer of the full-time secondary technical course to Suva Grammar School. There was also a steady increase in the number of schools offering craft courses in the late 1960s. By 1973 eighty-seven secondary schools and twenty-four primary schools were equipped to teach industrial arts and/or home economics. It was also hoped to establish a strong vocational bias in the new junior secondary schools, but at the time of writing the high cost of providing appropriate facilities and the traditional reverence for academic schooling are already proving very difficult to surmount.

The first major post-war revision of the primary school curriculum was completed in 1954, but in the absence of any permanent machinery for undertaking what should have been a continuing process of revision, only spasmodic further progress was achieved in the next fourteen years. In 1965 the setting up of an English Teaching Unit enabled work to

¹⁴R.A. Derrick, *Vocational Training in the South Pacific*.
F.J. Harlow, Central vocational training institution.

proceed on the development of a new English course ranging from class 1 to class 4. However, it was not until 1966 that it was finally decided to instigate a major program of revision across all subjects. The move was partly brought about by world trends and by pressure from Miss Freda Gwilliam, Educational Adviser to the Minister for Overseas Development. The advent of ministerial government in Fiji also made the Department of Education much more sensitive to popular political pressures.

In 1966, after the Government had approved in principle the eventual substitution of a six- for the traditional eight-year primary course of schooling, a Curriculum Revision Committee was set up. This sought the assistance of the newly-established Centre for Curriculum Renewal and Educational Development Overseas (CREDO), whose Director visited Fiji in 1967. Further advice and encouragement was forthcoming at the Fourth Commonwealth Education Conference held at Lagos in early 1968. Towards the end of the same year, the Department of Education set up its own Curriculum Development Unit, charged with the task of revising curricula and producing the necessary supporting texts for both the six-year primary course and the four-year junior secondary course. In 1969 the United Nations agreed to the University of the South Pacific's request for the establishment of a United Nations Project — the financing of a secondary school Curriculum Development Unit within the University's School of Education. The project is designed to prepare a new form 1-4 syllabus. After initial delays it was finally started late in 1971. In 1970 the Curriculum Development Unit of the Department of Education was merged into the Education Department's new research and development section.

The main effect of these moves has been to speed up the rate of curriculum revision. It is still too early to make any extended analysis of the changes that have been made, but many new courses in basic subjects have been introduced on a trial basis and some have now been integrated into all the primary schools. Radio broadcasts, first started as far back as 1956, have also been extensively revised and reorganized in conjunction with the program of curriculum revision. Clearly the quality of the teachers in the schools and the facilities made available to them will finally determine the outcome of the curriculum program. This fact has been recognized by the Education Department and in the past few years an increasing number of in-service courses have been provided for teachers to acquaint them

with new curriculum ideas and content. The teacher-training program has also been revised to accommodate new teaching methods and syllabuses. Progress in the field of curriculum reform is rarely spectacular and of necessity must be viewed as a long-term and on-going activity and it will probably be many years before lasting beneficial effects are achieved in all Fiji's schools, but at least the effort is being made. It is also currently hoped that with the termination of the United Nations Project in the mid-1970s, a similar unit can be established to revise the fifth and sixth form curriculum so that the South Pacific countries can dispense with relying on New Zealand's public examinations for their selection purposes. Instead, it is hoped to introduce new regional examinations tailored to suit the needs of the territories of the South Pacific.

The disparity between the quantity and quality of education and its increasing cost may well be heightened in the years ahead by the Government's decision, made in November 1972, in keeping with its long-term educational objectives, to begin implementing fee-free education as from the start of the 1973 school year. Initially, the scheme was to apply to class 1 only. In 1974, fees were to be abolished for classes 1 and 2 and thereafter a further class would be added each year until by 1978 the basic six-year primary course would be fee-free. Inevitably the scheme would result in greatly increased costs for the Government and the use of funds which it might be argued could have best been used to improve the quality of schooling — fee-free education is really a quantitative measure because it encourages more parents to send their children to school — but by deciding to introduce the scheme on a progressive basis year by year an attempt is being made to mitigate its short-term effects.

It would appear that Rodger, by then Under-Secretary for Administration in the Department of Education, played a significant role in persuading the Government to introduce fee-free education on a progressive basis. In a memorandum to the Minister of Education he claimed that an abrupt abolition of all fees at the primary school level would not only be very costly to implement but would also create a number of unfair anomalies.¹⁵ Voluntary schools needed money for four main purposes: to pay in full or top up

¹⁵FDEF 18/21/48 Some Thoughts on the introduction of fee-free education.

teachers' salaries; to build and furnish additional school buildings; to maintain school property; and to buy and replace classroom equipment and learning materials. 'Tuition' fees were used mainly to meet the costs of buildings, maintenance and equipment, but they met only a small part of the total cost. Hence the need in most schools for 'building' and/or 'admission' fees, and constant fund-raising activities. Recent high building costs and interest rates had also created an extra financial burden for many schools. The Department of Education had also altered its policy recently in respect to building grants. Instead of issuing many small sums, it was now policy to issue 'worthwhile' grants. This meant, in effect, that a primary school was likely to get a building grant only once every fifteen to twenty years. From the records of the Department of Education Rodger concluded that over Fiji as a whole non-Government primary schools raised privately about sixteen dollars per child. Tuition fees accounted for slightly over half of this with fees averaging \$8.50. (Fees ranged from nothing at all in many Fijian schools in the Eastern Division to as much as \$18 in some urban schools.) The balance of \$7.50 was raised by special fees and fund raising. It was clearly cheaper to send children to Government rather than private schools. The fees were \$12 per child, but the extra money needed to run the school came from Government revenue. Moreover, the remission of fees was more favourable in Government schools, averaging \$2.50 per head as opposed to \$1 per head in non-Government schools. Rodger stressed that the wholesale abolition of fees would result in endless requests to Government for massive assistance towards maintenance, especially from many outlying schools which were in a bad state of repair:

Once Government automatically assumes partial responsibility for maintenance by abolishing tuition fees, all these schools could reasonably be expected to ask for assistance far in excess of that which they would otherwise have provided for themselves.

Furthermore, the wide range of fees charged also complicated the problem of abolishing them because the difficulty would then arise of how much each school should get in compensation for fees forgone. Rodger concluded therefore, 'that a blanket abolition of existing "tuition" fees is probably impracticable in the next few years — partly on grounds of cost, but also because of difficulties inherent in estimating the cost and unfairness of its operation'.

On the other hand, he thought that the introduction of fee-free schooling on the basis of one class per year had several advantages. The system could be extended year by year on a prearranged and clearly understood plan; all races and all geographical areas would be affected equally; the problem of the large number of children not in school would be barely felt because the six and seven year olds would enter class 1 in the normal way, while those who had left school prematurely were unlikely to seek readmission to class 1; and the excessive claims for maintenance were unlikely to arise as Government would initially be contributing only a small part of the total fee revenue. Admittedly, the problem arising from the wide range of fees charged would remain and it was also true that extra expenditure on education would be caused by subsidising those parents who could afford to pay, but that would also be the case in any wholesale abolition of fees. Rodger's assessment of the pros and cons of the fee-free issue highlights the complexity of much educational decision-making even on what appear to be relatively simple matters of policy.

Since independence the Government has been subjected to new educational demands, especially in the area of pre-schooling. The establishment of private kindergartens dates back as far as the 1950s, but their growth was especially marked in the mid- and late-1960s. By 1970 there were fifty-nine in operation. In 1973 the number of pre-schools as they are now termed, had risen to ninety-seven, catering for 2915 children and employing 217 supervisors. From a survey of preschools undertaken by the Department of Education in 1971 it appeared that most of them were in urban areas in the Lautoka and Suva districts.¹⁶ At that time, only four of the supervisors were qualified kindergarten teachers. The survey stated that most of the recruits were primary school leavers who were totally unfit to carry out the important duties that their work demanded. At the present time, preschools receive no Government assistance and the standard of facilities and equipment leaves a great deal to be desired. DPVI made brief mention of pre-schooling and of the fact that the Department of Education employed two supervisors to guide existing and projected preschools 'along the right lines', and to run short training courses for supervisors and their assistants, but no Government

¹⁶FDEF 24/69/27-32 Information paper on pre-school education in Fiji, Aug. 1971.

financial aid for individual preschools was expected. It was asserted that the provision of school facilities for children of school age was of greater immediate importance and that therefore Government did not intend to enter directly into the kindergarten field during the Plan period. The Director of Education made a similar response in a letter to the National Youth Director of the Young Womens' Christian Association:

... I have consistently made it clear that, at the present stage of our development the Education Department is not able actively to concern itself with pre-school education the problem is really the age-old one of priorities.¹⁷

Despite the Government's clearly stated position, pressure for official recognition of preschooling and financial aid has continued. In December 1971 the Government agreed to set up an Advisory Committee on preschooling and in September 1972 a report was prepared on the subject.¹⁸ As Professor I.D. Stewart, the Convenor of the Advisory Committee, remarked to the Secretary for Education:

... this [pre-school] sector of the educational enterprise is likely to become the focus of an increased amount of attention in the next few years, and ... it is in the best interests of the country to ensure that the quality and the rate of growth of pre-school education is subject to government control.¹⁹

Whatever the outcome of the present deliberations on preschool education, there is little doubt that the pressure on the Government to do something will continue to grow. The same could also be said of demands for schools for mentally retarded children. Essentially, it is a question of priorities, as F.H. Moffett, then the Acting-Director of Education, emphasized as far back as 1968:

I regret that until we reach the stage where we are able to provide a primary education for a greater

¹⁷*ibid.*, 24/69/7 3 Mar. 1970.

¹⁸A. Grey, *A Framework of Family Education Proposals for Fijian Peoples*, Bernard Van Leer Action-Research Project, University of Sydney, 1972.

¹⁹FDEF 24/69/59 23 Oct. 1972.

number of children of school age, and until our serious shortage of teachers is overcome, I am unable to consider the setting up of special centres for slow learning children.²⁰

Present indications suggest that the ordering of priorities with respect to the quantity and quality of education to be offered will continue to dominate the Minister's time as the education system continues to expand and takes on new responsibilities in the 1970s. It was not surprising that the Minister of Education should highlight this area of concern in a speech that he made during 'Education Week' in September 1972.²¹ He emphasized the fact that people concerned about education in Fiji were 'seething with ideas', but added that the trouble with most ideas was that they cost money and it was debatable whether the country could afford to spend more than 22.5 cents in every dollar of government expenditure on education as was currently being done. With a limit on available resources, priorities had to be determined and that was where the difficulties really started. He then elaborated on a dozen different items which were currently on his desk for consideration. Besides preschool education and the needs of handicapped children, the Minister mentioned fee-free education, more junior secondary schools, more fifth and sixth forms, teachers' salaries, training more teachers, training in basic building skills, the development of technical-vocational education and grants to youth organizations. He claimed that he could have readily added to the list but hoped that he had proved his point — 'we cannot do everything at once, and ... to decide what we should do first and what we should defer until later, is not as easy a task as some of our critics seem to think'. The Minister could have added that his problems were by no means unique to Fiji.

²⁰*ibid.*, 24/22/83.F.H. Moffett to Chandra Babi, 25 Mar. 1968.

²¹*ibid.*, 24/62/40., 'Priorities in Education'. Speech by the Minister for Education, Youth and Sport, during Education Week, 2 Sept. 1972.

Chapter 12

Conclusion

Since World War II, education has assumed an unprecedented importance in planning for national growth in the developing countries of the world. Never before has so much financial and human capital been invested in so short a time in the expansion of school systems. The rapid growth of education has inevitably created major problems involving the organization and control of schools and the determination of planning priorities, both of which have been amply demonstrated in the post-war development of education in Fiji.

Various factors have shaped the education system in Fiji in the past thirty years. Foremost has been the rapid and unrelenting population growth, which has put unprecedented strains on the economic and skilled manpower resources of the territory and been primarily responsible for the quantity/quality dilemma that has confronted educational administrators throughout the period. Changing attitudes towards the value and role of education, both on the part of individuals and the state, have also exerted a decisive influence on educational growth in Fiji since 1945. The belief in education as a basic human right encouraged a strong groundswell of social demand for more schooling that was strengthened by the significance attached to education from the mid-1950s onwards, both in Fiji and elsewhere, as an essential component in the promotion of national development. World War II also had long-term effects on education in Fiji. It hastened Britain's resolve to promote the economic and social development of its colonial empire and opened the way to a general awakening of the 'Third World' of which Fiji is a part. Fiji's post-war economic fortunes similarly played a decisive role in determining the extent and pace of educational growth. The best of intentions remain stillborn without finance to implement them and Fiji has been fortunate in the past three decades in enjoying a sustained period of rising prosperity and generous amounts of Commonwealth financial and technical assistance. Moreover, the realization in the early 1960s

that political independence would soon be achieved also acted as an inducement to both the British Government in Whitehall and the Colonial Administration in Suva to accelerate educational progress.

The precise nature of Fiji's education system has been determined by the geographical layout of the territory, the mixed racial composition and contrasting cultural backgrounds of the population, and by the legacies of British colonial education policy. The far-flung distribution of the Fijian islands has always posed a communication problem and necessitated the building of many small schools, while racial distinctions have given rise to segregated schooling and frequently to wasteful duplication of facilities. Finally, the British implanted an education system based on the voluntary school principle. While this idea fostered local interest and initiative in the establishment and running of schools, it also gave rise to serious qualitative deficiencies in many of them, to the encouragement of racially distinct schools, and to inadequate provisions for schooling especially in rural areas.

The evidence contained in this study suggests that two basic educational problems have confronted the Fiji Government since the last world war. The first has been the chronic lack of sufficient financial and human resources to cope adequately with the rising social demand for education. This does not mean that the Government has neglected education in its budgetary allocations. Quite the reverse is true. For many years the vote for social services has been the largest item in the annual budget, accounting for slightly more than 30 per cent of total public expenditure. Of this, education has been allocated almost 60 per cent.¹ Furthermore, the

¹The allocation of resources appears to be consistent with that of many developing countries, although comparable statistics are difficult to obtain. There is currently no means of judging whether budgetary allocations for education are either excessive or inefficient compared with alternatives. Moreover, there is a similar lack of information as to private and social internal rates of return to investment in educational capital formation. During the period of colonial administration, the Government was concerned to preserve an appropriate balance in expenditure, and allocations for education and health were determined largely by private agreement between

private sector also makes a substantial contribution towards provision for education, although the precise amount has consistently been difficult to assess accurately. In 1972 the Bureau of Statistics calculated that in the previous year non-government spending on education had amounted to about \$4 million. By comparison, gross government expenditure, capital and recurrent, for the same year totalled \$9.5 million. Unfortunately, Fiji's population has grown at a very fast rate during the past two decades, with the result that the quantity of schooling provided has outstripped its quality.

Consequently many schools have characteristically been of poor and temporary construction, overcrowded, lacking in basic equipment, and staffed by poorly educated and frequently untrained teachers. Moreover, most schools, especially at the secondary level, have been geared to a highly academic curriculum which has clearly been unsuited to the abilities and interests of many pupils and quite unrelated to Fiji's growing needs for skilled manpower. Senator R.L. Munro recently highlighted the essence of Fiji's post-war quantity/quality dilemma when he claimed that there were far too many children to educate in proportion to the economically active or productive section of the population. He asserted that the proliferation of children in Fiji had ruined education. There were too few schools, too many children in each class, too many of them at home trying to do their homework, and too few teachers to teach them.²

The tension between the quantity and quality of education offered in the schools appears to have been intensified by the divided control of education, the second of the two basic problems confronting the Government since 1945. The British encouraged the proliferation of voluntary agencies,

¹ (continued)

the respective directors. When Rodger went to Fiji in the mid-1950s, education and health received approximately equal amounts of government funding. Then Rodger and the Director of Health agreed that in a 'young' country like Fiji education should get more than health. Since independence education has continued to receive a very high priority because it has been a greater vote-catcher than health.

²Report of a speech by Senator R.L. Munro, President of the Family Planning Association of Fiji, at the 1971 graduation ceremony of the Nasinu Teachers' College. *Pacific Islands Education*, no.60, Oct. 1972, p.36.

whether they were religious or secular, with what amounted in practice to little more than nominal overall direction and supervision of the schools by the Department of Education. This relatively loose administrative framework was an expression of the long-standing English tradition of placing great value on local as opposed to centralized control. Safety from the threat of centralized bureaucratic direction was to be found in having the control of education shared out among a wide variety of different agencies. Unfortunately, local control also has its inherent weaknesses and these have been amply demonstrated in Fiji. While the Government has subsidized local efforts to establish and maintain schools, it has been unable to control, as effectively as it would have wished, both the pace and direction of educational growth because the onus for starting schools has traditionally remained with the voluntary agencies. With the possible exception of the Ten Year Plan of 1946, the British never seriously entertained the idea of setting up a system of state schools. Instead, they tried with limited success to influence the growth and quality of schooling by exhortation and various forms of grants-in-aid.

On the basis of Fiji's post-war experience and with current trends elsewhere in mind, the thesis is advanced that the essentially voluntary system of schools and the largely indirect control of educational development exercised by the Government has outlived its usefulness in Fiji. If the importance now attached to education as a national social and economic investment, and the qualitative deficiencies in Fiji's existing education system (apparently the outcome in part of insufficient Government control and direction in the past) are taken into account, it would seem more appropriate for the Government to assume direct control and responsibility for the majority of schools as soon as possible. Stephens reached a similar conclusion in 1944, as did the Education Commission in 1969. Moreover, the current Development Plan makes tacit recognition of the desirability of such a move, but states no more than that the Government plans 'eventually' to take over responsibility for all those schools that express a wish to be taken over. It is also worth noting that the Indians have consistently supported the idea of a system of state schools since before World War II.³

³In its submission to the Burns Commission in 1959 the Indian Community expressed the belief that the Government should

(Footnote 3 continued on p.194)

It may justifiably be asked why such a course of action is advocated now whereas in the immediate post-war years it was politically and financially impracticable. There appear to be several reasons. In the first place, the Government now attaches the highest importance to education as a social and economic investment in the country's future well-being. This is reflected in the fact that more public money is now being spent on the provision of schooling than ever before. In the circumstances it hardly seems wise or politically prudent to hand over such large sums of money to private management, especially in view of the proven inefficiency of many voluntary school management committees. Moreover, the Government is already rapidly assuming the burden for the majority of educational costs in the form of teachers' salaries and the remission of school fees. There is also a need for greater efficiency in the use of existing resources. As Rodger recently pointed out, not enough control is currently being exerted over the setting up and location of junior middle schools and many existing schools are not being utilized to their maximum capacity.⁴ Problems of this nature are bound to occur in a system lacking a strong central authority. At the present time there appears to be a need in Fiji for more uniformity in the school system to ensure greater equality of opportunity for all children. Fijian children living in remote areas are a case in point. If the Government strictly controlled the appointment and posting of all teachers and operated some type of country service arrangement as in New Zealand, a better standard of teaching could be achieved in the small rural schools. The English ideal of strong local school management is commendable and indeed to be encouraged in a society in which the general level of education of the population is relatively high, as in most Western countries, but it is debatable whether the same principles should be encouraged amongst a population consisting largely of semi-literate farmers and farm labourers. Traditional financial arguments also appear to be no longer relevant. Whereas the British Administration always argued that it could not afford to take over control of the

³ (continued)

provide a national system of schools open to all races and classes. They were also emphatic that the responsibility for mass education should rest with the Government and not with religious societies and *ad hoc* committees. (See Sahib, 1963: Educational reorganisation in the colony of Fiji, p.137.)

⁴FDEF 18/21/91 Notes on the Opening of New Schools.

schools, the present Fijian Government is in effect gradually working towards that end by assuming an ever-greater burden of school costs. Moreover, the Fijian economy is now better able to support a state school system than it was in the past. Finally, it is probably true to say that such a move would have popular political support from most quarters. Many people appear to be aware of the country's educational shortcomings and conscious of the need for something better than the traditional voluntary system. At the same time it is also true that by dismantling the voluntary school system something of great value would be lost. Over the years the local school committees, whether Indian, Fijian, European or Chinese, have all made worthwhile and sustained contributions to the school system, despite their obvious shortcomings. In the advent of any state school system it is likely that much of that popular interest and voluntary effort on behalf of individual schools would be lost. The relative lack of parental support for the few existing Government schools in comparison with their voluntary counterparts has long been manifest. Nevertheless, the advantages to be gained from a state school system in terms of greater efficiency of the use of resources and equality of opportunities for all children appear to outweigh other considerations. To some extent a parallel can be drawn between the present position in Fiji and that in New Zealand during the provincial period of the nineteenth century, when the Government, faced with the choice of continuing to support denominational schools or setting up its own state system, decided on grounds of efficiency to establish a public school system.

Perhaps the best solution in Fiji's current circumstances would be to create a dual system in which existing voluntary schools could either choose to remain independent (and would then no longer receive Government assistance), or they could elect to be taken over by the State. Meanwhile, the State would embark on a program of building public schools to fill the gaps left by private initiative. This arrangement would provide the religious bodies with the opportunity to remain independent and at the same time enable Indian and Fijian local school committees to hand their schools over to state control if they wished. The cost of providing a greatly increased number of schools in Fiji at the present time is clearly beyond the financial resources of the churches. It is also probably fair to claim that they have no great desire to expand beyond their current responsibilities. On the other hand there appear to be many school committees who would be only too willing to hand over their schools to

Government control. Estimates of the cost of introducing a State system of schools can only be approximate. Much would depend on the nature of the agreement reached with the voluntary agencies and on the speed with which the move was made. However, there is little doubt that the sum would run into several million dollars in the initial stages and that future recurrent costs would be high, but the cost of running any system of schooling is high and the Government is already committed to heavy expenditure on education both now and in the future. It is also possible that greater efficiency in the use of existing and future facilities would to some extent contain costs. Finally, the degree to which any Government is prepared to invest in schools is a reflection of the importance attached to education in developing the quality of a nation's way of life. At the present time it seems that the Fijian Government places a high premium on its educational investment.

The location of control in most education systems has traditionally been a source of conflict, with social, economic and educational considerations continually shifting the point of balance and making new adjustments periodically necessary. As G.W. Parkyn has remarked,⁵ any particular allocation of responsibilities within an education system is likely to be a more or less temporary arrangement that changes with the passing of time. Seen in this context, it would seem that Fiji may have reached a decisive point in its educational development. The Government may choose to muddle on as in the past, vainly trying to cope with the social demand for education by working through the voluntary agencies, or it may decide that the time has arrived to introduce a State school system in order to control more effectively the quantity and quality of education offered, so that the vast financial and human investment is used to Fiji's maximum benefit. It is possible to argue that that is what the Government of Fiji is currently trying to do; that it has arrived at an educational policy which accurately reflects the political, social and economic realities of contemporary Fiji; and that the policy is generally acceptable to the people. Be that as it may, it still seems that the social demand for more education currently has precedence over the quality of what is offered. The present policy may be

⁵'Some fundamental problems of democratic administration' in G.W. Parkyn (ed.), *The Administration of Education in New Zealand*, pp.112-13.

politically expedient in the short term, but it is doubtful whether it can sustain the sort of economic and social development that Fiji appears to need if it is simultaneously to remain an independent state and achieve a major improvement in the general living standards of its people. Moreover it would seem from the proceedings of a seminar on educational priorities in the South Pacific, held at Suva, that a similar problem exists in other territories of the Oceanic region.⁶ Fiji is currently pursuing an education policy similar to those adopted by most developing countries since the last world war. The question that must seriously be examined at the present time is whether there is any viable alternative.

Since World War II a marked change has taken place in the attitude of the Government of Fiji towards its role in the promotion of education. During the late 1930s, the British approach to the economic and social development of the colonies underwent a major reorientation which culminated in the passing of the first of the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts in 1940. The traditional doctrine of self-sufficiency was replaced by a belief in the need for substantial financial aid from the United Kingdom and a greater emphasis on the expansion of the social services, including education, as a means to achieving greater economic productivity. In Fiji, the redefinition of colonial policy resulted in a more positive approach towards education by the Government. Nevertheless, the financial vicissitudes of the early post-war years and the divided responsibility for education made planning a difficult task and prevented the Government from adopting and sustaining any long-term comprehensive education policy. The record of the past thirty years presents several attempts to plan for future educational growth, but proposals were either stillborn or amended substantially in the process of implementation. Throughout the period covered by this study the Government appears to have been influenced primarily by social demand, first for primary schooling and latterly for secondary and tertiary education. The missionaries originally entered the educational field in order to save souls. The Government later supplemented

⁶'Priorities in Education in the South Pacific'. Third South Pacific Seminar, University of the South Pacific, Suva 1972. Some thirty papers were presented on a wide array of educational problems in the territories of the South Pacific. On the specific question of the control of education see Phillip Hughes, Summary Paper, no.29, pp.2-3.

and encouraged their efforts in order to provide a literate cadre of minor civil servants. This objective remained a feature of post-war policy but by then the Government was faced with a mounting wave of popular demand for schooling such as it had never experienced before. Moreover, the pressure for more schools put a great strain on the Colony's financial resources at a time when there were many other equally urgent demands to be considered. In retrospect, it appears that the British Administration in Fiji never quite made up its mind what educational policy to adopt. Perhaps this accounts for the *ad hoc* nature of so much educational decision-making in the post-war period until the mid-1960s. Only then, when the territory embarked on a series of co-ordinated social and economic development plans did a more comprehensive and long-term education policy start to emerge. The piecemeal approach to educational development was caused in part by financial stringency but also by the ability of the voluntary agencies to thwart Government objectives by failing to take the initiative when presented with the chance to do so. The largely abortive attempt to establish non-academic or vocationally oriented courses in the secondary schools in the late 1950s is a case in point. Finally, perhaps it was unfair to expect any government to plan very far ahead in the uncertainties of the immediate post-war years, especially in the educational field in which the growth of social demand was so dramatic and far-reaching. C.E. Beeby recently claimed that since 1945 most governments have had only an emerging educational purpose that has become altered in the process of moving towards the goal.⁷ The statement is particularly apt in the case of Fiji.

This study also emphasizes the close relationship that always exists between educational planning and the political climate at any given time. As W.E.F. Ward, a former educational adviser to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, has remarked, 'The educational administrator has to be content to achieve only as much of his professional ambition as is practical politics'.⁸ He must of necessity have a vision of the system he is building and of the standards for which he is striving, but a public which has

⁷C.E. Beeby, 'The present position of educational planning'. Paper presented at the Seminar on Educational Planning, Victoria University, Wellington, May 1972, p.19.

⁸W.E.F. Ward, *Educating Young Nations*, p.34.

had no experience of those standards of quality is most likely to press for quantity in education rather than quality. If this happens, as it has in Fiji, then the administrator is likely to see his high standards swept away in the flood of cheap schools produced to meet popular demand. Rodger's warning to the Fijian Government over the recent proliferation of junior secondary schools is an example of what Ward means. Moreover, it is also essential to bear in mind that educational planners or administrators (in the past there has been no meaningful distinction) have always found themselves confronted by an existing education system combining elements of both old and new. An archaic education system cannot be scrapped and rebuilt from the ground in a year or two. Changes in educational systems have to be brought about by a set of policies spread over time, with careful regard paid both to the priority needs of individual sectors and the evolution of the system as a whole. Davies was very much aware of this fact in 1946 when he was entrusted with the job of preparing the Ten Year Plan. While he sympathized with many of Stephens's ideas he also knew that their implementation in the immediate future was not politically possible. Hence his attempt to compromise. At the present time there appears to be a conflict in aims between the Fijian Government and the Department of Education. The Government, for obvious political reasons, is still placing the highest priority on plans to expand the size of the education system and the length of schooling, but the Department is acutely aware of the need to improve the quality of the offering. Consequently, educational policy is still to some extent confused in practice, with the Department of Education having to pay lip-service to the Government's stated objectives. Once again it is the difficult problem of determining priorities.

Nevertheless, for all its shortcomings, education has made striking advances in post-war Fiji. McGrath has spoken of the 'shocking' state of education in the years immediately after World War II, while Davies claims that education in the Pacific Islands was in a sorry state everywhere in the late 1940s. At that time the view was widely held by most Europeans that the Pacific Islanders had a low potential for economic and social development and that they were therefore incapable of ever accepting major responsibility for their own destiny. The traditional paternalism of the colonial era still lingers on in a few areas, but in general it has given way to a far more optimistic assessment of the Islanders' economic, social and political potential.

By the standards of most developing countries, Fiji is currently making generous provision for the educational needs of its people. The majority of children now receive at least six years primary education and more children than ever before are receiving varying degrees and types of secondary schooling. Furthermore, the basis for widespread tertiary level education has now been established and the Derrick Technical Institute and the University of the South Pacific have rapidly established Fiji as the focus of educational development in a wide area of the South Pacific. However, geographical and racial difficulties traditionally associated with educational development still remain.

Rodger recently remarked that the physical nature of Fiji made it difficult for the Department of Education to know what was going on within the school system at any one time, despite recent increases in the number of field staff. The educational gap between Fijians and Indians is also a continuing source of concern, although the general level of literacy is much higher and more widespread than it ever was in the past and there is a sense of urgency and purpose about educational development that bodes well for the future. However, the basic tension between the constant social demand for more schooling and the need to improve the quality of education remains. The unrestrained growth of secondary education in the past decade has aggravated the shortage of educated and trained teachers and there is no foreseeable short-term solution to the problem. In addition, the current emphasis on curriculum renewal is also being jeopardized to some extent by the inferior quality of so many teachers. As Rodger asserts, 'It is hard to get across an appreciation of new teaching methods. Many teachers catch on to words but not ideas'.

There is little doubt that the failure, to quote Rodger, 'to get enough Fijians through to the top' of the education system presents potentially the most serious and difficult educational problem in the immediate future because of its possible political implications now that Fiji is an independent state. But education is only a symptom of a much deeper social and cultural problem akin to that of the Maoris in New Zealand. The future of Fiji is inextricably linked to the fate of the Fijian people and as yet there is no clear indication of the path they will choose. In his 1959 report on the Fijian people, Spate warned that no people could contract out of the century it lived in, nor could it be the sole judge of the terms on which it entered, for economic

life has its own logic.⁹ Nothing has happened since then to change the relevance of that remark. The longer Fijians cling to their traditional life-style and the more the Indians dominate the economic life of the country, the greater is the risk of grave future racial trouble.

The Government places a high priority on developing a racially harmonious society, and multiracial schooling is frequently invoked as the principal means by which this is to be achieved. The subject remains controversial but slow progress is being made. In 1972 Rodger was able to state that during the 1971 school year 322 of the country's 627 primary schools had children of more than one race on their rolls. In addition, 154 primary schools had multiracial staffs and 83 of the 98 post-primary schools had children of more than one race amongst their enrolments.¹⁰ Statistics of this sort clearly failed to impress many opposition politicians, who looked to much more positive measures from the Government to implement multiracial schooling. H.C. Sharma claimed that the principle had gained very little momentum in recent years and remarked that 'one swallow does not make a summer', and the admission of one Indian student to a Fijian school or one part-European student to an Indian school did not make the school multiracial.¹¹ Generally speaking, attitudes towards the subject do not appear to have changed significantly since the 1960s, although there may be a slight softening of the Fijian standpoint if the comments of Adi Losalini Dovi, an Alliance Party Member of Parliament, are a reflection of broader Fijian thinking. She said that when she first entered politics she thought that intermarriage was the answer to the racial problem. Now she was not so sure as this implied 'wiping away a particular race'. Instead, she favoured multiracial schooling. Only, she said, by 'letting our children mix at a very early age will we be able to appreciate each other's culture'.¹² M.J. Bay has also pointed out that resistance to multiracial schooling is weakening rapidly in urban areas where a variety of secondary schools have recently been established: 'To fill their rolls they will take virtually

⁹Sbate, *The Fijian People*, p.9.

¹⁰Rodger, *Fiji Education: some facts and figures*, p.9.

¹¹*Fiji Senate Debates*, 17 Dec. 1970, p.107.

¹²*Fiji Parliamentary Debates*, 9 Dec. 1970, p.142.

anyone.¹³ In addition, an increasing number of children now live in multiracial communities, especially in Suva, and the Department of Education is actively encouraging Indian children to attend Fijian schools and vice versa to rationalize the use of existing school facilities.

The long-standing controversy over the language of instruction still remains, although it now seems generally accepted that it is educationally desirable to introduce both the study and use of English as soon as possible in a child's schooling. As in the past, the availability of competent teachers is the main obstacle. Meanwhile, the majority of children are taught in either Fijian or Hindi for the first four years of school. Similarly with the issue of compulsory schooling there seems little point in pressing the principle further until there is sufficient school accommodation within easy reach of all children of school age. When that stage is reached there will probably be little need for legislation to compel attendance at school if the past experiences of other countries like New Zealand is a reliable guide.

The type of education offered in Fiji's schools is also a contentious issue. Despite the anti-colonial views of writers like R. Mathews,¹⁴ it was the Indians and Fijians who originally demanded academic education modelled on colonial lines. In the years between the two world wars the British tried to introduce a more practical type of education but the Indians, in particular, would have none of it. They and many other native races throughout the British Empire sought an education similar to that given to Europeans.¹⁵ That alone was the passport to status and the good life. It is only recently that technical and vocational education have made significant headway in Fiji, but there is still strong resistance on the part of both Indians and Fijians alike to any major departure from the traditional academic offerings. The same applies to the use of external examinations. While they are not specifically geared to

¹³Interview with Bay.

¹⁴R. Mathews, 'Fijian Education: a request best repudiated?', *Australia New Zealand History of Education Society (ANZHE) Journal*, 1(1), Apr. 1972, pp.24-33. Also 'Fijian Education - A Sequel: on getting away from mum', *ANZHE Journal* 1(2), Oct. 1972, pp.46-54.

¹⁵See John Anderson, *The Struggle for the School*.

Fiji students, they provide the yardsticks of academic progress that are necessary in a variety of professional callings, and preparation for sitting them dominates the annual work of the secondary schools. At the present time much of the curriculum revision work is being directed towards making the primary and secondary school work more directly related to the Fijian and wider South Pacific environment. Furthermore, the Department of Education, in keeping with general trends elsewhere, favours a broad general education at the primary stage with the option of more vocationally-oriented courses at the post-primary level. The recent rapid growth of the Derrick Technical Institute has stimulated the development of craft subjects in the schools, but the costs of raw materials and specialized equipment and facilities, plus the difficulty of recruiting competent staff, have made the task difficult. Clearly, specialized trade training and other technical courses will in future be centred on the Derrick Technical Institute, which since 1971 has catered solely for tertiary students. Agricultural training is similarly concentrated at the Navuso Agricultural College, which, together with the Student-Farmer Scheme and the Marist Agricultural Training Centre at Tutu, have been under the control of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests since 1973.

The recurrent costs of education constitute perhaps one of the most serious problems facing educational administrators in Fiji. They have been steadily rising since the last world war as teachers' salaries and building costs have increased. Both Hayden and Rodger have spoken of the difficulties encountered annually in balancing the budget and of the constant need to ask the Government for additional funds for each succeeding year. Typical of the problems currently concerning the Department of Education in this sphere is the recurrent cost of the preliminary classes at the University of the South Pacific. Since 1968, all 6A or seventh form work in Fiji has been done at the university. At the time when the idea was instituted it seemed a good way to avoid duplicating expensive sixth form facilities such as laboratories, and also a way of overcoming small and uneconomic senior secondary school classes. Unfortunately, the cost per pupil at the preliminary stage is very high because the teaching is done mainly by expatriate New Zealand secondary school teachers. The Department of Education in Fiji is reluctant to take over responsibility for preliminary classes, but financial pressures may eventually dictate their own logic. Finally, a substantial increase in teachers'

salaries in May 1973 also heightened the recurrent cost burden.

Since the last world war, Fiji has been the recipient of a vast amount of financial and technical aid from the United Kingdom, and education has received a substantial share. Between 1946 and 1970 Fiji received £10,452,000 under the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, of which slightly more than 17 per cent was spent on primary, secondary, technical, vocational and higher education.¹⁶ The principal aid schemes included the rebuilding of Queen Victoria School, the Suva Grammar schools, and the Nasinu Teachers' College; the construction of the Derrick Technical Institute, Adi Cakobau, Lautoka High, and Ratu Kadavulevu schools; and extensions to the Veitu and Adi Maopa primary schools. Aid was also given towards the recurrent costs of the Derrick Institute, the establishment of the Educational Research Institute of the early 1950s, overseas scholarships, and the initial costs associated with the new university. Finally, the United Kingdom currently contributes substantially towards the recurrent costs of the university.

Notwithstanding Britain's major material contribution over the past thirty years, Fiji also owes a considerable debt to New Zealanders and the New Zealand Government for much of its educational development since World War I. Indeed, Hayden goes so far as to suggest that the Scheme of Co-operation, initiated in 1924, has been the backbone of Fiji's education system over the past fifty years. It was natural that Fiji should rely heavily in the past on expatriates and also logical that New Zealand, the nearest British Dominion, should supply the majority of senior administrators and teachers to maintain the school system. Men like Davies, McGrath, Moffett and Bay all made significant contributions to Fiji's post-war educational development, while Russell and Caughley established the tradition in the 1930s. Davies and Stephens, in particular, appeared to reflect their New Zealand backgrounds in the contributions they made to the immediate post-war planning of education in Fiji. It was also possibly significant that English and New Zealand educational thought differed markedly over the value of a state school system as opposed to one run by voluntary agencies. New Zealanders appear to have been generally

¹⁶*Colonial Development and Welfare Acts 1929-70: a Brief Review.* Cmd. 4677, pp.44-5.

outspoken in their criticisms of Fiji's voluntary school system — understandably, coming as they do from a country with a predominantly state school system characterized by a strong central Department of Education. This divergence of viewpoint between British colonial education administrators and their New Zealand colleagues may well have contributed to the indecisive nature of government educational policy in Fiji in the late 1940s and 1950s.

The Colonial Office practice of moving administrative and executive personnel around the colonial territories at regular intervals may also have contributed to the *ad hoc* nature of educational policy in Fiji after 1945. While the practice could no doubt be justified, it made long-term and consistent planning difficult in the colonial setting, whether in education or in any other aspect of government. Moreover, it was not until the post-war period that the colonies and their administrative personnel were encouraged to plan for long-range development. The thinking associated with the pre-war policy of self-sufficiency understandably took many years to change. For most career-minded colonial administrators the main objective was surely to avoid 'rocking the boat' over established policies and financial matters.

Fortunately for Fiji there was one notable exception to the general rule of frequently moving colonial officials from place to place. Throughout the late 1950s and the 1960s, Fiji's education system was under the control and direction of Gordon Rodger, who appears to have epitomized the best qualities of a colonial administrator. A Yorkshireman by birth, he studied at Cambridge and London universities and joined the Colonial Education Service after World War II. He served as an education officer in West Africa before being posted to Fiji as Assistant Director of Education in 1955. In 1957 he became Director. Rodger's arrival in Fiji coincided with a change in the political and economic climate. The British Government, conscious that the Empire was fast disappearing, was concerned to do all it could in the short time left to prepare the remaining colonies for self-government. Consequently, social development was high on the list of priorities. At the same time, the late 1950s also saw a marked upswing in the economic fortunes of the Western world which was reflected in higher sugar returns for Fiji, which in turn resulted in more money being made available for development schemes. Hence Rodger arrived in Fiji at an opportune time to promote educational growth.

Throughout his stay in the territory Rodger has remained a firm advocate of the voluntary school system because of its value as a stimulus to local initiative, but he has been no doctrinaire theorist. As he has admitted, the educational policy followed by the Government in the 1960s was essentially one of expediency, not through choice but as a matter of necessity; 'It was *ad hoc* and messy, but realistic'. Like most able educational administrators, he quickly learned the art of compromise, which was essential in the Fijian setting with its many different educational agencies. Within the restricted social setting of Fiji, it was not hard for a Director of Education to incur the wrath of individuals or groups of people for actions taken in his name. It is, therefore, perhaps a testimony to Rodger's administrative skill that after nearly twenty years of service he remains a widely respected figure. Perhaps this is because, as he himself suggests, he was not a teacher or an educational specialist. Moreover, he rejected 'dictation of policy from above', preferring instead to engage in round-table discussions in an effort to accommodate all parties. It is also characteristic of Rodger's concern for education in Fiji that, despite relinquishing his post as Director in late 1971, as part of a deliberate attempt by the Government to replace expatriates in top administrative positions, he accepted a new post as Administrative Secretary, in which he continued to exert a significant influence on Fiji's educational development.

Davies is another individual who deserves greater credit for his efforts to improve education in post-war Fiji than is commonly acknowledged. Hindsight bears ample testimony to the soundness of many of his views about education in the mid-1940s and his shrewd evaluation of public opinion in Fiji in the latter years of World War II and its aftermath, and he cannot be blamed for the eventual curtailment of the Ten Year Plan.

By world standards, Fiji can hardly lay claim to being amongst the most important of the world's developing countries, nor is it situated at the centre of world affairs. Nevertheless, it is a significant territory in the Oceanic region and one which presents in microcosm most of the educational problems that confront countries of the Third World. Education inevitably precipitates social and economic changes which, in turn, lead to the disruption of traditional lifestyles. This appears to be the price all countries must pay for progress. At the same time there is, both in

Fiji and elsewhere, a current need to achieve a more effective control of the pace, direction, and content of educational development, especially if the quality of the process and the quality of the product of education are to be improved and human and financial resources are to be used most effectively. This in turn necessarily entails an efficient system of educational administration and supervision. Perhaps the professional educator's desire to control the quantity of schooling offered in the interests of quality is not politically acceptable at the present time. Ultimately that is for the politicians to decide. In the meantime educational planners can do no more than point out the possible courses of action and their probable outcome. Fiji's post-war experience suggests the need for greater state control of education and, in the opinion of this writer, the eventual substitution of a system of public or state schools for the essentially voluntary or private system in existence at present. A statement from the report of the Indian Education Commission of 1966 is perhaps an appropriate note on which to conclude this study: and it also lends support to Stephens's views of thirty years ago:

The growing educational needs of a modernizing society can only be met by the State and it would be a mistake to show any over-dependence on private enterprise which is basically uncertain.¹⁷

Postscript

Since 1976, Fiji's Seventh Development Plan has been in operation. The educational objectives remain similar to those for DPVI. There is the same strong emphasis on improving the quality of schooling and meeting the country's manpower needs. In 1978 the Government reached its goal of providing six years of fee-free primary schooling. It is still the Government's policy to extend fee-free education to the lower secondary level when funds permit, and to provide a basic education of ten years' duration for every child. Substantial progress has been achieved in overcoming the shortage of trained teachers. The new Lautoka Training College opened in 1977 and there has been further expansion

¹⁷*Report of the Education Commission 1964-66*, Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1966, pp.446-7.

of the School of Education at the University of the South Pacific. Progress has also been made in the revision of school curricula at both primary and secondary levels although this is necessarily an ongoing process. Major expansion and diversification of technical and vocational education has also been achieved, and Government financial aid to non-Government schools, especially in rural areas, has risen steadily. Secondary school enrolments have maintained a steady upward trend (in 1977 they totalled 35,400, an increase of 25 per cent in four years) but primary school rolls have levelled out and in 1975 dropped for the first time in thirty years. The small but significant decline in primary rolls has continued as the drop in the birth rate in the 1970s takes effect. This trend will generate important long-term consequences for the school system in the 1980s.

Outwardly, the education system appears to be thriving as never before. In 1978 the Ministry of Education consumed 25 per cent of total operating budget expenditures and 43 per cent of the Government's salary bill, but this state of affairs may not last. In May 1979 the *Report of the Financial Review Committee* was presented to the Government.¹⁸ For more than a year the Committee had been reviewing Fiji's economic performance since independence. Their report clearly shows that the country is living beyond its means and that substantial cuts in public spending will be necessary in the near future if Fiji is to remain solvent. Current economic problems stem from the oil crisis of 1973 and thereafter. From 1971 to 1973, average real growth in Gross Domestic Product was 8.9 per cent per year, but from 1974 to 1977 average yearly growth fell to 2.4 per cent. Since the start of the Seventh Development Plan in 1976, government spending has risen substantially but revenue has not increased at a corresponding rate. Consequently Fiji has been operating on budget deficits since 1976. The Government is particularly concerned about employment prospects for school leavers in the 1980s. The Financial Review Committee estimates that between 1976 and 1991, more than 118,000 new jobs, or nearly 8000 per year, will have to be created to employ all new entrants to the labour force and absorb existing unemployment. The extent of the problem can be gauged from the fact that in 1976 the number of employed totalled about 164,000. Thus within the space

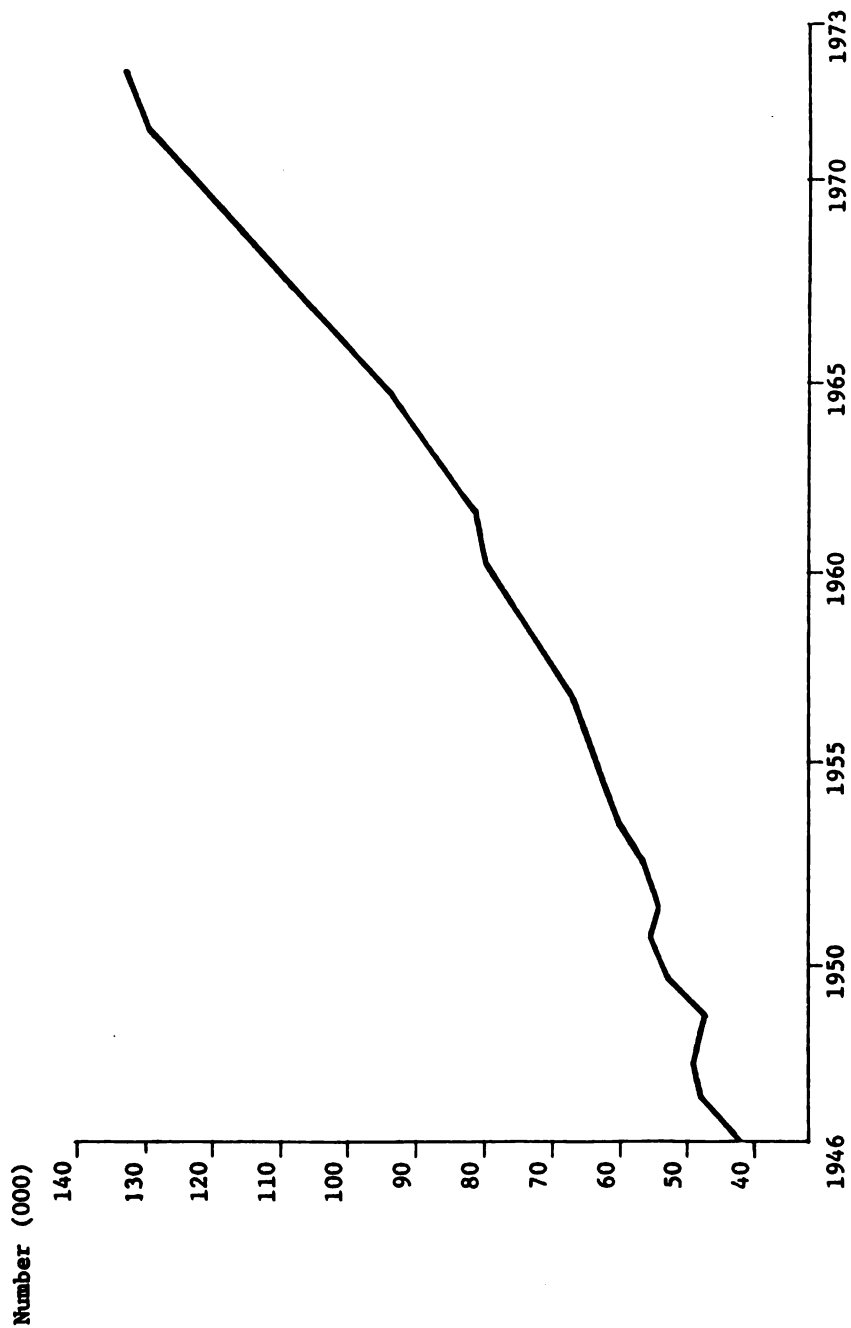
¹⁸Fiji Parliamentary Paper no.17/1979.

of fourteen years the economy must expand its employing capacity by almost 75 per cent.

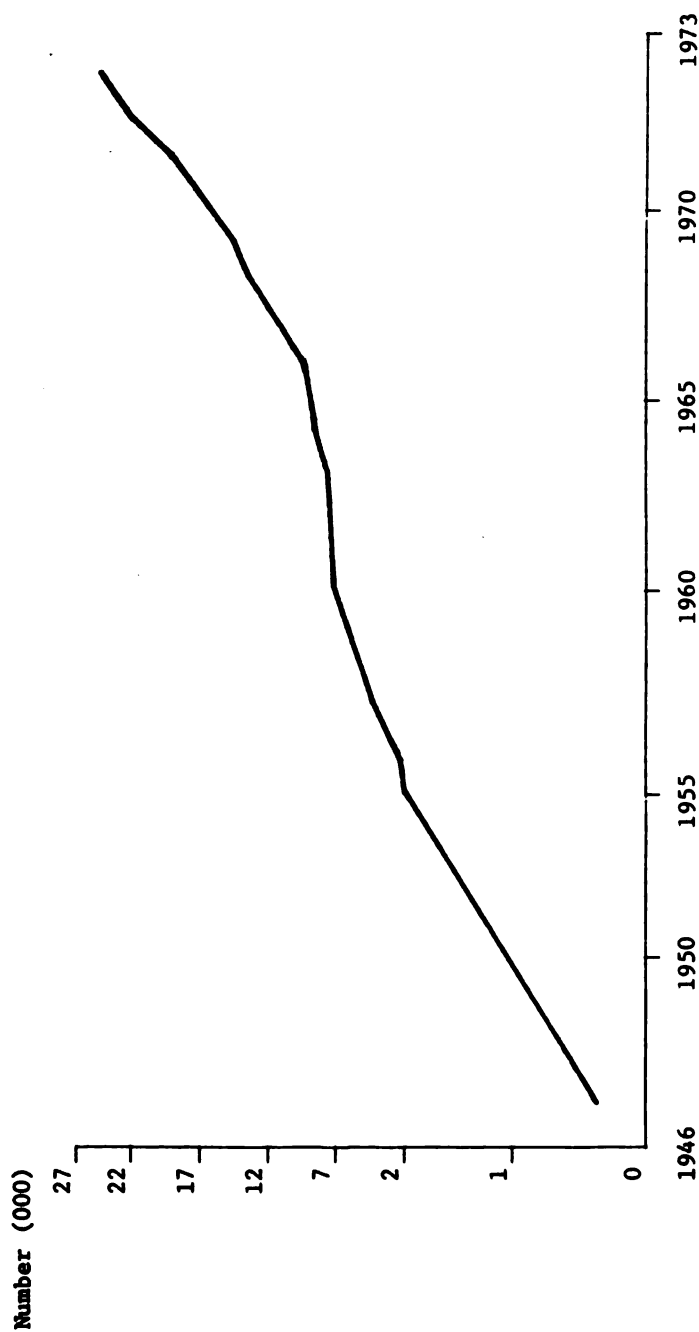
Besides restoring a balanced budget, the Committee is also anxious to see the Government channel its resources into areas that will enhance economic growth and employment opportunities. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Committee views with concern the fact that in 1978 social services accounted for 35 per cent of public spending. Accordingly the Committee recommends cuts in the educational budget. These include a halt to the expansion of the fee-free scheme to lower secondary schooling, a severe cutback in building subsidies for new schools and the introduction of double sessions in some urban schools if necessary, a major reduction in the number of teachers employed by the Government, a tightening of standards for the remission of school fees, and a reduction from 80 per cent to 50 per cent in the grants made towards the salaries of teachers in non-Government schools. As the Committee remarked, 'Education now takes almost one-quarter of Fiji's operating expenditures, but we are not convinced that it can continue to justify this share'.

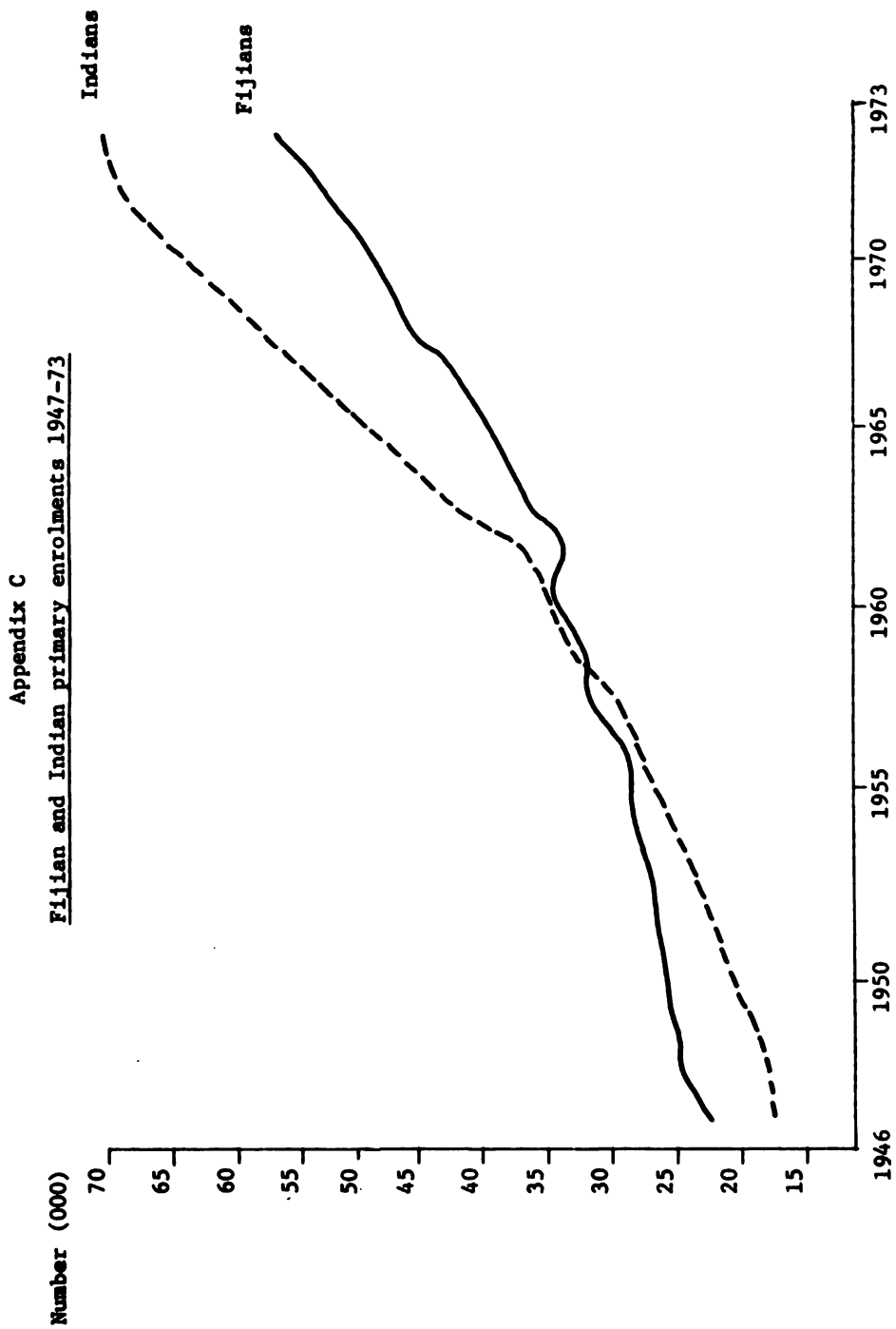
Fiji's economic problems are shared by many developing countries at the present time. It remains to be seen how the politicians respond. One thing is certain, severe cutbacks in educational spending will provoke political repercussions but so will rising unemployment of school leavers and further rampant inflation. To date the Fiji Government has not seriously considered nationalizing the school system but its attitude could change in the years ahead for two reasons. A prolonged economic recession might seriously erode the financial base of the voluntary schools, while the growing acceptance throughout the community of the need for a closer alignment between the schools and the employment market will encourage a greater degree of central co-ordination and control of the school system.

Appendix A
Total primary enrolments 1946-73

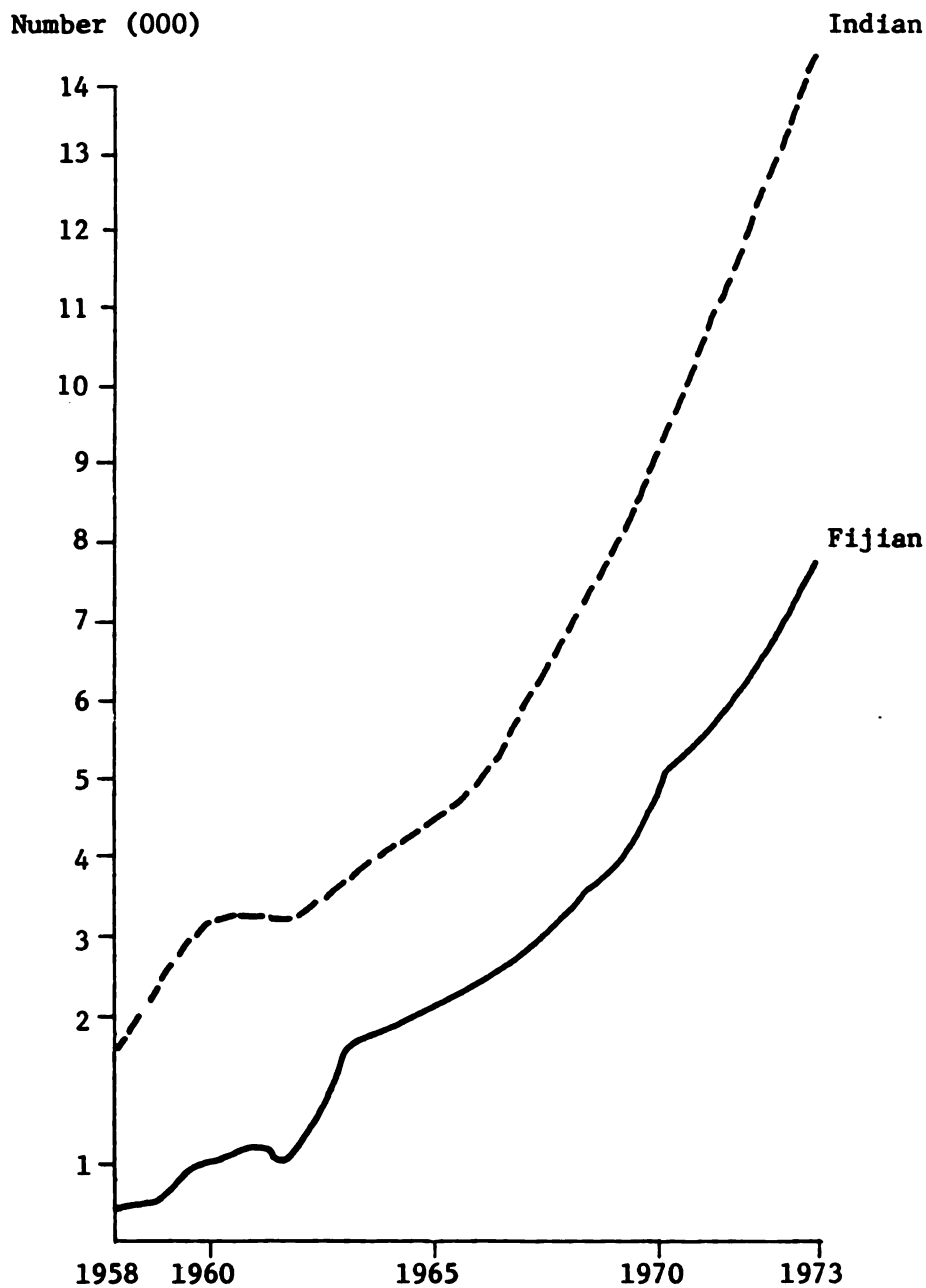


Appendix B
Total secondary enrolments 1947-73



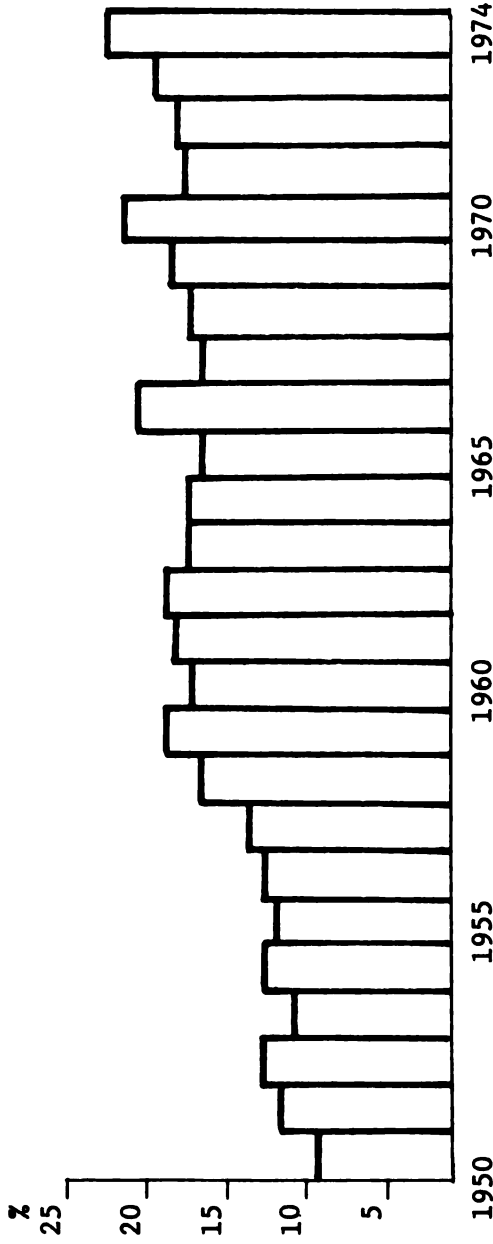


Appendix D

Fijian and Indian secondary enrolments 1958-73

Appendix E

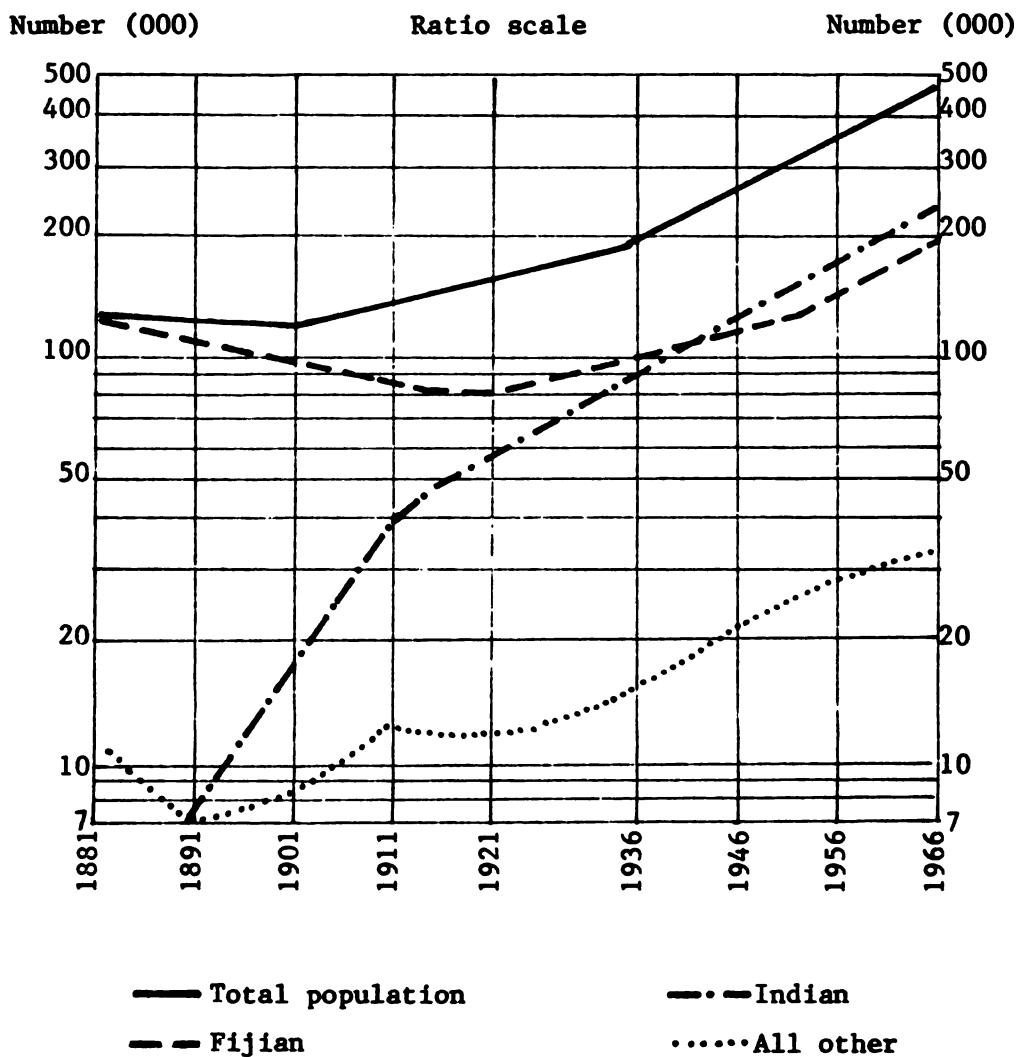
Percentage of Government expenditure
spent on education 1950-74



Figures derived from *Fiji Annual Reports* 1952, 1955, 1958, 1961 and 1964; *The Statesman's Year Book* 1972/73; *News from Fiji* Dec. 1970, Dec. 1971; and *The Far East and Australasia* 1972, 1973 and 1974. The figures for 1973 and 1974 are estimated.

Appendix F

Total and component populations by Census years 1881-1966



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