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CHAIRPERSON’S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs report on *the Consolidated Review of the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority Annual Report 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022 – 2023*.

As mandated under Standing Orders 109(2) (b), the Committee considers issues related to health, education, social services, labor, aviation, culture and media.

Fiji Teachers Registration Authority (FTRA) is a statutory body mandated to regulate entry into the teaching profession in Fiji. The Board is appointed by the Minister for Education, Heritage & Arts, to provide advice and guidance on policy developments and strategic matters.

The following are the main functions of FTRA:

1. Registration of teachers to teach in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools in Fiji.
2. Registration of teacher educators in teacher training institutions.
3. Registration of teacher administrators at the Ministry of Education and private schools.
4. Registration of training institutions for undertaking practicum in schools.
5. Working with employing authorities, training institutions and other relevant stakeholders regarding the standards of teacher education programmes.
6. Undertaking appropriate review of activities and programs for the improvement of teacher registration process at FTRA.
7. Conducting necessary professional standards development and induction programmes for Teachers.

The Major highlights of FTRA during the year under review were as follows:

1. Teacher Registration 10,562 teachers (2020-2021), 5,253 teachers (2021-2022) and 5,253 teachers (2022-2023).
2. 53 Awareness session throughout Fiji.
3. 44 Orientation workshop were conducted for 3362 students from 6 teacher training institutions.
4. 59 Induction were conducted for a total of 2430 students from six teacher training institutions.

I am thankful to the Hon. Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, Hon. Alipate Tuicolo, Hon. Viam Pillay, Hon Alikia Bia and Hon Parveen Bala for their invaluable contribution and support. I extend my sincere appreciation to Hon Jone Usamate, for his contribution and support being an alternate member.

Finally, I thank the Secretariate for their hard work and dedication in compiling this report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this report to Parliament.



.....
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
Chairperson

ACRONYM

COL	Commonwealth of Learning
FTRA	Fiji Teachers Registration Authority
MOE	Ministry of Education
ODL	Online Distance Learning
UNCDP	United Nations Capital Development Fund

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs (**‘Committee’**) is established under Section 70 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and Standing Order 109. The Committee’s mandate and functions are provided under SO 109 (2) and 110 (1) (a)-(d) & (f).

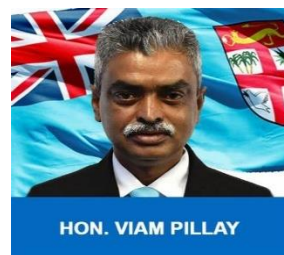
The Members of Committee are:



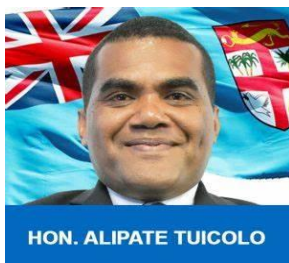
Chairperson
Government Member



Deputy Chairperson
Government Member



Opposition Member



Government Member



Opposition Member



Government Member

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs, pursuant to Standing Order 109 (2) (b), was referred the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority (FTRA) Annual Report 2020-2021 on 12th July, 2024, Annual Report 2021-2022 on 5th August, 2024 and 2022–2023 Annual Report on 7th August, 2025.

Standing Orders 109 (2)(b) allows the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to examine matters related to health, education, social services, labor, aviation, culture and media.

1.1. Committee Procedures

Deliberations on the Consolidated FTRA Reports commenced in August 2025. The Committee read through the reports, prepared questions and seek clarifications on key issues of interest from the FTRA.

The Committee held a Public Submission with the FTRA on 27th August 2025.

Upon receipt of all pertinent information pertaining to the Committee's queries, the report was subsequently endorsed on 25th September 2025.

The Committee received responses from the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority, which can be viewed at the following link <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>

2.0 COMMITTEE DELIBERATION AND ANALYSIS

FTRA was initially known as Fiji Teacher Registration Board (FTRB), a special project unit of the Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts in 2008. After the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji approved FTRB's divestment in 2013, the name was changed to FTRA hence a restructure of the secretariat was implemented by the FTRA Board.

The FTRA is governed by a Board who are representatives of a cross section of the teaching industry.

FTRA has partnered with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to develop an Online Distance Learning (ODL) Policy for in service teachers.

In addition, FTRA was collaborating with United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) to fund and assist in the development of Online Teacher Registration Portal. FTRA's focus remains on enhancing excellence in teacher registration through strategic partnerships and innovations.

Analysis

The Committee reviewed and analysed the FTRA Annual Report (2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022 - 2023) and made one consolidated report.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

The Committee conducted its review of the 2020 – 2023 Annual Report and identified the following key findings:

- 3.1 The Committee noted that the FTRA invested in Online Teacher Induction Program and Online Assessment Portal during COVID-19 Pandemic.
- 3.2 The Committee noted that FTRA exceeded their budget while carrying out major office renovations on the heritage building leased from FNPF.
- 3.3 The Committee noted that FTRA deregistered 64 teachers who were still teaching without renewing their teaching license.
- 3.4 The Committee noted that there was teacher shortage due to migration in certain discipline hence FTRA have registered teachers under Limited Authority to Teach Category, who don't meet the requirements of the registration process.
- 3.5 The Committee noted that under the FTRA Act, they have the power to fine the employer who employs unregistered teachers.
- 3.6 The Committee noted that FTRA lacks the proper coordination of the teacher registration process in rural and maritime areas.
- 3.7 The Committee noted that the registration and renewal process of FTRA is throughout the year.
- 3.8 The Committee noted that FTRA intends to review the Act.
- 3.9 The Committee noted the low levels of digital literacy amongst certain applicants and the inadequate funding to expand FTRA outreach and support programs.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

The Committee conducted its review of the 2020 – 2023 Annual Report and recommends the following:

- 4.1 The Committee recommends that FTRA should continue to invest in Digital On – line platform.
- 4.2 The Committee recommends that FTRA must ensure before undertaking any capital project, they should carry out scope of work and estimate cost of project to prevent over-spending.
- 4.3 The Committee recommends that FTRA must collaborate with the Ministry of Education to streamline the process of renewing teacher’s license.
- 4.4 The Committee recommends that the FTRA must ensure teachers who are registered under Limited Authority to Teach Category should complete their degree program in order to be a fully qualified teacher.
- 4.5 The Committee recommends that FTRA must collaborate with the Ministry of Education to ensure compliance with the regulations in the FTRA Act.
- 4.6 The Committee recommends that FTRA must work with the Ministry of Education to provide connectivity that will enhance teachers access to on – line Registration portal.
- 4.7 The Committee recommends that FTRA must introduce strict guidelines to ensure that teachers register on time.
- 4.8 The Committee fully supports FTRA’s intention to review its Act and policy.
- 4.9 The Committee recommends that more funding must be allocated to FTRA to cater for their outreach and support programs.

5.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND GENDER ANALYSIS

Provided by the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority.

The FTTRA has aligned its operations with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 on Quality Education and SDG 5 on Gender Equality, to promote equitable access to teacher registration and professional development opportunities.

All the FTTRA programmes, including mandatory Induction and Orientation programmes and stakeholder consultations, are designed to be inclusive and gender neutral.

Furthermore, the FTTRA has collaborated with key education partners to implement policies that actively support the participation and advancement of women in the teaching profession, with a focused effort on reaching underserved and rural communities.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the FTTRA faced several notable challenges. These included limited access to reliable technology and internet connectivity in rural and maritime regions, low levels of digital literacy among certain applicants and inadequate funding to expand outreach and support programmes. These factors collectively impeded equitable participation in FTTRA's online training and teacher registration systems. As a result, the Authority actively advocated for increased investment in rural digital infrastructure and support mechanisms to enhance accessibility and ensure no applicant is left behind in the pursuit of SDG-aligned objectives.

5.1 SGD on Gender Equality

1) Table below is the new Teacher Registration for the period 2020 to 2023

Year	Male	Female	Disqualified	Total	Comment
2020-2021	342	1000	0	1342	Most students enroll in ECE Program, however ECE is not a shortage area, more career emphasis to be placed by career teachers.
2021-2022	399	1342	0	1741	Most students enroll in the ECE Program, however ECE is not a shortage area more career emphasis to be placed by career teachers.
2022-2023	489	1550	0	2039	Most students enroll in the ECE Program, however ECE is not a shortage area, more career emphasis to be placed by career teachers.

2) Table below is the Teacher License Renewal for the period 2020 to 2023

Year	Male	Female	Terminated	Total	Comment
2020-2021	3599	5511	130	9220	130 Teachers were terminated due to No Jab No Job Policy
2021-2022	1186	2326	0	3512	During this period due to Covid terminations were placed on hold
2022-2023	696	1891	300	2887	300 Teachers failing to renew teacher license

3) Table below is the Teacher Registration Categories for the period 2020 to 2023

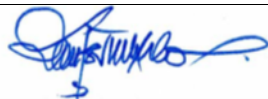
Year	Provisional Registration	Full Registration	Limited Authority to Teach	Total
2020-2021	1,347	8,201	1,014	10,562
2021-2022	2,793	2,216	244	5,253
2022-2023	3,455	1,185	286	4,926

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Committee after having reviewed the Consolidated Reports of Fiji Teachers Registration Authority 2020 - 2023 is of the opinion that there are still areas of improvement needed to align their achievements together with their intended goals and directions set out by the authority.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' SIGNATURE

We, the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, hereby agree with the contents of this report:

Committee Member	E-Signature
Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu Chairperson	
Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure Deputy Chairperson	
Hon. Alipate Tuicolo Member	
Hon. Viam Pillay Member	
Hon. Parveen Bala Member	
Hon Aliko Bia	
Date: 25 th September 2025	

ANNEXURE

Published evidence

Written evidence, transcripts, and supporting documents can be viewed on the Parliament website at the following link: <https://www.parliament.gov.fj/committees/standing-committee-on-social-affairs/>



Fiji Teachers Registration Authority (FTRA) Written Response to PAC Questions on FTRA Annual Report 2020-2022

Financial Performance

1. What were the key revenue streams for FTRA during this period, and how did they evolve over the years?

Key Revenue Stream: Government Operating Grants is main source of revenue for the FTRA. In 2020/2021 & 2021/2022 FY, the operating grant from the Government amounted to \$430,000 for both financial years. The Registration fees collected by the FTRA are deposited directly into the Government Consolidated Funds Account. The FTRA does not retain any portion of the registration fees for its own/operational use.

2. Can you provide insights into the major expenditure and how they contributed to operational efficiency?

During the reporting period, one of the major expenditures undertaken by the FTRA was the procurement and implementation of a new online system to facilitate the delivery of Induction Workshops across all Teacher Training Institution campuses in Fiji. This strategic investment was necessitated by the COVID-19 lockdown and associated restrictions, ensuring continuity of service delivery through virtual platforms. In addition, the Authority developed and implemented an online Induction Assessment Portal for pre-service teachers, procured through a formal Service Level Agreement process. These initiatives have significantly enhanced operational efficiency by streamlining the registration process, improving accessibility and ensuring the timely preparation and registration of quality teachers for the Fijian education system.

3. Were there any significant financial challenges faced between 2020 and 2022, and how were they addressed? Notable increase in expenditure from \$430,000.00 to \$502,183.00!

Yes, the FTRA experienced notable financial challenges between 2020 and 2022, primarily due to a significant increase in operational expenditure from \$430,000.00 to \$502,183.00 due to the following major factors:

- Development of the first ever website for the FTRA
- Development and implementation of the online Induction Assessment Portal for pre-service teachers.
- Procurement and implementation of the new online system to facilitate the delivery of Induction Workshops across all Teacher Training Institution campuses in Fiji via virtual mode due to Covid restrictions.

- This was largely attributed to the recruitment exercise undertaken in 2020 following a directive from the Board which required that all positions be advertised, as most staff were previously engaged on temporary or short-term contracts. The recruitment process was conducted based on the Open Merit Recruitment and Selection framework, resulting in salary adjustments accordingly. This exercise was critical in addressing staffing instability and improving overall productivity and institutional capacity. It is important to note that these additional expenses were supported by the brought forward cash flow of \$168,347, which helped offset the financial strain despite the recorded operating loss for the year.

Policy and Regulatory Changes

4. What major policy changes were implemented during this period, and how did they impact FTRA services?

During the reporting period, the FTRA implemented a series of foundational policies, including the development and adoption of its first-ever Whistleblower Policy, Occupational Health and Safety Policy, Building Emergency Evacuation Plan, Finance Manual, Staff Annual Assessment Policy, Disaster Recovery Plan and Standard Operating Procedures. These critical governance instruments, which were previously absent, significantly strengthened the Authority's institutional framework by providing clear operational guidelines, enhancing accountability and reinforcing FTRA's professional and statutory standing as a regulatory body.

5. Were there any amendments to regulations that directly affected the Teachers and other Stakeholders?

NO

Infrastructure Development

6. What were the key infrastructure projects undertaken between 2020 and 2022, and how did they improve registration efficiency?

Between 2020 and 2022, the FTRA undertook several key infrastructure projects aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and service delivery. These included:

- Comprehensive office renovations to comply with Occupational Health and Safety standards.
- Establishment of a dedicated customer service area for the teachers.
- Installation of structured workstations to support staff productivity.

- Creation of a formal meeting room to facilitate Board and stakeholder engagements.
- Upgrades were made to the Authority's electrical & network systems
- Public awareness was strengthened through the installation of billboards and official signage.

Collectively, these infrastructure improvements have contributed to a more professional, accessible and efficient registration environment.

7. How did FTRA ensure sustainability in its future infrastructure development plans?

To ensure sustainability in its future infrastructure development plans, the FTRA implemented a comprehensive approach that included securing all assets and liabilities under appropriate general insurance coverage and introducing cloud-based data backup systems to safeguard critical information. On the human capital front, the Authority adopted succession planning and in-house staff training strategies to build institutional resilience, maintain service continuity and support long-term organisational growth.

Registration and Compliance

8. What initiatives were introduced to improve the registration requirements of Teachers during this period?

During the reporting period, the FTRA introduced a range of targeted initiatives to improve the registration requirements and overall efficiency of the teacher registration process as follows:

- Establishment of a dedicated customer service area with clear notices
- Introduction of compulsory Induction Workshops for pre-service teachers, where all registration requirements are explained and provided prior to their graduation.
- Allocation of dedicated email addresses for each service area, enabling trained staff to respond to queries within one working day.
- An online payment platform was launched to enhance accessibility with easier payment options.
- Nationwide awareness workshops were conducted at Education district offices to streamline the renewal process.
- To manage high-volume periods, overtime was approved during peak months (December and January)
- Renewal Notices were issued as early as August to teachers with registrations expiring on 31st December.

Fiji Teachers Registration Authority (FTRA) Written Response to PAC Questions on FTRA Annual Report 2020-2022

- Streamlined vetting system and updated registration forms were implemented, alongside the training of additional revenue collectors to support timely service delivery.

9. How did FTRA enforce compliance with registration regulations, and were there any notable enforcement challenges?

The FTRA enforced compliance with registration regulations in accordance with the provisions of the FTR Act 2008. A structured vetting process was introduced to ensure that all applications were thoroughly assessed against the stipulated criteria. The Authority underwent an internal restructuring, establishing two dedicated departments; one for new Teacher Registrations and the other for Renewals. Staff within these departments received targeted training and were also responsible for drafting the relevant Standard Operating Procedures to guide consistent implementation. Additionally, nationwide awareness initiatives were conducted to educate stakeholders on the importance of holding a formal teacher training qualification and the requirement for continuous professional development as part of the ongoing compliance framework. While the enforcement processes were strengthened, challenges included varying levels of awareness among stakeholders and resistance from unqualified individuals attempting to enter the profession. Also poor network connection hindered the virtual communications at times.

10. Were there any significant changes in strengthening the Registration system, and what measures were taken to address them?

Yes, there were some changes implemented to strengthen the teacher registration process, particularly through the introduction of online services during and after the COVID-19 period. While this transition modernised the registration process and enhanced accessibility, several challenges were encountered. Key among them were limited digital literacy among stakeholders, lack of adequate knowledge in regards to online system and inconsistent internet connectivity, especially when liaising with remote and maritime districts. To address these issues, FTRA conducted targeted awareness sessions, provided user support through Education District Office and worked closely with relevant authorities to improve digital readiness and network access.

11. Were there any public consultations or feedback mechanisms that influenced policy changes?

FTRA conducted extensive consultations across Fiji's Central, Western, and Northern divisions. These included meetings with school heads, representatives of private schools and tertiary institutions. Stakeholders provided feedback on teacher qualification expectations, registration delays and service accessibility. Suggestions received during

these consultations were incorporated into updates to registration forms, SOPs and digital platforms.

Public Engagement

12. How did FTRA address concerns raised by the public regarding Teacher Registration?

The FTRA introduced weekend service operations during peak registration periods and opened communication lines via email and phone. Teachers were also provided with status updates on their applications and assistance with the submission of missing documents. FTRA's had a proactive stance in issuing deadline reminders and publicly disclosing policies around deregistration and compliance enforcement.

SDG's and Gender

13. How Sustainable Development Goals assisted the FTRA to maintain Gender equality.

The FTRA has aligned its operations with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 5: Gender Equality, to promote equitable access to teacher registration and professional development opportunities. All the FTRA programmes, including mandatory Induction and Orientation programmes and stakeholder consultations, are designed to be inclusive and gender-neutral. Furthermore, the Authority has collaborated with key education partners to implement policies that actively support the participation and advancement of women in the teaching profession, with a focused effort on reaching underserved and rural communities.

14. What were some of the challenges with the implementation of SDG's.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the FTRA faced several notable challenges. These included limited access to reliable technology and internet connectivity in rural and maritime regions, low levels of digital literacy among certain applicants and inadequate funding to expand outreach and support programmes. These factors collectively impeded equitable participation in FTRA's online training and teacher registration systems. As a result, the Authority actively advocated for increased investment in rural digital infrastructure and support mechanisms to enhance accessibility and ensure no applicant is left behind in the pursuit of SDG-aligned objectives.

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS

FIJI TEACHERS REGISTRATION AUTHORITY'S ANNUAL REPORTS 2020 TO 2023

SUBMITTEE: **Fiji Teachers Registration Authority**

VENUE: **Big Committee Room, Parliament**

DATE: **Wednesday, 27th August, 2025**

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST/WEST WING), PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ON WEDNESDAY 27TH AUGUST, 2025 AT 2.01 P.M.

Interviewee/Submittee: **Fiji Teachers Registration Authority Board**

In Attendance:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1) Mrs. Sangeeta Singh | - | Chief Executive Officer |
| 2) Mr. Ritchie Verma | - | Principal Accountant |
-

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members and secretariat, a very good afternoon to you all. It is a pleasure to welcome everyone to this public hearing session. At the outset, for information purposes, pursuant to Standing Order 111 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, all Committee meetings are to be open to the public. Therefore, please note this submission is open to the public, the media and will be aired live via the Parliament channel on the *Walesi* platform and streamed live on the Parliament Facebook platform.

For any sensitive information concerning the matter before us this afternoon, that cannot be disclosed in public, can be provided to the Committee either in private or in writing. However, please be advised that pursuant to Standing Order 111, there are only a few specific circumstances that allow for non-disclosure, and this includes:

1. National security;
2. Third-party confidential information;
3. Personnel or human resources and matters; or
4. Deliberations and discussions conducted in the development and finalisation of Committee recommendations and report.

This is a Parliamentary meeting and all information gathered is covered under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act. Please note and bear in mind that we do not condone slander or libel of any sort, and any information brought before this Committee should be based on facts. In terms of protocol, please minimise the usage of mobile phones and all mobile phones are to be on silent mode. I wish to also remind honourable Members and our guests that all questions asked are to be addressed through the chair.

(Introduction of honourable Members)

Today, the Committee will be hearing a submission from the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority. It relates to the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority's Annual Reports for 2020 to 2023. We acknowledge responses to the question, and due to the essence of time, you may give a brief response. The honourable Members may intervene if they have a supplementary question. I now invite the Chief Executive Officer and the team to introduce themselves and then begin with the presentation.

(Introduction of representatives from Fiji Registration Authority)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may start your presentation. Let me remind you of the importance of time, and I believe you already responded to the questions we sent. The floor is open, we will intervene during the presentation, or we will wrap it up when you finish.

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, I will slightly give a background of the Authority. As we all know, it is a statutory body that deals with teacher licensing in Fiji, which is our key KPI. Apart from teacher licensing, we carry out inductions and orientations for pre-service teachers and awareness at the regional and local levels. Those are our key KPIs.

Question No. 1 - Key revenue streams and evolution from 2020 to 2022?

- Our key source of revenue is Government grant.
- The registration fee collected through teacher registration and other categories of registrations is directly deposited into the Government consolidated funds account.

Question No. 2 - Major expenditures and impact on efficiency?

- Investment in the online system during the two financial years due to COVID-19.
- We went ahead and invested in Online Teacher Induction Programme. The first procured software was to facilitate the workshop online because we could not travel to the teacher training institutions.
- The second component was the online assessment portal which was introduced in the year. Online payments were also introduced during the COVID-19 period. Before that, all payments were done manually at the Government revenue collection office. It was the 13 Government schools and our six education offices and of course, the FTRA office. During COVID-19, we introduced an online payment option. Also, we introduced more streamlined processes, whereby it could do both, online and face-to-face.

Question No. 3 - Financial challenges between 2020 to 2022?

MR. R. VERMA.- Mr. Chairman, some highlights for the expenditure increase:

- FTRA website development;
- Implementation of the online induction assessment portal;
- Recruitment and implementation of the new online system for induction workshops for all the teacher training institutions.

A major contribution was for the recruitment exercise in 2020. There was a re-advertisement of all the positions. A recruitment process was done in 2020 as well. This readjusted the salaries for 2020. That is all the major expenditures.

Question No. 4 - Major policy changes and their impact?

I was appointed as the CEO in December 2019, and at that time, there were no policies. When the Board was appointed in July 2020, these were the policies that were developed:

- Whistleblower Policy;

- OHS Policy;
- Staff Annual Assessment Policy;
- Disaster Recovery Plan;
- Finance Manual; and respective
- SOPs.

These improved governance, accountability and professionalism.

Question No. 5 - Amendments to regulations affecting stakeholders?

There were no amendments made to the Act during the reporting period.

Question No. 6 - Key infrastructure and projects, and improvements?

Yes, we did carry out a major renovation. Our office is based at Level 2 Harbour Front Building, Suva, which is a heritage building owned by the Fiji National Provident Fund.

It is an old building, so we carried out the required renovation works. We renovated the customer service area and developed proper workstations for staff members to carry out their duties. We also built a boardroom for meetings rather than having it at outdoor venues. We upgraded our IT system.

There was no signages nor billboards, so we did it. People needed to know that there is an organisation called the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority and there were electrical wiring and other OHS required issues that were addressed in the two financial years. Those were the major infrastructure changes.

Question 7 - Ensuring sustainability of infrastructure?

We introduced insurance coverage for assets and liabilities FTRA has. Apart from that, we also have operating assets and liabilities, that is fixtures and fittings, so we introduced appropriate general insurance to cover our assets, liabilities and continuity of business. We got a cloud backup system in case there is a disaster. Data is precious, and we will be handicapped if we lose our data. As far as the human capital side is concerned, the Principal Accountant revealed there was a major restructure and succession planning introduced during those two years, whereby our junior staff members were trained in such a way that if a senior position goes vacant or someone resigns, we can fill the gap. So succession planning and in-house training were provided to our staff members.

Question No. 8 - Initiatives to improve teacher registration?

Induction workshops or programmes were introduced in 2015, and it was meant for our pre-service teachers. It was there, but it was not compulsory. However, in 2021, we made it compulsory. Our pre-service teachers are inducted in terms of their teacher registration and expectations we have for them to be great teachers in the system. The service desk was introduced, a dedicated email system like for renewals. ID cards at FTRA, so we had our own, as we are the host. We had our own email system introduced, our online payment was introduced, and advanced renewal notices were sent out as per the Act.

There is a registration expiry where all registrations expire on 31st December, except for the expatriate teachers whose teacher registrations are aligned as per their work permit. More than 95 percent of the registrations expire on 31st December. We introduced advanced notices to teachers. Around August as soon as the financial year closes, we send out the notice so that it is a heads up to the teachers that in December their license will expire. They have ample time to renew.

We introduced awareness workshops not only at the Ministry of Education, Education Offices, District Offices, and also private schools and other special schools and centers. Overtime was introduced during the peak period. That is December and January. We changed our working hours in 2020, whereby the FTRA office opens at 8 a.m. and closes at 5 p.m. and open during lunch as well. Teachers finish off at 3.30 p.m. so they have at least 1.5 hours buffer to come and renew or register themselves or if they have any query. Those were some of the changes made during those two years.

Question No. 9 - Compliance, Enforcement and Challenges?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, you are talking about compliance. I am more interested in non-compliance. What is the number of teachers who are non-compliant at this point in time?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, we had 64 teachers who did not renew their registration. In April, we deregistered them, sent them and their employer notices. In this case, the employer is the Ministry of Education. They are slowly coming but unfortunately are still in the system. They are teaching without a valid licence. They have to do their police and medical clearances again. When they come for registration, if they were registered under the full category, we downgrade them to the provisional level. The reason is that they failed to meet that requirement, and their registration period changes. The day we receive the police and medical clearances then the form has to be endorsed by the head of the school. If it is endorsed in favour of the teacher, that is the day it will have a start date. They will also have a lapsed period in between. As far as teacher registration, yes, we have some non-compliance.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the challenge is that now they do not have contracts. They have an employment period that ends when they turn 60. Probably they have that mindset, if they did not renew, they would not be pushed out. The second challenge is the extreme teacher shortage in certain discipline areas. They have an upper hand to some extent. If we look at the figures, these are a handful of teachers only. We register more than 15,000, and if 64 are not coming, despite given so many reminders and time they fail to renew, then it is upon the individual professionals themselves.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just to add on to what the honourable Bala had said about compliance, you mentioned some non-qualified people were trying to enter the system. What do you mean by that?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have teachers who are yet to complete their Degree, but we have registered them under the Limited Authority to Teach category because of a shortage in those areas. For example, Maths, Physics, Primary, PEMAC and Computer Science are areas we do not have enough in the pool, and the Ministry genuinely needs them in the system. These are under-qualified teachers and that is Category No.1.

Category No. 2, Maritime and Rural. There are teachers, pre-service registered graduates in the system, or registered pre-service teachers, but some of them do not want to serve in maritime schools. We did not have a choice when the Ministry did the minute saying, we have identified these personnel who are willing to serve in that particular school, but do not have the required qualification. We give them limited authority to teach with a notice. They are given initially two years to upgrade their qualification, and as per the Act, there is another extension that can be granted. A maximum four-year period is given to this limited authority to teach categorised teachers to upgrade themselves and move to provisional and eventually to full.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, there are still cases whereby the four-year period has lapsed. They could not upgrade their qualification due to the remoteness of the school. They do not have internet connectivity, or certain courses are offered via face-to-face mode. Sometimes there are certain schools whereby the boat or the ship goes once a month. If it is school time, and they are unable to make it to the mainland or to the university to upgrade. We still have teachers under limited authority to teach who are unable to upgrade their qualification. We are working with the Ministry if those teachers could be transferred to a school whereby they can complete their studies and they can at least upgrade themselves to meet the Minimum Qualification Requirement (MQR). Those are the key categories as we speak.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Not for those ones, the ones that, the limited something, what you call them?

MS. S. SINGH.- Limited authority application.

HON. J. USAMATE.- But the ones that are permanent teachers, is there not registrations tied to their remuneration so if they are not registered, it, impacts on the amount of money that they get? I do not see any excuse for anyone that is fully registered and not registering on time. Mr. Chairman, through you, is there a linkage between if you who are a permanent teacher, who do not get re-registered on time, that it should feed it into your pay, is there any such system or is it totally as you said, two separate things?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman through you, rightfully, if we follow the Act, as soon as we deregister, these teachers should be terminated. The employer should not employ them; it is very clear in the Act. There is a heavy penalty as well. If an employer employs an unregistered teacher, the fine could be as high as FJ\$150,000.

HON. J. USAMATE.- But the problem here is that the employer is the Ministry of Education.

(Laughter)

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, so I assume when you saying that if we properly, so that means there are currently teachers who are in that scenario?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, yes, there are.

HON. J. USAMATE.- The good thing is that percentage is less than half percent. Is that trend improving? You are only less than half percent are leaked. I did the quick calculation out of the 15,000. Is that trend improving or decreasing? The percentage of those that are not meeting.

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman through you, it is improving.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, so to me, it looks like that your organisation is a toothless tiger. Here you are saying that the Act is crystal clear. If they do not comply, they need to be terminated. On the other hand, we are listening that there are a number of teachers who do not comply but are still in the system. Where do you stand in this?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, the normal process is the report in advance, even before deregistration is sent out to the employers, whether it is a private school or Ministry of Education. At their level, they are sorting it out and the option is to engage them in non-teaching duties unless they come and renew. The onus is on the employer to sort this out because we are a licensing body and we cannot really interfere as far as recruitment is concerned. However, we do give them a report on a weekly basis and they are aware. The only issue is when they are terminating, it is important that they find a replacement for that particular teacher. That is the real challenge on the ground.

We are unable to find suitable replacements. We may have a lot of registered graduates in the pool, but if they do not want to go and serve in Vanuabalavu or all the way in the interiors of Ra, Naitasiri or Serua provinces, we are handicapped. At the end of the day, we need a teacher in the classroom. We do not want our students to be affected, so that is where the limbo is.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Just one question, Mr. Chairman. If you are Licensed to Teach (LT) and whether you are provisionally registered or fully registered, you are doing the same job, do you get the same pay or is it different?

MS. S. SINGH.- Different, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Okay, so if someone is fully registered and does not meet your condition, then it becomes provisionally registered, their salary will drop?

MS. S. SINGH.- Yes.

HON. J. USAMATE.- So that is the punishment.

MS. S. SINGH.- **Question No. 9 is covered.**

Question No. 10 - Changes to strengthen registration system.

Yes, we did implement a number of changes to strengthen the teacher registration process which is our key KPI. We introduced, like I mentioned earlier, online payment services, direct deposit service was also introduced and renewal submission through dedicated email account. They do not have to necessarily submit originals. They could also email the online payment confirmation and the completed renewal form, and we were able to renew using the email forms. So that was the advantage that they did not have to come down to the FTTRA office or Education office.

Challenges - Limited digital literacy among some of the teachers. Lack of adequate knowledge in regards online system. Like, some of the teachers based in maritime and rural areas, they were not registered for online payment, so they could not do it. Some of them were sending

it through TMO through Post Fiji, and it was very difficult to reconcile. The Government Schools and Education Office were there, we worked closely with the District Education Office and the 13 government schools, so they were receiving payments on behalf of FTRA and depositing it in the Government's Consolidated Funds Account. There was an arrangement done on how they could courier it if they did not have internet services. So, those types of arrangements were made with the schools.

Question No. 11 - Consultations or feedback mechanisms

Yes, consultations across Fiji shaped updates. First, we addressed concerns raised by the public regarding teacher registrations. The introduction of weekend services during peak periods. We ensure that at least a Saturday in December and in January, we are open to all our teachers so that they can submit their renewal forms if they missed out or could not do it prior to that. They requested, and we have introduced that. Open communication channel via email and phone, we introduced more hunting lines; there are Vodafone, Digicel and landline hunting lines to make calls, sometimes they are unable to send an email, they find it easy to give a call.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Can the school management raise their concerns directly to your office in regard to the performance of teachers, or they must formally inform the employer, that is the Ministry of Education?

MS. S. SINGH.- The normal process is, there is the head of school, a principal or head teacher. The report should go to the head of school because as far as renewal is concerned, we are dependent on heads of schools and the Education District Office. For teachers, the form is endorsed by the head of school and for all the principals and head teachers, it is endorsed by their respective divisional or senior education adviser. That is the channel we follow and that is the channel the management could follow - work with the head of school, and it should be sent out to the employer, human resources department and the FTRA could be copied as well. Performance and professional development are key requirements for the renewal of registration and then deciding on the appropriate category whether they will remain on provisional or they should be promoted to full, so they play a very important role.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, that is below the head of schools, which you have responded. What about if the issue is with the head of school?

MS. S. SINGH.- The management can raise it through the District Office of the respective divisional and the employer.

HON. MEMBER.- The Ministry?

MS. S. SINGH.- Yes.

In order to improve the services, we adopted a proactive approach by issuing timely deadline reminders and publicly disclosing its deregistration and other upcoming events. Before we deregister teachers, individual emails are sent. There is a dedicated staff who will call these individual teachers to remind them, and whenever we send out the email, the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Education and head HR is always copied in the email. If we are unsuccessful, we put up a public notice - this is the deadline, please renew, otherwise you will end up losing your registration. That is what we introduced during that time and it did work. When I was appointed,

the number was as high as 1,800. So from 1,800 to 64, it is slowly improving. Those were the questions that were raised for those two financial years.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I believe there is a Report on 2022-2023 that was given to us the last two weeks. Most of the questions that were answered were based from 2021-2022. Can you give us a brief on the 2022-2023 Annual Reports, just highlight the points that need to be addressed with the Committee.

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, there were a set of questions sent. Mr. Chairman, through you. do you want me to go over all the questions or just an overview?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Give an overview.

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, basically, in 2023, post-COVID, the biggest challenge we faced was massive teacher migration. That was one key area whereby we ended up losing our cream teachers. These were our full registered teachers, more than 1,000. The Ministry of Education was the employer for most of these teachers. That was one of the biggest challenges. The strategy we had to take was, which I briefly explained earlier, we had to go to the teacher training institutions and do some marketing with the Ministry of Education or for them in those shortage disciplined areas, if final year students were willing to teach on a full-time basis and study on a part-time basis, so we could give them limited authority to teach. We were able to attract a handful of them. We inducted them and we registered them. That was the strategy we took.

The other strategy was, previously, until 2022, the retirement age was 55. When the retirement age was increased to 60, we had teachers who could still serve. If they were medically fit and willing to come back and serve, we re-engaged them so that they could serve till 60. We tried to cover up that gap to some extent. Those were the major challenges we faced.

On achievement side, FTRA is working closely with the UNCDF in terms of developing an online teacher registration system. They are funding the project. The project started in 2022, and the feasibility was finalised last year. Sir, UNCDF will appoint a developer or a company that will start the development of the online teacher registration system in Fiji. That is one achievement.

The second one, Commonwealth of Learning, Canada supported the development of

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, through you, what is UNCDF?

MS. S. SINGH.- That is United Nations, the financial wing that looks after a number of projects in Fiji.

The Commonwealth of Learning, Canada provided a lot of support in terms of developing the first national Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Policy for our in-service teachers to conduct professional development via blended mode, where there was network and connectivity. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, we are able to conduct via online mode and where there is no connectivity, we are doing it through face-to-face mode. This was the first policy. PDs were done, but we did not have a policy. So this policy was developed with massive stakeholder consultation. We had a major workshop in Vanua Levu, one in the

west and one in the central as well. It took us one year and we were able to develop that policy. So those were the major achievements that year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, CEO and the team. Now is the time for the honourable Members to raise their supplementary questions.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, CEO, it will be interesting to know, I just wanted to know more about your follow-up process, what avenues are there? When you make a decision to deregister a teacher, I think this might help in getting back the number of teachers in the field or in teaching. What follow-up process is there or what avenues are there to help the teacher be registered again and again teaching?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, first of all, the process starts in August every year. If we go through the entire process, we send out the renewal notice to them. That goes to their individual email accounts and copied to head of schools and the district office. Come 31st December, all the processing is done in January when we run the report and we see that still they have not done it, we send a follow up email to them and send the report to the respective district office and the Permanent Secretary for Education and head of HR - we genuinely need your assistance because these are the batch of teachers who could not renew. Sometimes they do the payment in the bank and they are late in submitting. We have to give a buffer in the beginning without penalizing them, that is why we do not carry out the deregistration process in January, sometimes the courier takes time to reach us if they are unable to email. We do follow-up via email and there is a department that does phone calls as well because we have to be mindful that there are certain places, the mobile phone does not work - , Digicel works, Vodafone does not work or vice versa. There will be one particular point where they will go and make a call. We do call them and we work closely with the Divisional Education Office, the Senior Education Assistants and Education Assistants because they constantly travel to those centers, especially to our Eastern Education Office, and Vanua Levu as well. We have to work closely with them in order to get the assistance. Those are some of the mechanisms in place.

Deregistration takes place in April, so we give them time till 31st March. After 31st March, they have to do their police clearance and medical again. They have a leeway till 31st March. That was the decision made by the previous board. Now we have a new board, so it will depend on what decision will be made by them come December and January in terms of late renewals.

HON. A. BIA.- What I am worried about is that some of the teachers are de-registered because of performance, is there any programme with the Ministry and FTRA to get them in training? Some sort of awareness so that they can learn and be registered again to teach.

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, yes as I mentioned earlier, the head of school and the divisional education office have to endorse the renewal form. So, the moment we see, for example, that there are three checkboxes that has to be ticked. If out of the three, one is not ticked in favour of the teacher, I email the head of school to get more information on what went wrong and then I work closely with the employer because they have a special department at the Ministry that looks after this. I also work closely with the training team so that there is no duplication of work. If I have to cover pedagogical knowledge and the Ministry wants to do the same, we run one workshop, and those teachers are invited to that particular workshop. So, under one umbrella, we are able to cover or achieve both.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Chairman, just a question. Madam CEO, thank you very much for your presentation. I am looking at the responses that you have given to the Committee, well-articulated responses, and I thank you for that. I see that during this reporting period, it was during the COVID-19 period. If we were to have another COVID-19 tomorrow, are your mechanisms in place? Because you worked through COVID-19 and it was the first time for everyone where you had to adjust yourself - God forbid if something like this ever happens again, is the machinery of the FTRA ready and can continue if, say, a pandemic such as COVID-19 hits Fiji again?

MS. S. SINGH.- Touch wood, it should not happen, but if it does happen, yes. We went through a lot of difficult phases at that time and there are a number of ways you can manage that. We are not 100 percent automated, so human capital plays a very important role. We rostered it, we had clusters of staff. Monday this team came, so they remain in their own cluster. Tuesday a different team comes, masks are there, we had the temperature gun - everything in the office. We did not allow a lot of crowding so we followed those protocols. If there is a catastrophic cyclone or any catastrophic loss, our people are trained in such a way, we can work from home as well. Of course, we will need certain approval levels whereby probably if movements are restricted and there is power failure and internet is down, obviously the service will be affected to some extent. If something of that nature happens, my team and I are ready to serve our hard-working teachers undoubtedly.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Thank you very much, Madam CEO, that gives confidence.

My question is on the registration part. You are the registration organisation, the licensing organisation. I am aware that you have just notified this Committee that registration is on an annual basis. Is it correct?

MS. S. SINGH.- Yes.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- It is always done in April. Is that when they have to lodge their new registration? Or December? If you are to renew your teacher registration, when do you do it - December or April?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, let me update the Committee. There are two key components in relation to teacher registration. One is new registration. It could take place throughout the year. It takes place after the graduation or when a pre-service teacher completes his or her degree level programme. As we all know FNU and USP's major graduation takes place either in March or early April. So, we expect these two Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) to issue completion letter with official transcript prior to the commencement of the next academic year so that we register and have enough pre-service teachers in the pool because come December we will have exits. Retirees will be there, resignations will be there. So, we will need those registered graduates in the system. New registration takes place after the graduation. There is one coming up in September.

Now going to renewals, that is the second aspect to the registration. Although it expires on 31st December, we could accept renewal any time as far as they meet the renewal requirement. So, it is not necessarily strict that you only do it at that time. At the moment, we have two weeks break. We sent out the notice in advance. So, there are teachers who are bringing in their renewal registration, submitting or sending it to FTRA now. We can start with

the renewal process now so that there is not a huge backlog in December because that is Christmas time, festive season and teachers want to enjoy their holiday. We have a open policy, even the Act allows us. So, we are not going outside our *bible*. We are within the Act.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Renewal is annually, correct? If I am a teacher, I want to renew, I do it annually (my registration).

MS. S. SINGH.- There are three categories. Limited authority to teach is given for a two-year period. Provisional, if I graduate with a Bachelor of Education (Secondary Education), I will be given one year provisional first and then depending on my performance whether I will be promoted to full or I will remain with another one year provisional. If you meet the provisional requirement and the head of school endorses your form in favour of you, you will be promoted to full registration which is a three-year period. So, provisional is one, limited authority is two, and full registration is three.

The only exceptions are our retirees. If a teacher is retiring, say this year and the registration is next year, and the registration expires this year, they have the exception to pay one year fee. Otherwise, all full registered teachers, we only accept three-year renewal.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Three year renewals.

MS. S. SINGH.- That is full registration.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- I will just touch on the full ones, not the provisional. So, full registration after three years then it is renewed? My question would be on where are these registrations done? Just in one place? Is it online or is it hard copy? How do you do registrations for them because I am mindful, do you have only one office in Fiji? I am mindful of the fact the widespread of the teachers around the country, the opportunity that you should venture into decentralizing so that you can facilitate better the teachers. Just a thought for you, might as well try and go into decentralizing in the north and west.

It goes back to my question, how do they come and register - manually or electronically?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, as we speak, there is a dedicated email address, renewals@ftra.com. They can always email the renewal form and the online payment confirmation. The second option, if they do not have email, then they can submit. If they do not want to email it, they can submit it at any of the education offices. They have government revenue collectors and we work very closely with them and we have offices Fiji wide. They also have the option of making payment at the 13 government schools like Bucalevu, so they can make their payment there and they can always email it or directly courier. If they do not want to email, some of them courier it. Nowadays, most of them have smartphones and during festive season, they travel. They take a photo with their mobiles, *Viber* it as the *Viber* option is there as well. Since we are not 100 percent online at the moment, so email, education district office, government schools and *Viber*; these are the four key platforms.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Moving forward, do you intend to go digital all the way? What is the timeline for that?

MS. S. SINGH.- Like I mentioned earlier, we always wanted to go online but budget was an issue then COVID-19 was there. Discussion started in 2022 with the UNCDF and they are funding the project. Development of the system will start in November this year, and we want to do the pilot next year.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- By that time, all applications will be electronically, right?

MS. S. SINGH.- Yes, exactly like how it is done in Australia and New Zealand. We want to link it with the BRN system, so they enter their Birth Registration Number, the details are there. The teachers will enter their personal details and then we will move forward from there. That is our plan.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Last one for me, probably my request to you, through Mr. Chairman, you have the data for the teachers. If you can provide us with that to have a fair idea how many teachers we have in Fiji? How many are registered? How many are on provisional? How many are male? How many are female? Most of these statutory bodies and organisations are quite female dominated, just for the fair idea of the Committee. We might have to say this in Parliament – the teaching industry is dominated by female. We just want to have a fair idea of those three categories. The provisional, how many? The limited authority to teach and full.

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, to update the Committee, I was at FNU Natabua on Monday and Tuesday inducting the pre-service teachers who will be finishing off with their programme end of this year, females are dominating. I got a surprise. I inducted about 400 pre-service teachers at FNU Natabua in day one and day two. So we have ECE primary and then secondary. Females are dominating the profession. Females are better mothers, better teachers.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, CEO, I just wanted to know more. How do you justify teachers who have limited authority to teach and those who have the full authority to teach because as a former student, while in school, all teachers do the same thing?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, if I may say so, there is added responsibility on the teacher because, first of all, they have not completed their studies, whereas a full-registered teacher has completed, but they opt to teach on a full-time basis, so they have an added responsibility.

During the day they teach, in the evening they have to study and complete their studies. But when it comes to salary banding, that is decided by the employer. The loading, how many classes a limited authority will teach, how many classes of a provisional or full-registered teacher will teach, that is decided by the employer. I am sure they have a mechanism in place because we are very specific and clear when we give the license. This particular person has limited authority to teach and our justification is provided. Why? Probably the GPA is low or incomplete studies. How they place them and what type of responsibility is given, that is between the employer and the head of the school.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman through you, thank you CEO. What are the common challenges you face when registering educators in tertiary and private institutions, and how are you dealing with it?

MS. S. SINGH.- Most of the educators at the seven Teacher Training Institutions - we have six full registered TTIs and one provisional, the Methodist Lay Training Centre is a provisionally registered teacher training institution, and the other six are Corpus Christi, Fulton College, Pacific TAFE, including our three universities.

All the academics who are associated or teaching teacher training programmes, they are registered with FTRA and they do normal renewals, the way other teachers do. The only difference will be, instead of practicing teacher, it will be practicing educator, and the employer's name instead of the school, we will put, for example, University of Fiji or USP. They are registered and at times there is a genuine need, especially if they are going to school to supervise practicum, so they must be registered because they enter the classroom to supervise their pre-service teachers on how they are teaching, so they must be registered. Teacher registration does not have an expiry date or retirement. Although someone may have retired from the system but wants to retain his or her teacher registration, they are most welcome to do so, as long as they meet the requirements. Post-retirement, once a teacher is always a teacher. They want to go into tutoring or part time tuition so they may retain their registration.

HON. J. USAMATE.- What do you think has been the impact of the FTRA on the quality of education in this country? What impact has it had? Is there something you assess or measure? I am talking about outcomes here, not just in terms of outputs. I am just trying to understand. I can understand the idea of licensing teachers, not allowing people that do not meet the requirements to teach. Is there an overall assessment of the impact of the FTRA?

MS. S. SINGH.- Yes, I believe. As an outsider, this is my first employment as a public servant. Prior to that, I was at USP and in the private sector. When I joined FTRA, I believe yes, it does contribute a lot in terms of quality of education. As our journey begins, like I mentioned earlier, one of the key KPIs is orientating. We orientate the pre-service teachers as soon as they enrol into a teacher preparatory programme. Semester one, we go to every teacher training institution campuses and orientate them, because at the end of the day, we all know and understand, teaching is not everyone's cup of tea.

We do not want students to just enrol into a programme, we have a big number like 1,000 in the beginning, by the time we return to induct them in year three or year four of the programme, the number has reduced by 50 percent. When we were doing some research, a friend is taking teacher training programme, he or she takes it. They go on practicum, then they realise, "oh no, this is not my field." So they drop out of the programme then. It is very important to orientate them in the beginning and that is what we do. We introduce them to key professional standards, the GPA cut-off and the registration requirements. So we do brief them and give them information, and through that way, we work closely with the teacher training institutions as well.

They are the ones producing teachers, and as the regulator, if we work closely with them, then we can work hand in hand and improve the system. Initially they are orientated, and when they go on their practicum, we do police check. If anyone has an adverse record, we hold it there. More information is required, it depends on the nature of the criminal offence, whether he or she suits to be in the profession. That cut off takes place even before they go on practicum.

Obviously after induction, when they return for their teacher individual registration – because practicum is granted through the TTI – the teacher training institution will send us an approved list saying, “okay, these 40 students are ready to go on practicum,” so the TTI will submit their police clearance. If anyone has adverse record, we hold it there. Finally, after the induction – it is a one day workshop – there is an online assessment component as well. They must be successful in that assessment. There is a group presentation session, they must present and they are assessed on that as well. When they come for teacher registration, I have personally seen in these last five years, there has been a lot of improvement. When we are deregistering, we hardly ever see this new cohort of graduates or teachers who are coming in the system deregistered.

(Honourable Member interjects)

MS. S. SINGH.- They are familiar with the process.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, one question. I always get this asked by all teachers. They say these young teachers come in, they have the qualifications, but they do not deliver the kind of results that the older teachers do, who have lower sets of qualifications, but in terms of the pass rates of their students are much better. You understand what I am saying? I get these messages all the time.

How is that taken into account? Like for instance, you have someone that has limited authority to teach and someone that is fully registered. Is there always a direct correlation between the person that has limited authority to teach and the quality of their teaching in the impact of the students on what they deliver, and someone that is fully registered? Because I hear comments when people say, “even these young ones come with all of these things but they do not deliver the same sort of results.” How is that taken into account when you look at licensing teachers, maintaining their licensing, et cetera? You get what I am trying to talk about?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, through you, as I mentioned earlier, initially when they walk into our office, either they will be granted with limited or provisional. Say a new graduate who meets all the registration requirements and the GPA cut-off as well is granted one year provisional.

So, that person is on provisional, we do not promote them to full unless and until they return with their renewal form endorsed by the head of school, saying that this person has met all the professional development requirements - discipline and teaching qualities. So once they endorse and this particular individual has completed full-time one-year of classroom teaching, then only can they be promoted to full. The head of school, who is the immediate supervisor can control it there the moment they believe this person is lacking what you just mentioned. If the teacher is not performing, they should not be endorsing that particular section so that we do not promote them to full. So the head of schools are the immediate supervisors. If someone is complaining about a particular head of school, then the divisional is the right person directly supervising that particular head of school. If they feel or they know that this particular professional is not performing, they should not be endorsing that section.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Do they do that?

MS. S. SINGH.- Sometimes they do, sometimes they do not, when they do not do it

HON. J. USAMATE.- That gets to my point. How do you monitor the effectiveness of your system, because you are relying on the assessment of the head of school. When we do assessments, there are people who always assess very hard, there are people who assess very soft, people in the middle. I am just trying to get to that slight kink in the system. How do you make sure that the monitoring is affecting, happening well? You get my drift?

MS. S. SINGH.- Yes.

Mr Chairman, through you, if you look at performance appraisal, then that becomes more like employer work. I strongly believe the Ministry of Education has dedicated people, they have a dedicated department, dedicated budget, so they are looking after that. But that could also be improved if a teacher is a graduate but underperforming, through professional development, we can polish that teacher and make him or her shine the way we want.

So the onus is on the head of school, if they can give a tip-off, “okay, next week we are covering this topic in this particular area,” so that the Ministry and FTRA can invite that particular teacher. The head of schools play a very important role, that is why they are called the head of schools. But to be very honest, when it comes to appraisal, I think the employer has an upper hand on that in terms of their actual performance appraisal because they have access to everything and we have limited access to their database. Our system is more in relation to registration and licensing.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, my colleague has given a long list, I just want you to add one more. That is on the teacher migration, if we can have that data as well. I have been going through this financial performance as well and I see that the grant that is allocated is around \$200,000 per annum for operating grant for the two years, am I right?

MS. S. SINGH.- For which financial year is that?

HON. P.K. BALA.- For years 2020-2021. I just want to know whether this is the same amount that you are receiving or has been increased.

MS. S. SINGH.- Increased?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, because I was just wondering about the meeting expenses, accommodation and travelling, whether with this amount, whether you can cater. So if it has increased, that is alright.

MS. S. SINGH.- It has increased and we are able to meet most of our KPIs. The only challenge is professional development. We are not able to move to every center. Despite being a statutory body, we have been working closely with the Ministry of Education because they have the facilities and Commonwealth has given equipments and things that we can work together and use the same equipment rather than having our own budget, own experts and recruiting more people to conduct specific theories. At the moment we are working with the Ministry and yes, there is room for improvement. We are working together to improve.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Chairman, just a last question from me. Madam CEO, it is not in the report. Are you well aware of the recent case of the FTU with regards to the regularisation? You are not aware of that?

MS. S. SINGH.- Salary?

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- The regularisation last year, I think in 2024. I was just trying to find how will that affect your work or what are your thoughts on the perspective of FTTRA, most probably they will be losing a lot of teachers, am I correct or is it the other way around? The regularisation that FTU took to court and already a ruling has been given, but from the perspective of the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority, what is your view on that?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, teacher licensing body is a totally separate process. It is a separate body. The key factor, the key requirement is formal teacher training qualification. If a professional has a registered recognised formal teacher training qualification, then we invite them to submit other requirements, like police clearance with no adverse medical record. We induct them and once they fulfil those requirements, they are registered. We do not deregister them if there is a, like court case going, they are not convicted. We cannot do that. They have a license in place and they are meeting the registration requirement. The issue will be, if they do not teach, they are unemployed or they do not meet the renewal requirements, they will remain on provisional, they will not be promoted to full. However, the onus is on them. We do not deregister them unless and until there is something coming strong from the employer that they have terminated based on these cases. So, if there is evidence, we deregister them.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Regularisation is beyond you.

MS. S. SINGH.- Yes, beyond us.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Basically that is an employment matter. You are a licensing agency. That is all you do.

MS. S. SINGH.- Exactly.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Madam CEO just from my side when we look at your policies and regulations, time has gone, we believe there is a need to look at your Act to suit the current situation that we are in. Are there any plans to review your Acts and policies to suit the current situation that we are in currently in, in terms of improving your system, improving the network that is there, that needs to be abiding and other sensitive matters, because I believe when the Acts are not reviewed within the timeframe, that always creates issues and problems. How do you look at that?

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, the Act was reviewed by the previous board, and it was submitted to the Ministry of Education through the Office of the Solicitor-General and we are waiting for the outcome. It has been reviewed in terms of meeting all the practical components, like you mentioned earlier, it is very important to review the FTTRA Act was done at that time and thereafter, after divestment, there was no review and the only amendment was done in 2019 whereby the board members composition was 15, now reduced to nine. That was the only change done and the review has been done. Moving to the policy side, all the policies that we have has an expiry date. So, it has to be reviewed on regular intervals. Some of these policies have been reviewed last year. There is one that will be reviewed this year by the new board. Most of the policies that were developed and implemented in 2020- 2021 were reviewed and

changes were done and we are using the current policies. The ones that are due for review will definitely be presented to the board. We have board committees and then we have the board as well. So, it is given to the respective committee and then the committee reviews it and then it goes to the board for approval.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- From my side, I believe we looked at the holistic part of the report especially for 2022-2023 which has been alluded to by honourable Bala when talking about the budget. The way things looks, it has been improving year by year. Can you give us the list of the fee registrations since you started up to-date just to help us in making a decision and helping you out in terms of your budget? What you have collected, that goes into the Government Consolidated Fund? Can it be provided to us through our Secretariat plus the question that was asked by the honourable members.

MS. S. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, just to give you an update, our fee collection fluctuates. Like I said, full registered teachers renew after three years. So, next year, we are expecting close to \$1 million collection. And the year whereby it is just like this year, it will be around \$300,000 to \$400,000, but we will send you the actual collection figure. We will get it from the finance department and emailing it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, Madam CEO and the team,. At this juncture, I wish to sincerely thank you for availing yourselves to this public hearing session which we all believe is very fruitful to the Committee while scrutinizing your annual reports.

The Committee adjourned at 3.07 p.m.