

# Repositioning Education in Fiji for the Fifth Industrial Revolution: Decolonising Curriculum and Re-Centring Indigenous Knowledge Systems

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**Abstract:** Fiji's education system remains deeply influenced by its colonial legacy, privileging Western epistemologies, English-language instruction, and Eurocentric curricula that often marginalise Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices (Thaman, 2003; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). This article critically examines the imperative to decolonise education in Fiji by re-centring Indigenous Fijian (iTaukei) knowledge systems and pedagogies grounded in the *vanua*, relational learning, and communal values (Lingam & Lingam, 2013; Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). Drawing on decolonial theory and the concept of epistemic justice, the paper argues that meaningful educational transformation must extend beyond content reform to reconfigure pedagogy, assessment, and teacher education in ways that affirm local worldviews and cultural identities (Santos, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). By exploring culturally sustaining pedagogies, this study highlights how integrating Indigenous philosophies of learning can foster holistic development, social cohesion, and contextually relevant learning outcomes (Raturi, Hogan, & Thaman, 2020; UNESCO, 2016). The article proposes practical strategies for embedding Indigenous knowledge in policy and practice, offering a pathway toward inclusive, ethical, and future-focused education in Fiji. Ultimately, the decolonisation of education is positioned not as a rejection of global knowledge, but as a rebalancing, one that honours Indigenous wisdom as vital to achieving educational equity and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Indigenous decolonizing sustainable epistemological philosophies policy Global integrating knowledge inclusive strategies culturally ethical

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## I. Introduction

Education in postcolonial contexts remains one of the most contested arenas for cultural identity, epistemological power, and social transformation. In the case of Fiji, the formal education system continues to reflect the enduring legacies of colonial rule, with curricula, language policies, and pedagogical practices grounded predominantly in Western epistemologies (Thaman, 2003; Lingam & Lingam, 2013). While education has historically been promoted as a vehicle for development and modernisation, this trajectory has often come at the expense of Indigenous knowledge systems, which have been marginalised, excluded, or superficially included in schooling structures (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Burnett, 2012). The imposition of Eurocentric frameworks has led to what Santos (2014) calls "epistemicide", the silencing and systematic erasure of alternative ways of knowing. For many Indigenous Fijian (iTaukei) learners, this has contributed to feelings of cultural dislocation, diminished engagement, and a disconnect between formal education and their lived realities (Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Sanga & Reynolds, 2021).

In response, there is growing recognition across the Pacific of the need to decolonise education and reposition Indigenous knowledge as a legitimate and central foundation of learning and development (Thaman, 2009; Sanga, 2016). This shift aligns with broader global discourses on epistemic justice, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and the revitalisation of Indigenous identity in education (Paris & Alim, 2017; UNESCO, 2016). Central to this movement is the concept of *vanua*-based education, which affirms Indigenous relationships to land, community, and spirituality as integral to teaching and learning (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Such approaches challenge dominant narratives of what counts as valid knowledge and seek to reconfigure the education system in ways that are culturally responsive, socially just, and contextually relevant (Voogt & Roblin, 2012; Raturi, Hogan, & Thaman, 2020).

Decolonising education in Fiji involves critically challenging the dominance of Western epistemologies and recognising the value of Indigenous Fijian knowledge systems (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Thaman, 2003). For decades, Fiji's education system has largely mirrored colonial structures, privileging English-language instruction, Eurocentric curricula, and formalised assessments that marginalise local ways of knowing, being, and learning (Lingam & Lingam, 2013; Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). This has contributed to an epistemic disconnection for many iTaukei learners, whose identities, cultural practices, and relational worldviews are often rendered invisible within

*Repositioning Education in Fiji for the Fifth Industrial Revolution: Decolonising Curriculum and Re-mainstream schooling* (Nabobo-Baba, 2008). In response, scholars and practitioners across the Pacific have called for the reassertion of Indigenous pedagogies—grounded in communal values, oral traditions, spirituality, and ecological knowledge—as a pathway toward more relevant, inclusive, and empowering education (Thaman, 2009; Burnett, 2012).

Centering Indigenous knowledge requires more than curriculum content changes; it entails a fundamental reorientation of pedagogical philosophy, teacher education, assessment, and policy frameworks to reflect Pacific worldviews and cultural logic (Sanga, 2016; Raturi, Hogan, & Thaman, 2020). In the Fijian context, *vanua*-based education, a model rooted in Indigenous relationships with land, kinship, and spirituality, offers an alternative paradigm that affirms Indigenous identities and fosters holistic learning (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Moreover, Indigenous knowledge is not static; it evolves in dynamic engagement with contemporary realities such as climate resilience, digital innovation, and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2016). Therefore, decolonising education in Fiji is not a rejection of global knowledge, but a rebalancing that positions Indigenous ways of knowing as equally valid and essential in shaping learners who are culturally grounded, socially responsible, and future-ready (Thaman, 2003; Sanga & Reynolds, 2021).

This article critically explores the need for and pathways toward decolonising education in Fiji by re-centring Indigenous Fijian pedagogies, values, and epistemologies. Drawing on Pacific scholarship and decolonial theory, it argues that true educational transformation must go beyond superficial inclusion of Indigenous content to involve a fundamental rethinking of curriculum design, teacher preparation, assessment practices, and educational policy. The paper advocates for a culturally grounded and ethically conscious model of education that affirms Indigenous knowledge not only as heritage, but as a dynamic and essential contributor to future-ready, inclusive, and sustainable learning systems in Fiji and the wider Pacific.

## II. Brief Literature Review

Smith (2012) argues that decolonising education is a critical response to the continued dominance of Western epistemologies in postcolonial education systems. This discourse has gained momentum globally, particularly in contexts where curriculum frameworks and pedagogical practices still marginalise Indigenous knowledge systems (Chilisa, 2012). In the Pacific region, and Fiji specifically, education structures are deeply embedded in colonial legacies that have historically excluded Indigenous languages, worldviews, and learning methodologies (Thaman, 2003; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). These systems have privileged Eurocentric perspectives, resulting in cultural dissonance, learner alienation, and structural inequities within educational outcomes for Indigenous communities (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021).

Recent scholarship argues for the re-centring of Indigenous epistemologies, such as *vanua*-based learning in Fiji, which emphasise relationality, communal responsibility, oral traditions, and spirituality in education (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Lingam & Lingam, 2023). Such approaches align with culturally responsive pedagogies, which affirm learners' cultural identities while fostering critical consciousness and social transformation (Gay, 2018; Bishop, 2019). Indigenous scholars advocate for curriculum reform that respects and integrates Indigenous worldviews not only as content, but as pedagogical and epistemological foundations (Thaman, 2009; Smith, 2012).

Concurrently, the emerging landscape of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR), marked by the integration of artificial intelligence with human values such as empathy, ethics, and sustainability, calls for an education system that is both technologically forward-looking and culturally grounded (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020; Moravec, 2021). The 5IR emphasizes human-centric innovation, highlighting the urgent need for education systems to balance digital competencies with Indigenous wisdom, ethical reasoning, and community-based knowledge (UNESCO, 2022).

Lingam et al. (2023) highlight that Fijian scholars and educators increasingly advocate for the harmonisation of Indigenous pedagogies with the evolving demands of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) to develop education systems that are culturally relevant, inclusive, and sustainable. This harmonisation involves integrating digital literacy and technological innovation into curricula while simultaneously embedding Indigenous worldviews, values, and knowledge systems that have been historically marginalised (Thaman, 2009; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Such an approach ensures that digital transformation does not occur in isolation from local cultural contexts but rather respects and amplifies community knowledge and relational ways of learning (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021; Raturi, Hogan, & Thaman, 2020).

Embedding digital skills within Indigenous pedagogies also promotes resilience by equipping learners with adaptive capacities to navigate rapidly changing socio-economic and environmental landscapes, including challenges posed by climate change and globalization (UNESCO, 2022; Fijian Ministry of Education, 2023). Crucially, this integrated model fosters intergenerational knowledge transmission, enabling elders and youth to engage collaboratively in knowledge creation and preservation, thus reinforcing community cohesion and cultural continuity (Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Ka'ili, 2016). This interplay between tradition and innovation reflects the ethos

*Repositioning Education in Fiji for the Fifth Industrial Revolution: Decolonising Curriculum and Re-* of the 5IR, which prioritises human-centric technology use embedded with ethical and social responsibility (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020).

Furthermore, such a synthesis of Indigenous pedagogies and 5IR principles supports the development of holistic competencies, combining critical thinking, creativity, digital fluency, and cultural literacy, that are essential for empowering learners as active agents of sustainable development and social transformation in the Pacific region (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Lingam et al., 2023). By recognising Indigenous knowledge as dynamic and evolving rather than static, educators can cultivate future-ready learners who are grounded in their identity yet capable of contributing meaningfully to global technological advancements (Sanga, 2016; Sharma & Narayan, 2024).

Thus, repositioning Fiji’s education system requires a dual transformation: decolonising curriculum content and pedagogy, while also responding constructively to the technological and ethical challenges of the 5IR. This convergence presents a unique opportunity to redefine education through both ancestral wisdom and future-oriented competencies.

**Table 1: Key Themes and References in Decolonising Education and the Fifth Industrial Revolution in Fiji**

Key Theme	Description	Key References
Decolonising Education	Critical movement challenging Western dominance in education to affirm Indigenous epistemologies and knowledge systems.	Smith (2012); Chilisa (2012)
Colonial Legacy in Pacific Education	Historical privileging of Eurocentric curricula and pedagogies in Pacific, marginalising Indigenous languages and ways of knowing.	Thaman (2003); Nabobo-Baba (2006)
Indigenous Knowledge Systems	Emphasis on Indigenous epistemologies such as <i>vanua</i> -based learning that prioritize relationality, community, and spirituality.	Nabobo-Baba (2006); Lingam & Lingam (2023); Sanga & Reynolds (2021)
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	Pedagogical approaches that affirm learners’ cultural identities and promote equity through culturally relevant teaching.	Gay (2018); Bishop (2019); Thaman (2009)
Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) and Education	Emerging global shift emphasizing human-centric technology integration, ethics, empathy, and sustainability in education.	Schwab & Zahidi (2020); Moravec (2021); UNESCO (2022)
Integration of Indigenous Knowledge & 5IR	Harmonizing Indigenous pedagogies with 5IR demands to create inclusive, future-ready, and culturally grounded education systems.	Lingam et al. (2023); Sharma & Narayan (2024)

### III. What Does it Mean to Centre Indigenous Epistemology in Education

Centring Indigenous epistemology in education entails recognising, validating, and prioritising Indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and being as foundational to teaching and curriculum development. In the Fijian context, this involves embracing the *vanua*, the holistic interconnection of land, people, culture, and spirituality, as a central epistemic framework that shapes knowledge production and transmission (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Thaman, 2003). Unlike Western epistemologies that often compartmentalise knowledge into discrete academic disciplines, Indigenous epistemologies emphasise relationality, collective responsibility, and the interconnectedness of all life, fostering a holistic and sustainable worldview (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). Centring such epistemologies in education means that learning is not solely about acquiring abstract information but about nurturing identities, cultural values, and responsibilities toward community and environment.

In practical terms, this reorientation challenges the dominance of Western-centric curricula and pedagogies that have historically marginalised Indigenous voices and knowledge systems in Fiji’s education system (Lingam et al., 2023). It calls for the integration of Indigenous languages, oral traditions, storytelling, and community-based experiential learning into formal education, thereby creating culturally sustaining pedagogies that resonate with students’ lived experiences and identities (Raturi, Hogan, & Thaman, 2020). This approach nurtures learner agency and promotes epistemic justice by affirming the legitimacy and value of Indigenous knowledge as dynamic, evolving, and essential for contemporary education (Santos, 2014; Smith, 2012).

Linking Indigenous epistemology to the emerging realities of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) offers transformative potential for Fiji’s education system. The 5IR, characterised by the fusion of advanced technologies with human values such as ethics, empathy, and sustainability, demands education that balances digital innovation

*Repositioning Education in Fiji for the Fifth Industrial Revolution: Decolonising Curriculum and Re-* with cultural rootedness (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020; UNESCO, 2022). Centring Indigenous epistemologies within this framework supports the development of learners who are not only technologically literate but also culturally grounded and ethically conscious, equipped to navigate complex global challenges while maintaining strong connections to their heritage and community (Lingam et al., 2023). This dual emphasis fosters resilient, adaptive, and future-ready citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to both local and global knowledge economies without sacrificing cultural integrity.

Ultimately, centring Indigenous epistemology in education is an act of decolonisation and cultural revitalisation. It empowers Fijian learners to reclaim their identities and knowledge sovereignty within a rapidly changing world, ensuring that education serves as a conduit for social justice, sustainable development, and the flourishing of Indigenous worldviews in the era of the 5IR (Thaman, 2009; Sharma & Narayan, 2024). In doing so, it challenges entrenched power dynamics in education systems and creates pathways for more equitable, inclusive, and culturally relevant learning experiences.

#### **IV. How Can We Transform Institutions to Support Sovereignty, Language revitalisation and Cultural resurgence?**

As Nabobo-Baba (2006) asserts, "education that ignores culture is education that disempowers." In the context of Fiji, transforming institutions to support Indigenous sovereignty, language revitalisation, and cultural resurgence begins with disrupting colonial legacies embedded in formal education, governance, and research systems. Institutional reform must actively deconstruct Eurocentric norms and re-centre Indigenous knowledge systems (*vakaturaga*), languages, values, and pedagogies as equally authoritative. This involves policy shifts that not only accommodate but prioritise Indigenous worldviews within curriculum design, teacher education, governance, and research ethics frameworks (Thaman, 2003; Smith, 2012).

Language revitalisation is foundational to cultural resurgence and sovereignty. The marginalisation of Indigenous Fijian (*iTaukei*) and Rotuman languages in formal education has contributed to the erosion of traditional knowledge systems and intergenerational disconnection (Ravuvu, 1988; Tabunidalo, 2022). Transforming institutions means creating formal mechanisms for the integration of Indigenous languages across all levels of education—not as optional subjects, but as primary mediums of instruction and scholarly inquiry. Teacher training institutions should mandate Indigenous language proficiency and culturally responsive pedagogies as core competencies (Lingam et al., 2023). Furthermore, national education policies must fund Indigenous language development, including digital archives, dictionaries, storytelling repositories, and AI-enhanced translation tools in line with 5IR innovations (UNESCO, 2022).

The Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR), with its emphasis on human-centred technological advancement, provides a timely opportunity to align digital innovation with Indigenous cultural resurgence. Institutions in Fiji can leverage technologies such as virtual reality, blockchain, and AI to preserve and revitalise traditional knowledge systems, promote ancestral land rights, and document oral histories (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020; Sharma & Narayan, 2024). Culturally embedded digital platforms, developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities, can enable learners to access and contribute to knowledge in their own languages, facilitating a decolonised, future-oriented education system that strengthens cultural continuity and autonomy. Institutional transformation also requires governance reform. Decision-making bodies in education, policy, and research institutions should be inclusive of traditional leaders, community elders, and Indigenous scholars to ensure culturally grounded leadership (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). Embedding Indigenous governance frameworks, such as *veiwekani* (relational leadership) and *veiqaravi vakavanua* (customary protocols), within institutional practice promotes accountability to land, ancestors, and community, key tenets of Indigenous sovereignty. Moreover, decolonising research institutions involves prioritising community-led inquiry that returns benefits to Indigenous peoples and recognises them as epistemic authorities (Smith, 2012; Nabobo-Baba, 2008). Ultimately, the transformation of institutions to support sovereignty, language revitalisation, and cultural resurgence is a moral, cultural, and developmental imperative for Fiji. In the age of the 5IR, these goals are not incompatible with innovation; rather, they are necessary conditions for creating a more ethical, inclusive, and culturally grounded knowledge society that respects Indigenous futures as integral to national development.

#### **V. Repositioning Education in Fiji for the Fifth Industrial Revolution: Capturing Decolonisation and Indigenous Knowledge in the Revised Education Act**

The revised Education Act in Fiji offers a critical policy window to embed transformative change that aligns education with the demands of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR), while decolonising its epistemological foundations. As the global shift toward 5IR emphasises ethical innovation, human-centred technology, and inclusive knowledge systems (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020), the Act must move beyond colonial legacies to foreground *vanua-based* (land-connected), culturally grounded, and future-ready education for all Fijians.

First, the Act must formally recognise Indigenous knowledge systems as foundational to national education. This recognition should be embedded in the preamble and policy principles of the Act, affirming that

*Repositioning Education in Fiji for the Fifth Industrial Revolution: Decolonising Curriculum and Re-* iTaukei and Rotuman epistemologies, values (*veiwekani, vakaturaga*), and pedagogies are essential to holistic learning and nation-building. Such a shift responds to calls by scholars like Nabobo-Baba (2006) and Thaman (2003), who argue for the validation of Pacific Indigenous knowledges as legitimate and rigorous.

Second, to decolonise the curriculum, the Act should mandate the integration of local knowledge, languages, and Indigenous philosophies across subject areas—from science to social studies, and from early childhood to tertiary levels. It should require curriculum review bodies to include Indigenous educators, elders, and researchers, ensuring that what is taught in schools reflects the ecological, historical, and spiritual realities of Fiji. This would dismantle inherited Eurocentric models that marginalise Indigenous learners and contexts (Smith, 2012; Tabunidalo, 2022).

Third, the Act must commit to language revitalisation as a core educational objective. It should legislate the provision of Indigenous language education in both formal and informal learning spaces and support the development of resources in iTaukei, Rotuman, and other vernaculars. In doing so, it aligns with global educational justice frameworks such as UNESCO's (2022) call to promote linguistic diversity as a pillar of inclusive, equitable education.

Fourth, the revised Act must be forward-looking in embracing 5IR technologies not just for STEM innovation, but for culturally grounded digital inclusion. The policy should support the development of AI, VR, and digital storytelling platforms that archive oral histories, traditional environmental knowledge, and ancestral wisdom, technologically enhanced yet deeply rooted in Indigenous ontologies (Sharma & Narayan, 2024).

Finally, the Act should establish Indigenous-led governance mechanisms within the Ministry of Education, such as a *Council for Indigenous and Decolonised Education*, tasked with monitoring, advising, and leading policy development on Indigenous education. This would institutionalise accountability to Indigenous communities and help safeguard against performative inclusion.

In sum, to reposition Fiji's education system for the 5IR, the revised Education Act must go beyond incremental reform. It must be a transformative legal instrument that reorients national education policy toward decolonisation, equity, and cultural resurgence, grounded in the *vanua*, yet responsive to the ethical imperatives of a rapidly evolving global future.

## **VI. Anticipated Challenges in Decolonising Curriculum and Recentring Indigenous Knowledge in Fiji's 5IR Educational Transformation**

### **7.1 Epistemological Resistance and Colonial Mindsets**

One of the most entrenched challenges is resistance to Indigenous epistemologies by policymakers, educators, and even parents who have internalised the superiority of Western models of education (Smith, 2012; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). The legacy of colonial schooling in Fiji continues to privilege Eurocentric knowledge, English language dominance, and standardised testing regimes that marginalise Indigenous ways of knowing. Changing this mindset requires sustained ideological and pedagogical transformation.

*"Decolonising the curriculum is not just a content shift—it is an epistemic revolution that challenges whose knowledge counts" (Thaman, 2003, p. 4).*

### **7.2 Lack of Institutional Capacity and Resources**

Effective integration of Indigenous knowledge and languages into the national curriculum requires well-trained teachers, culturally relevant learning materials, and digital platforms that support this shift. Fiji currently faces a shortage of curriculum developers and educators trained in Indigenous pedagogy and vernacular language instruction (Tabunidalo, 2022). Without significant investment, the risk is superficial inclusion or tokenistic content that does not empower communities.

### **7.3 Language Revitalisation Barriers**

Despite the constitutional recognition of iTaukei and Rotuman languages, vernacular language education remains undervalued in the formal schooling system. There is limited development of educational resources in local languages, and many Indigenous youths are experiencing language attrition due to English-dominant schooling and media exposure (UNESCO, 2022). Reversing this trend requires not only curriculum reform but intergenerational community engagement and state-supported literacy programs.

### **7.4 Digital Divide and Technological Inequality**

While 5IR promises inclusive, ethical innovation, digital access remains uneven across Fiji, especially in maritime and rural communities (Narayan & Kumar, 2023). If decolonised education is to be digitised or supported by AI, VR, or mobile learning platforms, there must be equitable access to infrastructure, electricity, and digital skills training for both teachers and learners. Otherwise, innovation risks reproducing exclusion.

### **7.5 Policy Implementation Gaps**

Historically, many well-intentioned education reforms in Fiji have struggled in implementation due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, weak monitoring, and lack of political will (Ali & Chand, 2022). If the revised Education Act includes decolonisation and Indigenous education mandates, it must also embed clear accountability mechanisms, timelines, and funding strategies to translate policy into classroom practice.

### **7.6 Navigating Religious and Cultural Tensions**

Decolonising education may raise tensions in a multicultural and multireligious society like Fiji, where curriculum decisions intersect with cultural identity, inter-ethnic relations, and political sensitivities. There may be misunderstandings about the aims of Indigenous resurgence, especially if it is misperceived as privileging one group over others. A careful, inclusive national dialogue is needed to frame Indigenous knowledge as a national—not ethnic, asset (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021).

### **7.7 Globalisation and Curriculum Standardisation Pressures**

Finally, Fiji's efforts to integrate Indigenous knowledge may conflict with pressures to meet global benchmarks in science, technology, and economic competitiveness. Balancing local cultural relevance with global competencies is a tension that must be navigated through curricular hybridity and contextualisation rather than exclusion.

## **VII. Way Forward: Reimagining Fijian Education for the Fifth Industrial Revolution**

According to Lingam et al. (2023), the way forward for repositioning Fiji's education system in the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) era lies in advancing a dual commitment: embracing cutting-edge technological advancement while deeply embedding Indigenous knowledge systems and values. Rather than perceiving the 5IR as a threat to cultural identity, it should be viewed as an opportunity to elevate local epistemologies through digital innovation, intergenerational learning, and sustainable community development (Sharma & Narayan, 2024). To do this effectively, education policy must shift away from assimilationist frameworks and instead foster culturally responsive and context-specific curricula that are both globally informed and locally grounded (Thaman, 2003; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). This involves reimagining curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional governance to ensure that Indigenous values, such as *vanua* (land and community), *veiwekani* (relationality), and *talanoa* (dialogic storytelling), are central to educational transformation in the digital age (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021; Raturi, Hogan, & Thaman, 2020).

To achieve this, several structural and pedagogical transformations are needed. Firstly, teacher education programs must be reformed to build educators' capacity to teach using both Indigenous and digital literacies, emphasising values such as *vanua*, *veiwekani* (relationality), and *talanoa* (dialogic learning) within digital spaces (Sanga & Reynolds, 2021; Raturi et al., 2020). Secondly, curriculum development must be community-driven, ensuring Indigenous voices shape how knowledge is constructed, assessed, and transmitted, especially in science, technology, and sustainability subjects. Partnerships between government, traditional knowledge holders, and local institutions are vital for developing inclusive frameworks that support sovereignty and resilience in the face of rapid technological change (Chilisa, 2012; UNESCO, 2021).

Moreover, language revitalisation efforts must be prioritised alongside digital innovation. Incorporating Indigenous languages in digital platforms and AI tools, such as translation software, learning apps, and culturally grounded media, can ensure that Fijian learners access the benefits of 5IR in linguistically and culturally empowering ways (Smith, 2012; Lingam et al., 2023). These efforts contribute not only to educational equity but also to the preservation of identity and ecological knowledge embedded in language.

Finally, the revised Fijian Education Act should institutionalise these commitments by mandating the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems, community consultation in curriculum planning, and the use of technology to enhance, not replace, cultural values. An inclusive and adaptive education system is essential to equip learners with the soft skills, digital competencies, and cultural grounding needed to thrive in a future shaped by AI, automation, and global complexity (Schleicher, 2018; Fullan & Langworthy, 2014).

## **VIII. Conclusion**

As Fiji navigates the complexities of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR), it is imperative that its education system undergoes a transformative shift that is both technologically progressive and culturally grounded. The global move towards hyper-connectivity, artificial intelligence, and human-centric innovation offers new possibilities for teaching and learning, but also poses a significant risk of further entrenching epistemic inequities if Indigenous voices and values are sidelined (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2023). Therefore, re-centring Indigenous knowledge systems within the Fijian educational landscape is not merely a matter of cultural preservation—it is a strategic imperative for equitable and sustainable development in the digital age (Thaman, 2009; Lingam et al., 2023).

### *Repositioning Education in Fiji for the Fifth Industrial Revolution: Decolonising Curriculum and Re-*

Decolonising education in Fiji entails more than curriculum reform; it requires a systemic reconfiguration of how knowledge is defined, transmitted, and valued in formal learning environments. This includes elevating Indigenous epistemologies, pedagogical traditions, and languages as legitimate and vital sources of learning, particularly in relation to digital literacy, environmental stewardship, and intergenerational knowledge transfer (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Sanga & Reynolds, 2021). The harmonisation of Indigenous worldviews with emerging 5IR technologies can cultivate learners who are not only digitally competent but also culturally resilient and community-oriented (Sharma & Narayan, 2024; Raturi, Hogan, & Thaman, 2020).

Institutional transformation must accompany curricular change. Policies, leadership structures, and teacher education programmes must embed principles of cultural sovereignty, linguistic revitalisation, and inclusive governance to foster educational spaces that are decolonised and locally relevant (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012). The forthcoming revised Education Act in Fiji presents a critical opportunity to enshrine these commitments into national law, ensuring that educational transformation is guided by Indigenous values such as *vanua* (land, community), *lotu* (spirituality), and *veiwekani* (relationality) (Thaman, 2003; Nabobo-Baba, 2020). Moving forward, collaborative partnerships among policymakers, Indigenous scholars, community elders, and international allies will be crucial in co-constructing educational futures that are both globally competitive and deeply rooted in local identities. A decolonised, 5IR-ready Fijian education system must not only equip learners with technological skills but also instil a sense of cultural pride, ethical responsibility, and adaptive resilience to meet the uncertainties of the future. Only then can education in Fiji truly become a transformative force for inclusive and sustainable development.

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