From campus to newsroom in the South Pacific: Credible media career paths versus ‘academic anaemia’

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Regional university - 3 campuses, 12 centres
Pacific media education

- USP Journalism founded 1994
  - French Government aid - 6 students
- 68 regional media graduates 1994-2002
- Regional vocational and educational media strategy:
  - Radio Pasifik
  - Wansolwara Online/Pacific Journalism Online
  - Wansolwara/Spicol Daily
  - WansolVisin

Regional comparison

- University education for journalists in the Pacific began 1975 (Papua New Guinea)
- Australia:
  - By 1990s, 39% of Australian journalists with degree or diploma
  - Further 16% with tertiary study (Henningham, 1998)
  - Media education focused on 22 university journalism schools
- New Zealand:
  - 1994 survey showed 37% journalists with degree or diploma (Lealand, 1998)
  - 3 university j-schools, 8 polytechnics

France:
- More than 62% of journalists have degree (McMane, 1998)
  - French system influential in French Polynesia, New Caledonia
- USA:
  - At least 92% of journalists have degree (Medsgen, 1996)
  - American system influential in American Samoa and Micronesia
- Pacific:
  - 48% have degree or diploma, 16% in Fiji (Layton, 1998)
  - PNG: 81%; Fiji: 26% - 49% no j-qualification (Robie, 2003)
  - Three J-schools (PNG x 2) and Fiji
Pacific political context

- History of political pressure on media:
  - Fiji: Media Council of Fiji Bill 2003
  - Tonga: Media Operators Act, Newspaper Act 2003, constitutional changes aimed at media
  - PNG: Media Tribunal Bill 1987 (later attempts)
- Politicians’ rhetorical attacks about alleged poor local standards of journalists, lack of training (Fiji)

Fiji Information Minister Simione Kaitani accused Fiji journalists of being ‘biased and ill-informed’ (Kaitani, 2003)
- Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase’s more scathing attack:
  - They are uncertain interviewers, poor verbal communicators, have problems with accuracy and are short on knowledge of current affairs. The result [of poor standards] is that coverage sometimes compromises the ideals of a free press (Qarase, 2001).

Attorney-General, Qoriniasi Bale:
- Quality of media reporting poor enough to cause damage to individuals and governments (Bale, 2003)
- Other commentators argue media control is government’s real concern (Singh, 2004)
- Tebutt opinion poll (2003):
  - 22% respondents favoured ‘a lot’ of government media control (sample 1005)
  - 49% ‘a little’ control - 29% against
Fiji’s Media Council Bill

- Fiji Government claims bill based on spirit of 1996 Thomson Foundation report (Morgan & Thomas, 1996)
- Claim rejected by media and civil society
- Media and self-regulating Media Council have campaigned strongly against draft bill

Fiji’s Media Council Bill

- Draft law provides for:
  - Information Minister appointing chairman and equal public members to media (eight)
  - Complaints Committee with power to initiate inquiries into ‘breaches’ of code of ethics
  - Conviction and fines of up to $2000 for failure to appear before Complaints Committee
- Most of 20 public submissions against proposed bill

Fiji’s Media Council Bill

- Intensity of opposition provoked Kaitani to complain in Parliament about being:
  - Crucified afresh with my pound of flesh sought after by certain sections of our media outlets over the proposed media bill (Kaitani, 2003)
- Kaitani declared he would back scrapping bill
- Editors forum debate on bill, media standards
Graduate journalist survey

- Little research on Pacific media and education/training
- USP monitoring project from 1998

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>62</td>
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<td>Response percentage</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
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** Actual total 68 - but six graduates in 1996, 1997 not included in survey

Age and gender

- USP j-graduates’ mean age 22.5
- Fiji newsrooms mean age 24.7 (Robie, 2003)
- Two-thirds (63.2%) of USP graduates female
- In 2000, 80% of graduates were women

Country

- Spread from 11 countries, including four outside USP membership:
  - Maldives, PNG, Tahiti and USA
- Programme attracts students from other countries:
  - Australia, Germany and Nigeria ...
- 67% graduates from Fiji
- 8.8% - Samoa
- 7.4% - Solomon Islands
The University of the South Pacific (Fiji)
Auckland University of Technology (NZ)

From campus to newsroom in the South Pacific: Credible career paths

### Graph 1: Pacific (USP) journalism graduates by country, 1996 - 2002

- Fiji: 77% (2002)
- Federated States of Micronesia: 1.50% (2002)
- Maldives: 1.50% (2002)
- Papua New Guinea: 1.50% (2002)
- Samoa: 1.50% (2002)
- Solomon Islands: 1.50% (2002)
- Tahiti: 1.50% (2002)
- Tonga: 1.50% (2002)
- Tuvalu: 1.50% (2002)
- USA: 7.40% (2002)
- Vanuatu: 5.90% (2002)

### Graph 2: Pacific journalism graduates by major, 1998 - 2002

- 83.9% graduates opted for BA degree with Journalism plus double major
- 16.1% chose two-year Diploma in Pacific Journalism
- 46.2% chose History/Politics as second major
- 13.5% - Literature/Language
- 7.7% - Sociology

- Economics
- Geography
- History/politics
- Law
- Linguistics
- Management and public administration
- No information
- No information
- No information
- No information
- Information systems
- Literature and language
- Management and public administration
- Fashion studies
The University of the South Pacific (Fiji)
Auckland University of Technology (NZ)

Preferred media

- 19% preferred a career in radio
- 11.7% chose newspapers
- 10.7% television
- 10.7% - civil society media
- 8.8% - government media
- 75.1% - enter news media at graduation

29 media employers in nine countries
- Largest employers: Fiji Daily Post (8.3%) Fiji and Vanuatu broadcasting corps, Fiji TV (4.8%)

Salary expectations

- 25% expected salary of F$10,001-$15,000
- 20% - $8001-$10,000
- 12.5% - $5000-$8000
- 2.5% - more than $30,000

Mean annual salary of F$13,000 is equivalent to A$9,620
- F$1 = A$0.74 11/11/04 www.xe.com
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Salary expectations


Perceived media role

- 30.8% supported 'watchdog' role
- 26.9% 'defender of the truth'
- 16.6% 'community empowerment'
- 2.6% - entertainment
  - See Romano, 1998

Perceived media role

Pacific graduates' perceived media role 1998 - 2002

- 30.8% 'watchdog'
- 26.9% 'defender of the truth'
- 16.6% 'community empowerment'
- 2.6% 'nation builder'
- 2.6% - entertainment

- See Romano, 1998
Conclusion

- Politicians continue to condemn media
- USP has made significant contribution to journalism education in South Pacific
  - 68 graduates in seven years
- Fiji greatest beneficiary - 67% of graduates
- Reality - graduates often eventually choose other better-paid career options after they join newsrooms

Although Fiji government has backed off over legislation, a threat is still present
- Media needs to respond to ‘wake-up call’ to improve standards
- Better training and recognition needed for educated journalists
- Better paid career paths in South Pacific needed to attract brightest journalists