International Education Journal, 2006, 7(7), 895-905.
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2006 *Shannon Research Press*.
http://iej.com.au

White collar work: Career ambitions of Fiji final year school students

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The career ambitions of 1012 pupils in the final years of secondary schooling in Fiji were surveyed. The range of careers they nominated was very narrow, with teaching, nursing and other white collar work in the majority of responses. This stands in somewhat stark contrast to projected labour force needs, and the current serious shortage of skilled workers in key growth industries. Data on factors influencing pupil career choice indicated that over 80 per cent knew someone about the kind of job they were aiming for, and that many of these people were adults in their local environment. This finding emphasises the role schools must play if the skilled human resource potential of Fiji is to be realised. Schools in which a well-supported technical and vocational training program (TVET) was established tended to show much wider career ambitions, not only for TVET students but also for students in the academic strands.

School-leavers, career ambitions, local influences, technical vocational education training, TVET, Mathematics

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on preliminary analysis of research undertaken in 2005 in nine very different secondary schools in Fiji. Responses were completed to a survey by 1012 students, with the majority from Form 7 (Year 12), some from Form 6, and some from the technical and vocational education and training sector (TVET). The purpose was to investigate school to work transitions. Pupils came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds in the north, west, Nadi and Suva. The original idea to conduct this study came from Veramu's (1992) research. He interviewed 1008 young people aged 15-29 years of both races in rural and urban areas and found "high but unrealistic expectations for future employment" (ECREA, 2002, p.9). It was hypothesised that if this were also true for senior high school graduates, it would impact on future Fiji human resource capacity. Veramu (1992) concludes that "too many of them were unemployed and the reality is that the current education system does not provide the necessary skills required by the job market" (ECREA, 2002, p.9). The 2000 national education report reached similar conclusions (Tavola, 2000; Sharma, 2000).

The last three years have seen a much greater emphasis on TVET in secondary schools. Yet it has always been difficult to persuade parents and pupils of the value of vocational study. While secondary schools can develop subjects and courses that are more responsive to market needs, there remains the problem of student choice. Senior-level pupils and their parents still cling to traditional white collar job stereotypes.

BACKGROUND

Fiji and its Economy

A relatively prosperous state, Fiji forms an important centre of industry and education in the South Pacific (EU, 2002a, p.29). GDP was predicted to grow at 4.1 per cent in 2005 (Fijilive, 2005). Life expectancy is around 70 (World Bank, 2003). Literacy is around 91.6 per cent (EU, 2002b, p.7). Formerly reliant on sugar production, Fiji has developed garment manufacturing industries (Storey, 2004), and become an international tourist destination. The tourist industry is growing very rapidly (Waqausa, 2004; Narayan, 2003), creating not only a new labour market (direct and subsidiary sectors), but new education and training imperatives (Yarrow, Strachan and Krishnamurty, 2000). However, the sugar and garment industries are under threat as the world moves towards full economic integration. The future will see some radical, potentially destabilising shifts in the economic base of Fiji, in the composition of the labour force, and in education and training alignments (Chand, 2001). Fiji has already undergone some "deagrarianisation" (Potter and Cooke, 2004, p.306). Over half the population are urban residents (Connell, 2003).

Fiji has a population skewed towards youth, so the entry of large numbers of workers with inappropriate qualifications into the urban labour market in a climate of low growth of traditional employment opportunities, and diminishing wage rigidity, will lead to a growing pool of under- and un-employed people (Chand, 2003, p.22) and social unrest. So careful development of human capital potential is therefore central not only to a future stable economy, but to the maintenance of political stability. However, it would appear from our research that an important locus of future career decision-making still lies in outdated family and community discourses about traditionally appropriate jobs for Fijians, Indians, males and females. This suggests an increasing role for schools in actively shaping the career ambitions of pupils.

Secondary Education and Training

Tables 1 and 2 show that total enrolments increased in Forms 6 and 7, but perhaps decreased in TVET. Increased enrolments in Forms 6 and 7 (qualifying year for tertiary entry) indicate the present upward credentialling of the local labour market. Formal education has been important for Fijians since first colonisation (Tavola, 1991, p.9), while schools for Indian children were established in 1898 (p.11). Tavola emphasised that "perceptions of education were inextricably linked with white-collar occupations in the modern sector of the economy and social demand throughout the colonial period was for a western-type literary education" (1991, p.15-16). Teasdale explains that,

> A system of examinations and reporting regulated progression through the school, and provided incentives for students to acquire knowledge and the formal credentials for having done so. These credentials in turn were linked to subsequent employment. The higher the credentials the more prestigious and well-paid the job at the end. This was the system of education that was exported to Oceania during the colonial era. (Teasdale, 2005, p.2)

Senior schooling in colonial times explicitly produced indigenous civil servants. Tevita Koroi, a Suva school principal, believes that this ideology still prevails so that the entire logic of the Fiji schooling system remains implicitly driven by a colonialist mindset.

Table 1. Form 6 and 7 enrolments by race 2003-2004

Sector	Form 6		Form 7	
	2003	2004	2003	2004
Fijians	6368	6965	1447	1755
Indians	5627	5565	2726	2793
Europeans	118	61	22	28
Chinese	82	58	32	19
Others	454	536	141	142
Total	12649	13185	4368	4737

Source: Fiji Ministry of Education

Table 2. TVET Enrolments by number of schools and gender 2003-2004, along with the total FIT franchise TVET enrolments

Category	2003 (n=63)	2004 (n=62)	2005
Males	1536	1374	
Females	783	600	
Total[a]	2319	1974	
Total FIT Franchise TVET enrolments	644	809	830

Source: Fiji Ministry of Education. n=number of schools. [a] It is not clear whether these figures include those pupils taking Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) franchised TVET programs in secondary schools.

By the 1950s "post-war prosperity had spread to Fiji and economic growth was starting to be linked with manpower planning" (Tavola, 1991, p.23), although indigenous Fijians were largely left out of this. The Spate (1959, p.24) report recommended that, with the exception of Chiefs, "Fijians should become independent farmers on traditionally owned land, while retaining villages as communal centres". The 1960s saw the opening of the Derrick Technical Institute (now Fiji Institute of Technology) and the University of the South Pacific in Suva. Independence in 1970 heralded the restructuring of schooling, curriculum reform and Fijian affirmative action. An examination of enrolments at Form 7 show that Fijian enrolments increased from 1447 in 2003 to 1755 in 2004, demonstrating the flow-on effects of affirmative action initiatives.

In the mid-1970s, vocational education started to respond to manpower needs. This continued in the 1980s, but the problem of too many academic school-leavers for the number of white-collar jobs remained, partly because it was hard to convince parents of the merits of vocational education (Tavola, 1991, pp.34-41). This remains a serious problem. In 2002 there was "an average of only 2,000 new jobs for the usual annual figure of 17,000 school-leavers" (Mausio, 2003, p.445). Teacher and nurse training institutions turn away thousands each year, and graduates from some university degrees can take up to ten years to find steady work. Many complete a technical qualification to make themselves more employable. Indo-Fijian teachers and nurses often migrate to other countries leaving a shortfall of practitioners. Yet there are sectors of the local labour market showing such a severe skills shortage that workers are brought in from overseas, for example, skilled garment cutters, pattern-makers and embroiderers, building construction managers, qualified dive instructors, beauticians, chefs and air-conditioning technicians. There seems to be little present alignment of the education system with manpower needs.

We found that the historically-established strong career orientation towards standard white-collar work on the part of pupils and their parents remains strong even though new job opportunities in the public sector have markedly declined. For young males, the fast-growth labour force sectors (FIBS, 2003) are as follows:

- Community, Social and Personal Services
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale/Retail Trade
- Restaurants and Hotels
- Transport, Storage and Communication
- For young females:
- Manufacturing
- Community, Social and Personal Services
- Wholesale/Retail Trade
- Restaurants and Hotels

In the professional fields, Fiji has a shortage of trained psychologists, veterinarians and architects. Yet very few of the occupations just mentioned appeared in the survey.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This research project involved cooperation between the University of Newcastle and the Fiji Institute of Technology. Survey and interview data were collected from the following schools:

- All Saints Secondary (Labasa)
- Labasa College
- Labasa Sangam (SKM) College
- Ratu Navula Secondary (Nadi)
- Nadi College
- Jasper Williams High (Lautoka)
- Natabua High (Lautoka)
- Ba Methodist High (Ba)
- Nasinu Secondary (Suva)

None of these are so-called 'flagship' schools like Queen Victoria, Adi Cakobau or Yat Sen. They were chosen to approximate general range choices for ordinary pupils and parents who must pay tuition fees for senior years. Nasinu Secondary has an almost exclusively Fijian enrolment while all others have mixed race enrolment. Labasa Sangam, Labasa College and Natabua Secondary enjoy a reputation for excellent examination results. Jasper Williams (all female) and Ba Methodist occupy a starkly contrasting lower socio-economic and academic position. All Saints, Labasa College, Natabua, Ratu Navula and Nasinu all have TVET programs (either Ministry of Education, franchised FIT modules or both). Nadi College takes Form 7 students who have not achieved entry anywhere else. 576 Fijians, 390 Indo-Fijians and 46 coded as 'others' completed the survey. Of Fijians and Indo-Fijians, 538 were female and 428 male. The group of 'others' were not considered by gender. Interviews were conducted with the Principal or Assistant Principal and with Ministry careers officers.

Form 7 education is not readily available everywhere in Fiji. Many of the students in this study came from small islands or the mountainous interior. They lived in local hostels or with relatives. All schools have well-established reputations and some dedicated former pupils who tend to send the next generation there. This is particularly so for Fijian students. As we shall see below, this sense of 'following in the footsteps' of older family members in schooling may extend to following career aims.

Descriptive statistical analysis of some key survey questions indicated that most career ambitions followed stereotypes, namely, white collar work of various kinds. A substantial influence on career decision-making by families and community members was also found.

FINDINGS

In this section, data on parents' occupation, presented in Table 3 is compared with student job choices, shown in Table 4. Best-liked and least-liked school subjects are reviewed with the aim of illuminating how some subjects open or close career options.

Parent Occupations and Student Career Aspirations

Parent's occupations, (see Table 3) were coded using a scale based on Erickson and Goldthorpe's (1992) classification of occupational groupings. Examples are provided.

1. **Professional, executive and senior managerial**: doctor, engineer, lawyer, architect, university lecturer, stockbroker, bank manager, politician, significant business owner, CEO or executive officer, resort manager.
2. **Para-professional, lower-managerial, small business owner**: teacher, school principal, nurse, paramedical and health workers, accountant, field officer, journalist, owns a retail or service business, real estate agent, police, army, ship's captain, foreman, shop steward, farmer (large land-holding), reverend, pastor, clergyman.
3. **Clerical, service and financial**: civil servant, clerk in a small company or business, shop assistant, waitress, bank teller or worker, public relations, receptionist, booking clerk.
4. **Trades and technical fields**: automotive mechanic, mechanical or other engineering (no degree), IT (no degree), carpenter/joiner, tiler, plumber, electrician, telecommunications worker, FEA worker, cook, pastrychef, beautician, builder, musician, classical dancer.
5. **Manual work**: factory worker, cane-cutter, labourer, miner, fisherman, market seller/trader or worker, farmer (small land holding), taxi driver, transport driver, dock worker
6. **Unemployed, no job, domestic labour or housewife**:(no income, small inconsistent income from various sources, or traditional land leased out providing some small income).
7. **Other**: international rugby player.

It is assumed that members of these occupational groupings share relatively similar, Levels of income, levels of economic security, chances of career advancement, scope of authority and control, and levels of work autonomy. (Pakulski, 2004, p.98)

Table 3. Parents' occupations expressed as a percentage (%)

School	Code 1	Code 2	Code3	Code 4	Code 5	Code 6	Code 7	Total
All Saints	0	21.98	2.19	4.39	42.85	25.27	3.29	100
Labasa College	0	22.39	7.60	15.21	43.75	21.85	1.04	100
Labasa Sangam	7	33.10	4.84	5.65	30.65	12.90	5.65	100
Natabua	4	33.98	7.76	5.56	27.18	10.67	1.94	100
Nadi College	7	17.10	9.21	9.21	23.70	27.60	6.57	100
Jasper Williams	0	22.44	2.04	22.44	36.73	16.32	0	100
Ratu Navula	1	12.74	0.98	10.78	46.07	24.50	3.92	100
Ba Methodist	9	10.50	7.90	2.63	27.60	39.50	2.63	100
Nasinu	0	21.10	3.51	13.50	28.14	30.15	3.51	100

Except at Labasa Sangam and Natabua Secondary where there were more occupations in Code 2, over 50 per cent of parent's occupations were manual work or unemployed, no job, domestic

labour or housewife. There is no classic racial explanation of the kind often used to explain such a pattern. Labasa Sangam was certainly 72 per cent Indo-Fijian, and Natabua was almost 60 per cent, but Labasa College – with almost 65 per cent of parent occupations in Codes 5 and 6, was over 65 per cent Indo-Fijian.

Table 4. Student career ambitions expressed as a percentage (%)

School	Code 1	Code 2	Code 3	Code 4	Code 5	Code 6	Code 7	Total
All Saints	22	60.43	5.49	2.19	2.19	3.29	4.39	100
Labasa Coll	18	59.89	5.72	15.62	1.56	0	0	100
Lab Sangam	30	50.80	9.68	8.06	0.80	0	0.80	100
Natabua	35	35.92	5.82	15.56	3.88	0	5	100
Nadi Coll	18	69.70	5.26	2.63	1.32	0	2.63	100
Jasper Will	10	79.59	4.08	0.00	0.00	0	6	100
Ratu Navula	4	41.17	4.90	19.60	29.41	0	0.98	100
Ba Meth	22	68.40	5.26	1.32	0.00	0	3.00	100
Nasinu	13	63.80	6.03	10.00	0.50	0	7.03	100

At seven of the nine schools, where over 50 per cent of parent's occupations were in Codes 5 and 6, over 60 per cent of respondents wanted a job in occupational Category 2. Some just wrote down 'white collar'. At All Saints for example, nearly 60 per cent wanted to be an accountant, a teacher or a doctor. At Labasa College, almost a quarter wanted to become accountants. At Labasa Sangam 20 per cent were hoping for various white collar jobs. At Jasper Williams, 40 per cent aimed to be an accountant or a teacher. At Nadi College, Ba Methodist and Nasinu, 161 of 351 students wrote 'teacher'. In total, the most popular jobs (in descending order) were teacher, accountant, civil servant, engineer, nurse, doctor and lawyer. The career ambitions of most pupils were inflated in relation to actual chance of success, either because the labour sector is already over-supplied, or because the examination results needed for relevant tertiary education are rarely attained by students at that school. Senior educationalists acknowledged the problem of 'mismatch', for example,

> This is what happens when you take people through a system that is targeting a white collar job – that job market. It takes young people through that tunnel kind of preparation. So if the job's available they will be able to get those jobs. But if the jobs are not available, those young people just stay (…) in towns. (…) It's partly the system - partly the opportunities that are available and the advice that they get. That's the kind of perception most people have – you go to school and you get a job – you get a government job. And when you look at government jobs it's mostly teaching and nursing and I know a few departments and ministries that used to take people into the public service (…). So it's that which has been there for quite some time. (Tevita Koroi, Principal – Nasinu Secondary, October 2005)

Ratu Navula and Natabua schools stand out in Table 4, although for different reasons, since 52 per cent of students at Natabua were contemplating non-traditional professional or para-professional careers, higher than any other school. Moreover, almost 50 per cent of students at Ratu Navula indicated a job in Codes 4 and 5, reflecting their career orientation towards sectors of the local tourism industry. Innovative approaches to careers education are taken in those two schools and both have well-supported and extensive TVET programs.

SUBJECT PREFERENCES AND STUDENT CAREER AMBITIONS

The accepted wisdom of career counselling is that young people should form career ambitions around the subjects they like, and avoid fields they dislike. Table 5 presents the modal response within each school of students' favourite and least favourite subjects.

Table 5. Most common favourite and least favourite subjects by school (n=1012)

School	Favourite Subject (mode)	Least Favourite Subject (mode)
All Saints Secondary School	Economics and Accounting	Mathematics
Labasa College	Mathematics	Mathematics
Labasa Sangam (SKM) College	Mathematics	Mathematics
Natabua High School	Mathematics	Mathematics
Nadi College	English	Mathematics
Jasper Williams High School	English	Mathematics
Ratu Navula	English	Mathematics
Ba Methodist	English	Mathematics
Nasinu	English	Mathematics

As survey respondents self-nominated, it was possible for some to name Mathematics as their favourite, while others named it least favourite. However, approximately 45 per cent of 1012 students disliked Mathematics, while only around 25 per cent at the three highest achieving schools liked it. Mathematics constitutes a significant career barrier for many students. All Principals expressed concern about this.

INFLUENCES ON CAREER AMBITIONS

A preference scale indicated the importance or otherwise of a list of factors influencing career choices. A response of '1' indicated extremely important and '5' signalled unimportant. Table 6 ranks the factors that influence personal career choice.

Table 6. Ranking of factors influencing personal career choice (n =1012)

Factor	Rank
Success in a school subject	1.1
Future income	1.3
Future job security	1.3
To support my future family	1.3
Interest in a school subject	1.3
My own interests	1.4
Teachers at school	1.8
Family members and relatives	1.9
Reading about jobs	1.9
Ideas from media	2.3
So I can move overseas	2.6
People that I met	3.1
Input from friends	3.3

These ranked factors do not however represent the actuality of student choice processes. On another question it was obvious that family members and relatives, the church and the local community play a much more significant role than is implied in responses here. We note though, that the apparent wide agreement that success in a school subject is important, bears upon the issue of general antipathy to Mathematics.

The question that followed the request to say what job they would like, was whether they had ever met anyone with that kind of job. The next question asked: 'If yes, how did you meet (or know) that person?' and participants could indicate that it was either a family member, neighbour or community contact. Table 7 presents the results to both questions and shows that in all schools, more than three quarters answered 'yes'.

The lowest affirmative responses from Natabua and Jasper Williams schools, are probably low for slightly different reasons. In both schools students were aiming for Code 1 occupations, so possibly they had never personally met an architect or lawyer, for example.

Table 7. Responses to 'Have you ever met anyone with that job?' (n=1012), along with male and female responses as to how they knew the person (n=827)

School	Yes=1 %	Male %	Female %
All Saints	86	47.61	69.81
Labasa Col	83	45.65	61.35
Lab Sangam	81	52.94	64.40
Natabua	78	62.50	46.87
Nadi Coll	83	27.27	57.50
Jasper Will	76	0	71.87
Ratu Navula	85	35.50	29.26
Ba Meth	84	36.36	43.75
Nasinu	80	48.31	64.83

This data contradicts the earlier data on factors influencing career decisions. For example it appears 'family' often does play a very important role. Broadly speaking, females were more likely to be following a family or local community member in their career choices. No 'race' pattern in responses was found. Instead, the difference seems to derive from the commitment to careers education of the school itself. The most notable exception to the trend, Ratu Navula school, offers the most substantial TVET programs oriented to the relatively new local tourism industry, so it may be that a generational reproduction effect is more effectively minimised there.

DISCUSSION

In summary the following relationships were found.

- A limited range of career choices were based seemingly on who one met in the first 17 years of life and lack of labour market knowledge.
- A limited range of career choices were based on the career aspirations of the previous generation and the dominance of the colonialist white collar work discourse.
- A range of career choices with highly competitive entry points to tertiary training involving severely limited quotas for nursing, teaching, and USP degree study, further complicated by failure and fear of Mathematics.
- The range of career choices was limited by fixed ideas about gender and race.
- There was danger of choosing a career with high levels of graduate unemployment.
- There was danger of choosing jobs and careers linked to shrinking industries and institutions (like the civil service), rather than expanding ones.

More than two-thirds of the desired jobs nominated by students at the nine schools were in the Code 2 occupations of accounting, teaching, civil service and nursing, or Code 1 occupations of medicine, engineering and law. Given the original Veramu (1992) finding, it does seem that career aspirations of students at most schools are inflated, or at least distorted, in relation to actual chances of success. For instance, according to the Lautoka Teachers College 2003 prospectus, each year approximately 6,000 applications are made for less than 300 actual places. Similar numbers apply to the Fiji College of Nursing for a strictly limited quota of places (around 210). Fiji College of Advanced Education, USP and FIT also have very large numbers of Form 7 graduates applying. In all cases it will be examination results that determine entry, and access to scholarships. A teacher at Ba Methodist School claimed that when some graduating Form 7 Fijian students failed to obtain entry to commerce programs, teacher or nurse-training, and were unable to find a white collar job, they simply returned to the village, especially the girls. While this is certainly understandable, it does represent a net loss of human resource potential for the nation, and a lack of return on the considerable investment of parents in schooling. Moreover, it would be

so much better if the young person in question were to return to the local community with much-needed high level technical skills in areas like agriculture, marketing, mechanics or textiles, rather than just the abstract academic knowledge obtained in senior school. In fact, the three most desired occupations of Fijian students, accounting, teaching, and various other kinds of white collar work, are virtually guaranteed to ensure the young person who does get this kind of job never returns to his or her own small, local community, whereas some other occupations such as plumber, electrician or seamstress, do offer that possibility.

In relation to school subjects, we conclude that in both direct and indirect ways, Mathematics as it is currently taught to Form Four and Five acts as a gate-keeping device, implicitly favouring the academic orientations of only some students. Excluding 'others', 52 per cent of females indicated Mathematics was least favoured, compared to only 35 per cent of males (Chandra and Lewai, 2005; Evening, 2004). Even more starkly, 72 per cent of Fijian students indicated they disliked Mathematics (Puamau, 2002), compared to only 31 per cent of Indo-Fijian students. It is a case of the system failing the pupils rather than the pupils failing the system. All nine Principals confirmed the existence of the Mathematics 'problem' and expressed concern about the effect it had on student confidence. It may also have an indirect influence on career ambitions. If so many students dislike Mathematics, then this must affect their choice of disciplinary study streams in senior years. Many implicitly rule themselves out of careers by avoiding Mathematics. Certainly some knowledge of Mathematics is required for many of the highest growth labour sector jobs. However, calculus, advanced trigonometry or algebra need not be included. More training in simple arithmetic, geometry, statistics, and less reliance on calculators is needed, and should form the basis for a second level of senior Mathematics study.

Responses to the preference scale for influences on career choice must be read sceptically, since implicit denial of family influence is contradicted responses to particular questions. For Fijians, for example, culturally children usually play an almost insignificant role in family decision-making, although this may be changing for urban-dwellers. In the survey, almost all females who wanted to be nurses identified a relative as role model, and the same pattern was true for males who wanted to be agricultural field officers. In other words, the formation of career ambitions seems grounded in the particular local environment for over half of these young people, possibly experienced as a much more authoritative source of ideas about jobs than the abstract world of career choice pamphlets that schools might provide. It became clear from interviews with Principals that the two schools at which this pattern was least evident were those with successful TVET programs and well-organised careers counselling, as well as careers information days.

The generational reproduction pattern is identified as a problem. With the best intentions, parents and families may well be advising students, and recommending role models for occupational choices, which made more sense 20 years ago than they do now.

> This is part and parcel of the colonial legacy. Because for a long time, since colonisation, Fijian parents, as well as Indian parents, have been led to believe, or could I say, have been misled to believe, that the best work anybody could ever get is in the white collar jobs. (…) Fijian citizens have been led to believe that, you know, get your kids educated so they become teachers, doctors, nurses and all, because that is where the money lies. (Mr Nemani, Careers Officer, Ministry of Education, September 2005)

However, not only is that no longer 'where the money lies', but obtaining any kind of 'white collar' job can no longer be expected. There are a great many more rewarding careers now than becoming a white collar worker, which promise less intensely competitive tertiary entry, better graduate employment prospects, and higher pay rates. But senior students seem mostly unaware of this.

CONCLUSION

In Fiji the rhetoric of many educationalists and economists is about building human resource capacity to support a new set of industries and endeavours. However, our research indicates that this may stand for nothing if young people and their families continue to believe in only a narrow and outdated set of career paths.

At present it seems some schools rely for careers education mainly on information given out by tertiary education providers during school visits. Since tertiary institutions are primarily interested in promoting their own courses, this does not represent anything like adequate careers education. We recommend in this article systematic expansion of careers module teaching and counselling in schools, right down to primary schools, with careers information made directly available to all parents, even those in villages, perhaps through the local primary school. Parents, who care deeply about the future of their children, and spend a great deal of their income on schooling, should have much better careers awareness. This could be achieved through some informal training sessions using existing forums such as church groups, village meetings, school functions and so on.

Our research findings strongly suggest that a broader range of imagined career options, and less stereotyped career ambitions, were observable at the schools where solidly-supported TVET programs were offered. We suggest that the positive focus of principals, teachers and community leaders on these programs may alter the entrenched school culture of traditional white collar work as the only logical outcome of completing Form 6 or Form 7. Accordingly we recommend the considerable expansion of well-supported, high profile TVET programs in secondary schools, not only because they are sorely needed, but because there is some evidence that the very presence of these programs in schools expands future career awareness for all pupils. It is possible to imagine a much more flexible senior curriculum in Fiji, with integration of practical and academic subjects leading to more targeted pre-career study. A further recommendation emerging from the research is for the introduction of another kind of Mathematics syllabus from Form 3, so the subject does not act as an implicit gate-keeping device, keeping some groups of students away from particular career categories.

In closing, we stress that our data implies the continuing pattern of large numbers of well-educated young people entering the urban labour market only to be disappointed. If the trend goes unchecked, this will only add to the existing high numbers of over-educated, unemployed young people, a recipe for social unrest. It seems a great waste of local Fijian human potential when overseas workers must be brought in to fill so many gaps in the labour force. We maintain that relevant secondary educational reform is central not only to ensuring Fiji has a sustainable economy in the future, but through that, to the future maintenance of political stability, in which traditional cultures can be maintained without conflict.

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