

Pacific newsrooms and the campus: some comparisons between Fiji and Papua New Guinea

David Robie

Most South Pacific journalists are living and working in either the Fiji Islands or Papua New Guinea. All three of the region's university education and training programs are also situated in these two countries. One institution in Papua New Guinea has educated a generation of Pacific journalists while university education is relatively new for journalists in Fiji and the smaller nations of Polynesia, where donor-funded short courses have been relied on for training. Politicians have lambasted what they describe as a lack of professionalism and training among Pacific Islands journalists. The University of the South Pacific introduced professional media attachments with Fiji news media for the first time during 1998. This paper examines the findings of a survey of 12 news media organisations in Fiji and Papua New Guinea during December 1998 – February 1999. It found a marked difference — journalists from Fiji are far less qualified, much younger and less experienced than in Papua New Guinea.

The quality and lack of professional formation of journalism practitioners in the South Pacific has been a frequent theme of criticism for politicians in the region (Robie, 1998:115-118). While the majority of journalists in Papua New Guinea do have formal training and qualifications (Layton, 1995; Robie, 1995, 1997), this is not the case in much of the rest of the region, including Fiji where newsroom staff have traditionally been school-leavers with little or no experience. Many news organisations rely on donor-funded short courses coordinated through organisations such as the Pacific Islands

News Association (PINA) and Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association (PIBA) in association with AusAID (A\$3 million Pacific Media Initiative), UNESCO, Commonwealth Press Union and others. It is questionable how well such short courses have served the region and whether they have really contributed to the long-term sustainability of journalism professionalism. Some even see the anomalies as “flawed” or “embarrassing” (Sorariba 1997; Hooper 1998). Other critics have the view that many training initiatives are “symptomatic of a failure of leadership among those in the Pacific, as well as those from donor nations, who lead the stampede to the trough of development aid dollars” (Hooper 1998, p.13).

Since the May 1999 general election in the Fiji Islands, when Mahendra Chaudhry was elected in a landslide victory as the country’s first Indo-Fijian prime minister, the local news media have faced sustained criticism for alleged lack of professionalism and ethics, and poor training standards (Robie 1999a; Vayeshnoi 1999a, 1999b; Chaudhry 1999). In paid advertisements in two of the national daily newspapers, the new *Fiji Sun* and the Government-owned *Daily Post*, Chaudhry’s administration condemned news media “hysteria” and accused the major Rupert Murdoch-owned *Fiji Times* of “fanning the fires of sedition and racism”. (*Daily Post, Fiji Sun*; 1999) Warning that the news media faced a media tribunal and legislation if it did not get its house in order, Chaudhry declared the media must work under the “ambit” of the *Public Order Act*, which “prohibits public statements and utterances which could incite” (Chaudhry 1999, p.7). He accused “irresponsible elements” in the news media of turning a continuing debate over the renewal of leases of land belonging to indigenous Fijians into a racial issue. The leases, which are running out, are mainly held by farmers who are descendants of indentured labourers brought from India last century when Fiji was a British colony. Chaudhry is descended from these Indians. He was in a new Fiji Labour Party-led Government removed by the mainly indigenous Fijian army in May 1987 in a bloodless coup after protests by indigenous Fijians against what they claimed was an Indian-dominated government. (In fact, the deposed Fiji Labour Party/National Federation Party coalition

Government was racially balanced with seven indigenous Fijian cabinet ministers, including Prime Minister Dr Timoci Bavadra, seven Indo-Fijian ministers, and one mixed-race minister.)

A few days before the Government advertisements were published on 30 October, Chaudhry had stunned the news media industry with a strong attack on the media while launching the Fiji Media Council's self-regulatory *General Code of Ethics and Practice* (1999). He singled out the *Fiji Times*, *Islands Business* news magazine and Fiji Television Ltd, and to a lesser extent the *Fiji Sun*, for scathing criticism. Chaudhry also named individual journalists, including the *Fiji Times*' political reporter Margaret Wise and *Islands Business* publisher Robert Keith-Reid. Citing examples of where journalism integrity was perceived to be eroding in the United States and other countries, Chaudhry said:

There is no doubt that media credibility is dropping. The public is becoming critical of media practices and its self-adopted watchdog role. The industry needs critical self-appraisal and a rethink of whither it is headed.

Fiji is not isolated from these developments. The media in Fiji also needs to take stock of how it is behaving and whether it is facing a crisis of ethics. Since taking office, my Government has had occasion to be extremely disgusted by the antics of some elements in the media who have used the medium of the newspaper and television to further their own personal agendas to discredit the Government (Chaudhry p.4).

Part of Chaudhry's speech dealt with general training and professional standards:

Ethics, professionalism, standards and training — these are key elements of the industry that need serious attention. Failure to address these issues has put the integrity of the entire [Fiji] industry in question.

It is the duty of media organisations to ensure local journalists are trained to acceptable standards . . . Government is prepared to draw on its resources and provide assistance in facilitating this.

Government is working on changes to the Media Act and the industry can rest assured that it will be fully consulted on this. We intend to give the Media Council teeth to impose fines where it finds the media code of ethics has been breached by media organisations (Chaudhry p.12).

Chaudhry went on to outline proposed changes to the *Newspaper Registration Act* which would include an amendment with “appropriate penalties” for infringing the proposed *Media Act*. To deal with defamation cases where members of the public have been “personally injured, maliciously or unfairly,” by news media, or the target of “character assassination”, the Government was considering establishing a Media Tribunal for “swift justice”.

In Papua New Guinea, then Prime Minister Bill Skate told a week-long World Press Freedom Day seminar in May 1999 that he supported press freedom, but promptly launched into a strong criticism of standards:

When I watch the television and I see a person making claims against another person, and the television station plays the story without seeking comments to balance the story, I feel sad for the media of my nation. Perhaps the problem with this style of reporting is lack of training by the companies [which] own our media outlets.

It disappoints me when I see foreign companies which own media outlets in Papua New Guinea ignore media and journalism development in our country. These companies earn money from our nation but do not put sufficient money back into training and developing our journalists.

I am calling on Channel Nine in Australia to help your television station [EMTV] in Papua New Guinea by providing real training for your journalists (Skate 1999).

Trends and dilemmas in the Pacific newsroom

This Pacific newsroom research grew out of questions about an apparent difference in attitude between the media industries in both Papua New Guinea and Fiji towards journalism education and training. Both nations have a similar sized news media industry, but in Papua New Guinea newsroom attachments for journalism students have been established for almost 25 years. The future of this system is now under question following the planned closure during 1999 of the University of Papua New Guinea journalism program, the pioneering institution in journalism education in the Pacific. Another institution, Divine Word University’s communication arts program in Madang, is attempting to

expand its courses to absorb the journalism students from UPNG but, being remote from the centre of national news media, has a less developed attachment scheme.

Papua New Guinea has two national daily newspapers, the Murdoch-owned *Post-Courier*¹ and the Malaysian-owned *National*, which have the largest circulations in the Pacific. It also has two national weeklies, the *Independent* (formerly the *Times* of PNG) and the Pidgin language *Wantok*, owned by the nation's major churches, and a fortnightly provincial newspaper, the *Eastern Star*. The major broadcasters are EMTV, which has a footprint from the Philippines to Tonga and is wholly owned by Australia's Channel Nine; the private NauFM radio group, managed by Communications (Fiji) Ltd; and state-run National Broadcasting Corporation. All major news media have Internet websites.

Fiji has a much better developed magazine industry with four major monthly or bimonthly news magazine groups, *Islands Business International*, *Pacific Islands Monthly* (Murdoch), *The Review* and *Fiji First*. The three daily newspapers are the Murdoch-owned *Fiji Times* and the struggling Fiji-government owned *Daily Post*, with a third daily, the *Fiji Sun*, which was launched in September 1999. Broadcasters are Fiji Television; the private Communications (Fiji) Ltd (FM96) group, which began broadcasting in the year of the military coups; and the corporatised Island Networks Corporation Ltd (previously the Fiji Broadcasting Commission). The *Daily Post*, Island Networks and *The Review* news magazine share a website, *FijiLive*, while the *Fiji Times* is still establishing a website of its own.

'Bringing culprits to justice': the survey

A newsroom training survey was conducted in both countries between 14 December 1998 and 28 February 1999 with personal visits by the author to newsrooms with questionnaires. Twelve news organisations were surveyed in this way with a thirteenth company declining to participate. The response rate (Table 1) ranged between 42 percent at one newspaper in Fiji and 100 percent at a radio broadcaster in Papua New Guinea. Overall, the participation rate in

this survey was far higher in Papua New Guinea (76 percent of total staff) than in Fiji (57 percent). But the final sample number of 124 with completed questionnaires are comparable, comprising 59 respondents from Fiji and 65 from Papua New Guinea.²

Table 1: Comparison of response level between media organisations

Media group*	Fiji		PNG	
Fiji Times	16	42%		
Daily Post	11	69%		
Communications (Fiji)	10	67%		
Fiji Broadcasting Corp	9	50%		
Fiji Television	5	83%		
The Review	8	80%		
Post-Courier			17	81%
The National			14	74%
Word Publishing			10	77%
National Broadcasting Corp			11	65%
PNGFM Pty Ltd			9	100%
EMTV			4	67%
Total:	59 (57%)		65 (76%)	

* The new *Fiji Sun* had not begun publishing when this survey was conducted; Islands Business International, with approximately five journalists on its staff, declined to participate.

The Fiji and Papua New Guinea samples are both balanced in gender (Table 2): 51 percent men and 49 percent women in Fiji, while Papua New Guinea had a slight majority of women (52 percent) over men (48 percent). This compared with journalism student balances at UPNG, where two-thirds were women, and the University of the South Pacific, where the balance was 35 women and 28 men.

Table 2: Media gender balance

Gender	Fiji (n=59)		PNG (n=65)	
Men	30	51%	31	48%
Women	29	49%	34	52%
Median age	22		29	

The median age of journalists in the Fiji survey was 22, ranging between the youngest at 18 and the oldest at 50. There was also a large bulge in the 21-25 age group. In Papua New Guinea, the median age was 29, ranging between 20 and 50. Also, the ages of PNG journalists were spread more evenly across the range.

Papua New Guinean journalists were found to be the most qualified with 73 percent having completed formal tertiary qualifications (Table 3), contrasting with 14 percent in Fiji. The Fiji figure represents a fall since the last survey seven years ago, in 1992, when Layton (1995) found 16 percent. Although the new journalism course at USP started providing graduates for the media workforce in 1996 (28 region-wide, including nine at the end of 1999, in the past four years, and a further 30 expected in 2000), and there also is a growing tendency of Fiji journalists to gain degrees abroad, these trends have not yet shown significantly in the statistics. The PNG figure was an increase over the 68 percent of tertiary qualified journalists recorded by Layton in her survey. But an earlier survey in 1984, which focused on the National Broadcasting Commission (Phinney 1985), showed the figure had been even higher in Papua New Guinea, at 76 percent. However, the more recent statistics would include a higher proportion of degrees to undergraduate diplomas.

When breaking down the tertiary qualifications into the actual degrees, Papua New Guinea and Fiji both had one masters degree in the survey; 14 percent in PNG had degrees (Fiji, 5 percent) and 57 percent in PNG at least had undergraduate diplomas (Fiji, 7 percent). Fiji's strength was shown in industry certificates (14 percent) whereas Papua New Guinea had none in this category. Also, 25 percent of journalists in Fiji had completed non-formal short courses while only

17 percent of journalists in Papua New Guinea had done any. However, while almost half of Fiji's journalists in the sample (47 percent) had no qualifications at all, barely 12 percent of PNG journalists fell into this category.

Table 3: Highest qualifications of journalists

Tertiary qualifications	Fiji (n=59)		PNG (n=65)	
a. Postgraduate degree	1	2%	1	2%
b. Undergraduate degree	3	5%	9	14%
c. Undergraduate diploma	4	7%	37	57%
Total a, b and c:	8	14%	47	73%
Industry certificates*	8	14%	0	0
Short courses**	15	25%	10	15%
No qualifications	28	47%	8	12%
Experience median	2.5 years		5.2 years	

* e.g. FIMA certificate, polytech 32-week certificates etc.

** Such as organised by PINA or its affiliates.

On attitudes to education and training, journalists in Fiji (80 percent) and Papua New Guinea (89 percent) were reasonably matched with desiring a combination of both tertiary journalism programs and in-house cadetships (Table 4). However, while a higher group of journalists in PNG favoured tertiary programs alone (9 percent) as against 5 percent in Fiji, it was the reverse in Fiji with 15 percent favouring an in-house cadetship compared with just 2 percent in PNG.

Qualitative comments indicated a high level of hostility among some journalists in Fiji towards university journalism courses. None of the respondents with such views actually had tertiary qualifications themselves, and none appeared to have attended any university course or program. One young newspaper journalist said prospective journalists should do a degree in something else other than journalism, such as economics. Another said "journalism is a profession that cannot be taught in a classroom". A third added: "I think these days graduates

just think if they have the qualifications, that's it — they are journalists". A 32-year-old editor said graduates had "attitudes which cannot be changed [and] this affects other staff", but was not more specific. He urged: "Scrap all university journalism courses!" But some journalists differ. One young staffer at the *Fiji Times* said:

Our journalists are too generalised — they misreport, misquote people, [are] unbalanced, [give] wrong spellings, and other basic reporting skills are lacking. If we had a combination of [in-house and university] training, maybe the standard of journalism would improve.

The negative attitudes appeared to reflect an insecurity towards graduates as they join the media workforce and in some cases were promoted rapidly or gained relatively high-paying jobs. One graduate in early 1999 became a features, then business, editor of a daily newspaper within three months of graduating. Another, a 20-year-old graduate, was recruited as a publications officer for a non-government organisation on a salary of F\$30,000 — or roughly four times more than the average starting salary for a journalist on a local media organisation.

Table 4: Journalists' opinions about their type of training

Preferred choice	Fiji (n=59)		PNG (n=65)	
Tertiary journalism school	3	5%	6	9%
In-house cadetship training	9	15%	1	2%
Combination of both	47	80%	58	89%

* Respondents were asked the question: How should journalists be trained? They were given the above choices and a provision for comments.

The major education institution represented by journalists with qualifications was the University of Papua New Guinea with 32 graduates in the news media workplace, including several editors, followed by 18 graduates from Divine Word University in Madang, PNG. In Fiji, just four USP graduates were recorded although a new batch of a dozen graduates in the region were not reflected in this survey.

Journalists were questioned on their perceptions of their media role to test their notions of news values in contrast to definitions widely used by politicians, particularly those stressing the need for “development journalism” (MacBride 1980; Hester 1987a; Loo 1994). A selection of five key words or phrases, drawn from “four worlds news theories” models widely taught in the Pacific³, were used as core options along with further open selections (Hester 1987b, 1987c; Lule 1987; Robie 1995; Romano 1999). The keywords or phrases were: watchdog, agent of empowerment, nation-building, or defender of truth. Journalists in Fiji had a far different view than their counterparts from Papua New Guinea on their perceived media role in the community (Table 5). Significantly more journalists in Fiji (63 percent) than in PNG (46 percent) favoured the western “watchdog” model as the preferred role. However, it was clear that Papua New Guinea journalists had a more complex view of their role, which generally included watchdog along with other variations. More than double the number of journalists in Papua New Guinea (37 percent) than in Fiji (15 percent), for example, saw the role of the news media as the “defender of truth”. Also, 12 percent of PNG journalists saw the public “empowerment” model as important, compared with just seven percent in Fiji. Journalists in PNG (25 percent) were also more likely to see the media as a “nation builder” than in Fiji (17 percent). Some journalists commented on the value of workplace attachments while studying.⁴

Table 5: Journalists’ views about their professional roles

Perceived Role	Fiji (n=59)		PNG (n=65)	
Watchdog	37	63%	30	46%
Agent of empowerment	4	7%	8	12%
Nation building	10	17%	16	25%
Defender of truth	9	15%	24	37%
Other roles	4	7%	5	8%
No answers	7	12%	1	2%

* Some respondents provided multiple answers with rankings.

The findings compared interestingly with a survey in Indonesia (Romano, 1999:75), which shares a common frontier with Papua New Guinea through its disputed province of Irian Jaya (West Papua). This contrasted notions of “watchdogs and *Pancasila* pussycats”, or variations of the development journalism philosophy based on Indonesia’s *Pancasila* press model. In Romano’s survey, 51 percent of the sample regarded the watchdog notion as most important, even though this term may not have been used as a preferred description. This was significantly lower than in Fiji, but higher than in the Papua New Guinea survey. However, 22 percent in the Indonesian sample saw the media’s chief role as an agent of empowerment — double the percentage in the Papua New Guinea and triple that of Fiji. In terms of nation-building, Papua New Guineans were more likely to see this as their role (25 percent) than in Indonesia (19 percent) and Fiji (17 percent). But Indonesia (8 percent) compared closely with Fiji (7 percent) when considering the notion of defender of the truth. This contrasted with PNG (37 percent). Romano’s survey had an additional category not contained in the two-nation Pacific survey — “entertainment”. But of the overall seven percent who nominated “other roles”, none included entertainment as an option, surprisingly as all Fiji and Papua New Guinea newspapers, at least, strongly feature entertainment and lifestyle coverage.

In the qualitative findings, there was a marked difference between the Papua New Guinea and Fiji samples. A far higher percentage of Fiji respondents did not provide answers (12 percent), whereas only two percent of PNG journalists did not respond. The Fiji non responses apparently had a correlation with those journalists who had no formal journalism education.

Many Papua New Guinea respondents saw a direct relationship between the watchdog and nation-building roles, and this was most marked with journalists working for the national broadcaster NBC. According to one journalist:

Especially in a developing nation, while we act as a watchdog we must also be mindful of our responsibility in nation-building. Exposing the truth and investigating the stories must be done without any bias. This is part of nation-building, leading a country to be more accountable to its people.

And another:

One of the most crucial roles of a news media organisation is in nation-building. Through many economic and social development stories encouraging people in their country to be self-reliant and productive, the media encourage them to be self-reliant and productive. They encourage them to start grassroots small business activities to improve the country's economy and the standard of living and they support and promote people to love, respect and become responsible citizens of their respective countries. It is through these and many other efforts of the organisation [that] nation-building is encouraged to develop a nation.

But such views were not restricted to the state-run radio. According to a journalist on the leading daily newspaper, *Post-Courier*:

News media organisations in PNG seem to be focused on being watchdogs, reporting on what is happening. But I believe [they] have a wider role and that is to be an agent for change. Papua New Guinea is a developing country which does not have the financial resources needed for development such as health programs etc., but established media, including radio, can be used to bring vital information to people to reinforce positive changes.

One journalist on the Malaysian-owned *The National*, one of Papua New Guinea's few to have a postgraduate qualification, said:

As opposed to the "gutter press", PNG journalism is centred around the philosophy of development journalism, meaning that what is reported must have significance to growth, development and the aspiration of PNG as a sovereign state and its citizens. The powerful elite are right sometimes, so are the people at other times. PNG takes the middle [road] to promote/defend the truth for the betterment and advancement of all. In so doing, PNG media will truly serve its purpose as a defender of truth, a watchdog and an agent of development.

Some journalists were acutely aware of the personal responsibility they carried, one saying her role was "challenging — and we actually make or break the nation [because of] whether we are accurate or not". Another said: "I am the teller of the story of life with the elemental things that are important to men and women. I give the

information which my audience most needs to get along in their daily existence . . . The message I bring is often the glue which holds society together.”

Respondents in Fiji appeared to be less philosophical about their roles. In fact, many, especially those who had no formal foundation in journalism theory, seemed unclear about the alternative notions presented. But many still had a robust view of their role. Said one television journalist:

Corruption tends to be rife in Pacific countries like Fiji and Papua New Guinea. As a watchdog, the role is clearly defined but resources or training, or lack of them, limit the inroads we can make into corruption and the strides needed to be a watchdog in other areas in the public spotlight.

A journalist working for the national broadcaster FBC said:

We best serve the community by disclosing the truth and the mysteries which are normally kept hidden away. With well-researched written reports, this will foster a more pro-active community, able to contribute more effectively to national development.

Some journalists in Fiji did share the common concern felt in Papua New Guinea about the wider roles in relation to the watchdog. As another state broadcast journalist said: “In fact, nation-building and watchdog would be the two roles I believe suit the work we do. We can’t be just watchdogs of society if we cannot promote prosperity and harmony in society. Negative reporting is not always healthy.” According to a senior reporter on a business magazine renowned for its ferret-like investigations:

Being a watchdog will also mean being a good journalist — one that is willing to take risks in digging things out but this could also mean having good contacts in the upper echelon of any government. I guess being a watchdog will subsequently make a person or an organisation an agent of empowerment and so playing a crucial role in nation-building. A watchdog for me personally is a person or organisation which takes on the responsibility of ensuring that the government as a whole, or any individual, or even a non-government organisation, does not abuse public funds, is not corrupt in any way . . . and takes on the role of exposing them to ensure justice.

Many respondents felt that while they were monitoring the government and the leaders, they should not forget to be the “eyes and ears of the people they serve”. It was important that media helped “weed out incidents which bring hardship to the people”. It was, after all, the media that brought “culprits to justice”.

Conclusion

Media technology and social changes in the South Pacific, as elsewhere in the world, are so rapid that the region needs major changes to its approach to journalism training and education. The system of donor-funded short courses that has tended to provide the core of training in the region, apart from Papua New Guinea where university journalism education has been the norm for more than two decades, is limited and frequently is little more than a band-aid solution to the challenges. An ideal neophyte journalist in the Pacific for the future is one with analytical skills, exposure to cultural and political dilemmas in other countries in the region, a broad knowledge in communication and other disciplines, and high expressiveness and multi-skilling in several media.

Journalism graduates who develop with the ability to identify, analyse and solve problems will be of great benefit to the region’s news media. They will have the capacity to adapt to the constantly changing demands in their careers. They will also have the eagerness and curiosity to become better lifetime learners and an asset to their media organisations undergoing change.

However, this survey has revealed a serious gap between the needs of the Pacific media and the future and the mindset of many journalists in the industry today. It has also underscored some fundamental differences between the news media in Fiji and Papua New Guinea. While politicians in both countries lament the lack of standards and professionalism, the survey has shown particular shortcomings in the media industry, in Fiji at least. While Papua New Guinea can be reasonably satisfied with its relatively high level of journalists with formal tertiary qualifications (73 percent), Fiji might well question why only 14 percent of its journalists are similarly qualified. And this appears

to have been a slight decline over the past decade in spite of the emerging new tertiary journalism program at USP. Papua New Guinean journalists also have a significant edge over Fiji in terms of age and experience.

In Fiji, there seems to be concern over a negative view in some media organisations towards university education and training for journalists. In fact, there is a prevalent attitude on at least two organisations, in spite of all the media industry hype about journalism training, that it would be better to maintain the status quo. One probable explanation for this is that as more degree-holders enter the media industry they will force higher starting salaries. This view is in contrast with other Pacific countries, such as the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, where media organisations are actively encouraging their staff to go to Laucala campus to gain journalism qualifications. It is also in contrast with other Fiji news media organisations which have prided themselves in employing graduates and have sought to achieve higher educational standards across the newsroom.

The survey also shows a more sophisticated grasp among Papua New Guinea journalists of the role of news media in developing societies. Journalists have been taught to take an adversarial role as a watchdog and have frequently exposed bad government and corruption in the Pacific. But when the watchdog is combined with a business-owned media, reporting frequently turns into an aggressive, cynical, self-serving and titillating banter, as has recently been the case in Fiji. Many Papua New Guinea journalists seem well aware of this additional challenge to their role — being a watchdog alone is not enough. It is also important to seek solutions. This awareness appears linked to the formal journalism education foundation that most have experienced. As one survey journalist observed, the media is “often the glue which holds society together”.

Notes

1. The *Post-Courier*, owned by a Murdoch News Ltd subsidiary, South Pacific Post Pty Ltd, has set an example in the Pacific for supporting media training. Since 1993, it has given an annual financial grant of K5000 each to the

University of Papua New Guinea and Divine Word University journalism schools to purchase computers and equipment. In recent years, the focus of the grant was changed to assistance in kind with the *Post-Courier* printing the fortnightly UPNG training newspaper *Uni Tavur* (since 1995, when it won the JEA Ossie Award for best student newspaper in Australia, NZ and the Pacific). The company is also now printing the quarterly DWU student newsletter, *Dimai*.

2. Some of the author's preliminary findings were presented at the First Oceania Regional Conference, World Association of Press Councils, Brisbane, 22-23 June 1999. Some statistics in that presentation have been revised for this paper.
3. This includes "fourth world", or indigenous minority news values, as typified by Bougainville within the Papua New Guinea state, Guadalcanal dissidents within the Solomon Islands; and Kanak radio stations within New Caledonia.
4. The University of the South Pacific followed the lead set by the University of Papua New Guinea (Robie, 1997) two decades earlier by establishing a system of professional media attachments with media organisations, starting in the second semester 1998. However, there are significant differences between the USP and UPNG models. The UPNG course structure provides for courses of varied weighting, depending on the content. Production journalism courses carry a higher weighting than for classroom only theoretical courses. Thus the final year News Practice, a 16-week full-time attachment with a daily news media organisation, is equivalent to the normal semester load of four courses.

Such a system does not apply at USP so a compromise was reached. Final year journalism students complete the course Journalism Production in which they undertake a formal attachment (six weeks full-time) with a daily news media organisation in Fiji. They also complete a project such as producing a major print/online publication or radio/television documentary (equivalent to four weeks full-time during the final year). So far 22 students have completed this attachment provision with just one failure, and while students consider the scheme a major boost to their professional ability and confidence, news editors and directors welcome the opportunity to work with the students directly. And the students are usually offered a job at the end of the attachment. They are also required to produce an analytical report on their experience, both written and presented orally as a workshop with other students. Although the

attachments were not directly considered as part of the survey, it is interesting to note some of the observations of students. According to one graduate from the Solomon Islands:

The attachment is an absolutely brilliant idea, but the training provided by the local [Fiji] media industry did not complement the advanced skills and knowledge we got from the USP program. The gap is too wide in terms of technology and knowledge offered.

Another who worked in television:

Working for the training newspaper *Wansolwara* and Radio Pacific is a good start but students need to experience the daily deadline in the afternoons or evenings. I think students shouldn't wait until the "attachment" period to get this experience. Although I met the deadlines, I also had to adjust to the television way of writing. The attachment is an excellent idea so that students can show their talents.

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Appendix: Journalism at USP

One of only two regional universities in the world, the University of the South Pacific is owned and operated by 12 countries. It has three campuses and five schools in the Fiji Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu, seven institutes, the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, and the Centre for Development Studies, and through its regional centres maintains an active presence in all member countries. It has 9515 enrolled students with 54 percent of them studying through distance learning (extension) study programs. The other regional university is the University of the West Indies. USP's 12 member countries and territories are: Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The total equivalent full-time students (EFTS) is 5762 and the EFTS percentage studying through extension is 37 percent. The Report of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific to the University Council, May 1999.

The university has a unique regional communications network established in 1974 for the development of extension studies. It is now currently spending almost F\$11 million in aid funds from Australia, New Zealand and Japan and more than \$2 million of its own funds to upgrade the network as the USPNet 2000 regional dedicated VSAT satellite communications and teaching system (Heads, 1999). The university will own and operate this private network which will be the largest outside the operators of national telecommunications services in the Pacific. It is due to come into operation at the start of the academic year in 2000. For USP's distant students, the new system will provide:

- opportunities for audio and video tutorials;
- communications by "local" telephone, fax or email between academic staff and students;

- live video transmission of a lecture from any of the campuses in three countries
- video conferences or tutoring between the 12 countries and the main Laucala campus in Suva;
- regional communication possibilities for the student-owned campus FM station Radio Pasifik and television training.

The journalism program in the School of Humanities is relatively new. Founded in 1994 with French Government aid funds, the program has a three-year BA degree double majoring in journalism plus a second discipline, and a new two-year diploma option. This followed an earlier journalism certificate course at USP which was established with Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation assistance in the mid-1980s but later foundered. During 1999, the USP program replaced the 25-year-old University of Papua New Guinea program as the major regional one after establishing a system of professional media attachments the previous year. The original USP certificate course was pioneered by journalism educator Dr Murray Masterton. However, although it was also situated in the Literature and Language Department, it has no curriculum or institutional connection with the present degree and diploma journalism program (Hooper 1998 & Masterton [2x] 1988). In February 1999, the University Council of UPNG announced it was closing the journalism program along with the Faculties of Creative Arts and Allied Health in a controversial restructuring move (Yakai 1999).

Currently, the USP journalism program has 63 enrolled journalism students, after more than doubling in size in 1998. It includes six practitioners taking the Pacific diploma (all working journalists or information officers from the Fiji Islands), and 57 from eight Pacific and Indian Ocean countries studying the degree program. The educational philosophy and pedagogy has a “liberating” model focused on far-reaching future media and social changes in the Pacific (Freire 1970; Masterton 1988). The program employs a goal-oriented, problem-solving and project-based pedagogy with an emphasis on theory integrated with professional journalism production outcomes (Freire, 1970; Chan, 1996; Hooper, 1998). It publishes and broadcasts:

- two training newspapers, *Wansolwara* and *Spicol Daily* (published daily for one week each year, inside a national daily newspaper);
- the first media training and resource website in the region, *Pacific Journalism Online* <<http://www.usp.ac.fj/journ/>>;
- the news service for Radio Pasifik; an FM station based on campus;

- television news reports and documentaries in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) on Pacific Way on the region's television stations.

So far, 17 journalists have graduated from the university in the new program with a BA degree in journalism and two in the new industry-based Diploma in Pacific Journalism. Thirteen graduated in 1998 (including two with the Diploma in Pacific Journalism), 3 in 1997, and 3 in 1996. Nine graduated in 1999 and more than 30 are expected to graduate in 2000. Twelve of these regional journalism students were from the Fiji Islands, two from the Federated States of Micronesia, two from Vanuatu, one from Samoa, one from the Solomon Islands and one from French Polynesia. All but four of the graduates quickly took jobs in the news media or related industries. Three of the remainder took teaching positions because of the higher salary scales while a fourth was early in 1999 attached to the Journalism Program studying for a masters degree in development studies, but in September joined the new *Fiji Sun* daily newspaper. The program also hosted another Masters student from the Auckland University of Technology who was doing a thesis on national development and the May 1999 Fiji general election. The program has proposed postgraduate journalism courses beginning in the year 2000.

In 1998, one journalism student won gold medals as the best student in the history/politics department in the School of Social and Economic Development and also the best student in the School of Humanities. Unfortunately, he did not win the gold medal in journalism because there was none for this new program. This was rectified for 1999, but there was no winner. However, the media industry and related sponsors supported an inaugural journalism awards ceremony which recognised outstanding journalism ranging from best investigative story to best contribution to regional journalism. The sponsors included Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association (PIBA), *The Review* news magazine, Fiji Television Ltd, *Daily Post* newspaper and the Caines Jannif photosupplies company.

Mr Robie is senior lecturer and journalism coordinator of the University of the South Pacific, Fiji Islands. Previously, he coordinated the University of Papua New Guinea journalism program, and is currently doing doctoral research with the University of Queensland.
