

South Pacific Notions of the Fourth Estate

A Collision of Media Models, Culture and Values

South Pacific media is generally projected as embracing Western news values with the ideals of “objectivity” and “facticity” being paramount. In fact, while this may well be partially true of the Western-owned mainstream media in the two largest nations, Fiji and Papua New Guinea, the reality is far more complex. In many respects, Pacific media have more in common with other developing nations, such as in India, Indonesia and the Philippines. Some argue that unique forms of media language are evolving in the region, while others assert that a unique style of Pacific journalism is emerging. This paper discusses notions of Fourth Estate in the South Pacific and outlines and applies a “Four Worlds” news values model that contrasts with media in the dominant regional neighbour states, Australia and New Zealand. It also assesses the findings of two rounds of empirical research in the newsrooms of Fiji and Papua New Guinea (1998/9 and 2001). Finally, the paper argues for major changes to alter a mindset in the region among news organizations that have been reluctant to invest in human resource development or recognize the importance of education for media and democracy.

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Brazilian educator Paulo Freire inspired many development communication and journalism theorists through his ideals articulated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). This pedagogy aimed at “liberation” by encouraging critical and inquiring thinking, a process that empowers people to understand the causes of social injustice and to act to change their lives for the better. Journalists in many developing countries, notably India and the Philippines, have not been slow to grasp this reality and adopt such principles. Development journalists are learners as well as teachers who identify with the needs and goals of the people. They are not neutral observers who “remain unmoved and unchanged” by what they see and write. They are more concerned with the process than the “spot news or action news” of events. They share the sentiments of the people in social situations and are changed to some degree as well as are changing the situation as reporters. They have a moral obligation to their readership and audience.

Development journalism emphasizes the “why” element of investigative journalism. Journalists reporting in this

context study and cover the process of socio-economic, cultural, political and educational changes in a developing nation. This is not unlike notions of public journalism in Western countries, or what John C. Merrill (1999) called “existential journalism”. Contrasting this concept with the mainstream Western belief in media “objectivity”, Merrill emphasized such ideas as authenticity, freedom with responsibility, and ethical independence (p. 32).

What a journalist does in specific cases does not matter as much as the fact that he *does something*. The supreme virtue for the existentialist is probably the most old-fashioned of all: *integrity*. And a person cannot have integrity unless he utilizes his capacity to choose, to act, to make decisions (ibid., p 33).

South Pacific media is generally projected as embracing Western news values with the ideals of “objectivity” and “facticity” being paramount (Street, 2001: 19; Tuchman, 1978). In fact, while this may well be partially true of the Western-owned mainstream media in the two largest nations, Fiji and Papua New Guinea, this paper argues that the reality is far more complex. In many respects, Pacific media have more in common with other developing nations, such as in India, Indonesia and the Philippines. Some commentators argue that unique forms of media language are evolving in the region (Geraghty, 2005; Moore, 1995), while others assert that a unique style of Pacific journalism is emerging (Layton, 1993). This paper discusses notions

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of Fourth Estate in the South Pacific and applies a “Four Worlds” news values model that contrasts with media in Oceania’s regionally dominant states, Australia and New Zealand. It also assesses the findings of two rounds of empirical research in the newsrooms of Fiji and Papua New Guinea (1998/9 and 2001). Finally, this paper argues for major changes to alter a mindset in the region among news organizations that have been reluctant to invest in human resource development or recognize the importance of education for media and democracy.

Freedom and self-responsibility

Merrill places great emphasis on freedom and self-responsibility. Yet it is the concept of a “free press” that lies at the heart of Western scepticism about development journalism. Merrill challenges whether the Western free press is really free at all, compromised as it is by an “impulse of self-censorship” (Wicker, cited by Merrill, 1996: 41) and a conformist corporate journalism. Merrill’s argument could be said to echo Gramscian views observing hegemony in mainstream media through journalistic practices. They offer a theory of journalism as a series of practices implicitly part of the “strategic management of information, ideas and therefore, culture” (Meadows, 1998: 5). Critical political economy is concerned with the dynamics of global capitalism and as part of this, the development and control of mega media corporations that reach into the South Pacific. Examples of this are Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation controlling interests in the region’s two largest and most influential English-language newspapers, *The Fiji Times* and the *PNG Post-Courier*, and Dassault-Hersant-Socpresse’s ownership of all three French-language dailies in the Pacific—*Les Nouvelles* and *La Dépêche de Tahiti* (French Polynesia) and *Les Nouvelles Caledoniennes* (New Caledonia) (Cass, 2004: 100–101). Development journalist Kunda Dixit (1997: 7) has been harshly critical of what he terms media “gobble-ization” and the Western drive for infotainment as a commodity. In his view, it is no coincidence that news businesses have been taken over by conglomerates that also own entertainment empires. Disney, owns ABC, Time-Warner bought CNN. According to McChesney and Nichols (2002: 26), the oligopolistic structures created by media conglomerates “make a mockery of the traditional notion of a free press”. Dixit argues that the public service role of media is being usurped by businesses for which the definition of news is simple: news has to sell, otherwise it is not news.

Fewer and fewer people today control the information we get, and they are setting the agenda for the rest of us — how we should behave, what we should buy, which credit card we must use, what we should wear, what movies we can’t afford to miss, what we should eat, what we must smoke. They are telling us Saddam Hussein [was] a crook, free trade is good, it is OK for five per cent of the world’s population to consume half of its resources (ibid.).

It is vital that journalists have a good analysis of the role of media and its relationship with good governance,

freedom of speech, human rights and executive power. Only a “genuine understanding of what is at stake can give journalists the will and wisdom not to bow to the considerable pressures” on South Pacific media freedom by governments, business and corporate power, and by non-government organizations (Leary-Atu, 2003). Non-partisan forums such as universities rather than sponsored courses that are “open to claims of hidden agendas” offer young journalists the confidence to pursue their stories in the face of social, cultural, political and religious pressures.

Four Worlds news model

While the winds of change swept through Third World nations in the post-Second World War rush to decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s, similar transitional ideological shifts later applied to “Fourth World” nations in the 1980s and 1990s. First World nations are the industrialized Western countries and Second World nations are the totalitarian remnants of the Soviet-era Marxist bloc—such as China, Cuba and Vietnam. According to Russell, Fourth World nations are defined as “indigenous peoples residing in developed nations, but living in Third World conditions”:

Although cultural traditions maintain a significant place in indigenous communities, it is contended that technological advancements have resulted in the increased proficiency of indigenous political skills; ironically, the colonized are overcoming the political mechanisms instituted by the colonizers (Russell, 1996: 57).

However, unlike Third World nations, Fourth World communities “cannot separate from imperial power because of their location within the boundaries of the imperialist nation”. This means that indigenous peoples must either obtain equal access to the political and economic opportunities of the democratic society, or continue to struggle for political autonomy (Robie, 1995: 11). The media plays an important role in that struggle and thus news values exhibited by indigenous media are often at variance with those of the West (First World), East (Second World remnants) and developing nations (Third World). While “objectivity” is espoused as a dominant ideal for First World media, the notions of “collective agitator” and “nation building” are more important for the Second and Third Worlds respectively (see Figure 1). News values reflect timeliness, proximity and personality for the First World in contrast to “ideological significance”, “party concerns” and “social responsibility” for the Second World. Third World news values prioritize “development”, “national integration” and “social responsibility” (see Masterton, 1996: 48; Lule, 1987: 23–46). And for the Fourth World, an “independent [political] voice”, “language”, “culture”, “education” and “solidarity” become the mantra (Robie, 2001: 13). Education is also important for the Second and Third worlds, but is not so crucial for First World media values.

Wantok Niuspepa is an example of Fourth World media in Papua New Guinea. It is a national weekly published in

Figure 1
Four Worlds news values matrix

<i>First World</i>	<i>Second World</i>	<i>Third World</i>	<i>Fourth World</i>
“Objectivity” – Examples, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, European nations, US	“Collective agitator” – Examples: China, Cuba, Vietnam	“Nation building” – Examples: Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Papua New Guinea, Philippines	“Self-determination” – Examples: Koori, Maori iwi, First Nations, Cordillera, Lumad peoples
1. Timeliness: News is now	1. Ideological significance: News is politically correct ideology	1. Development: News is progress, news is growth, news is new dams, new buildings	1 Independent voice: News spearheads a political view challenging the mainstream media perspective
2. Proximity: News is near	2. Party concerns: “The state one party [ie. communist] is news: what it does, what it thinks, and what it does not think.”	2. National integration: “News is positive achievement, pride and unity”	2. Language: News is in the first language of the cultural minority
3. Personality: News is prominent or interesting people: politicians, royalty, sports heroes and heroines, hip hop artists, movie stars	3. Social responsibility: News is responsible to society in the Second World	3. Social responsibility: News is responsible	3. Culture: News is reaffirming a distinct cultural identity
4. Unusual, odd events: News is quirky, weird, bizarre oddities outside the norm	4. Education: News is instruction; news teaches, news preaches	4. Education: News teaches, passes on knowledge	4. Education: News is teaching in own language ‘nests’. Example: te reo Maori, Maohi, Bislama, Tok Pisin
5. Human interest	5. Human interest: Similar to First World, but with an ideological touch	5. Other values: News similar to First World human interest, people etc.	5. Solidarity: News supports other indigenous minorities
6. Conflict			6. Conflict: Crises interpreted through an indigenous prism
7. Disaster			

Tok Pisin. *Wantok*, a unique newspaper in the South Pacific, was founded in 1970 through the extraordinary and visionary efforts of the late Father Frank Mihalic (see Robie, 2004: 151–158). It became an icon of national development and the contribution that good journalism can make to national education at a grassroots level. A sister weekly national newspaper, *The Independent* (formerly the *Times of Papua New Guinea*), publishing in English, closed in 2004. In Fiji, the leading surviving Fijian language weekly newspaper is *Nai Lalakai*, founded in 1962 by *The Fiji Times* group.

For comparison, both Australia and New Zealand have

thriving indigenous media applying Fourth World news values. In the case of New Zealand, there are currently 21 Maori or *iwi* (tribal) radio stations. They are all bilingual—Maori and English—and are required to broadcast a minimum of 30 per cent of air time in *te reo Maori* (Maori language) to qualify for state-funding assistance. It is believed there are no surviving *iwi* newspapers with just one Maori newspaper, *Te Maori News*, which is bilingual. Two established Maori magazines, *Mana* and *Tu Mai*, are flourishing and a new national Maori Television Service (MTS) was launched in 2004. In Australia, three major regular indigenous publishers

exist—*Land Rights News*, supported by the Central and Northern Land Councils; *Koori Mail*, owned by a group of Aboriginal community organizations based in Lismore, northern New South Wales; and the new *National Indigenous Times*, based in Canberra. About 160 licensed community radio and TV stations in remote areas broadcast more than 1,000 hours of indigenous content weekly as part of the Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Service (RIBS).

Pacific media identities

In the two Pacific media industry surveys referred to (Robie, 2004), marked differences were found in the profiles of Fiji and Papua New Guinean (PNG) journalists, especially in education, professional formation, salaries, news values and professional attitudes. In fact, rather than a “Pacific-style journalism” as flagged by researchers such as Layton (1993: 392) and Wakavonovono (1981: 22) more than a decade earlier, distinctively divergent Fiji and PNG journalism profiles and approaches have been emerging. In general, PNG journalists have been better educated, older, more experienced, but more poorly paid. While there were similarities on the core values of journalism between the two countries, PNG journalists appear to have more sophisticated values in their relationship and role with the community, which can be attributed to tertiary education.

It is in the area of educational qualifications and training that significant statistical differences between the two countries were indicated. Surveyed Papua New Guinean journalists were found to be more highly qualified than their Fiji counterparts. Between 1998 and 2001, the proportion of PNG journalists climbed from 73 per cent in the earlier 1998/9 pilot survey to 81 per cent, almost threefold higher than in Fiji. However, in the same three-year period, the number of Fiji journalists with a degree or diploma rose by more than a third from 14 per cent to 26 per cent. This reflected the growing number of graduate journalists entering the workplace from the University of the South Pacific (USP). Conversely, the proportion of journalists without basic training or qualifications also climbed slightly in both countries to almost half of all journalists in Fiji (49 per cent) and 14 per cent in Papua New Guinea. However, almost one in four Fiji journalists of the survey respondents indicated they had done professional and industry short courses run by regional or donor organizations. Papua New Guinea was less reliant on donor organizations because the country’s media organizations were more integrated with the university journalism schools.

The conclusions demonstrated (Robie, 2004: 201–238)—just as Romy Fröhlich and Christina Holtz-Bacha (1993) found in their European news media survey of European media training—how journalists in the South Pacific had been influenced in their global view and self-perception through education. While “typical” profiles drawn on survey data averages are a common technique, some researchers—notably Murray Goot—seriously question this approach. In *Australian Journalism Review*, Goot challenged what he described as “The identikit fallacy”

(2001: 121–122). However, with a far higher proportion of Fiji and PNG journalists surveyed, the author believes this technique can still be a useful guide.

While the typical Fiji journalist was most likely to be male (marginally), single and under the age of 25, with less than four years’ experience, and a native Fijian speaker, he worked for English-language media and was a school leaver with no formal training or higher education. On the other hand, a typical Papua New Guinea journalist was most likely to be female (also marginally), single, under the age of 29, with about five years experience, and a Tok Pisin speaker. She was working on English-language media and most likely had a university diploma or degree in journalism from either the University of Papua New Guinea or Divine Word University.

The Fiji journalist usually believed that a combination of a media cadetship and university education was the best way to be trained as a journalist, although he was unlikely to have had the opportunity to do so. While he strongly supported the notion of investigative journalism as a measure of commitment to being a watchdog on democracy, he would probably regard culture and religion as major obstacles. Also, he thought the public had a “satisfactory” perception of journalists.

However, the Papua New Guinean journalist most likely believed that journalists should receive a university education with a media organization attachment or internship. She probably entered journalism to communicate knowledge to the community and expose abuses of power and corruption. She might go into public relations, but was less likely to do so than in Fiji. She also had an understanding of the role of development journalism and considered it relevant to Papua New Guinea. She was also less likely to see culture and religion as obstacles such as in Fiji. Also, she thought the public had a “very good” or “good” perception of journalists.

Watchdog and development journalism

According to the second survey, most graduate journalists in Fiji and Papua New Guinea were produced from the University of PNG (49 per cent in PNG and 29 per cent overall for both countries), followed by Divine Word University (17 per cent overall) and USP (15 per cent). However, USP graduates spread throughout other Pacific countries were not surveyed in this research.

An even larger gulf between the countries was demonstrated in the earlier pilot survey of 1998/9. Fiji journalists then had a mean age of 22, seven years younger than in Papua New Guinea (29), while mean experience in Fiji was two-and-a-half years, contrasting with PNG journalists having more than double the experience at just over five years. The improvement in Fiji was attributed to the increasing numbers of older and educated journalism graduates from USP joining the industry.

The main factors contributing to making journalism an appealing career were communicating knowledge to the community (73 per cent), exposing corruption (44 per cent), and varied and exciting work (25 per cent) in Papua New

Guinea. In Fiji, they were communicating knowledge to the community (53 per cent), exciting work (44 per cent) and exposing corruption (37 per cent).¹

Sixty per cent of Fiji journalists were satisfied with their journalism career in contrast to just 49 per cent in PNG. The number who said they were dissatisfied was about the same in both countries (23 per cent in Fiji; 21 per cent in PNG). Yet, Fiji journalists were more likely to leave journalism, mostly to public relations. Sixty per cent of Papua New Guinean journalists expected to stay within journalism in five years' time, while just over half of Fiji journalists surveyed (53 per cent) saw themselves remaining in the profession.

Journalists in both Fiji (74 per cent) and PNG (73 per cent) regarded their main professional role as a watchdog on democracy. Papua New Guinean journalists also regarded the educator role (52 per cent) as important, followed by defender of the truth (35 per cent) and nation-builder (33 per cent). Less than half of Fiji journalists (42 per cent) saw the educator role as important, followed by defender of the truth (40 per cent) and nation-builder (35 per cent). This contrasted with the Romano (1998: 75) survey of Indonesian journalists who had less support for the watchdog role (51 per cent), followed by agent of empowerment (22 per cent), nation-builder (19 per cent) and defender of the truth (8 per cent). Thirty per cent of PNG journalists favoured agent of empowerment, almost double the support for this category in Fiji (19 per cent).

Forty-nine per cent of PNG journalists regarded the phrase "development journalism" as applicable to their media — in contrast to Fiji where only 37 per cent shared this view. Also, Fiji journalists recorded high uncertain (23 per cent) and no response (35 per cent) categories. This was borne out by the high proportion of Fiji journalists whose qualitative question responses demonstrated a lack of understanding of the term, probably a reflection

of the higher level of journalism education in Papua New Guinea.

Sixty-five per cent of Fiji journalists strongly agreed with the ideal that media was a watchdog rather than just another business, compared with 44 per cent in PNG. This also compared with the Schultz (1998: 257) survey of Australian journalists, which showed 60 per cent of newsroom journalists and 68 per cent of investigative reporters as strongly agreeing.

However, when asked to consider the actual situation in their country, only 12 per cent of Fiji journalists strongly agreed in contrast to 27 per cent in Papua New Guinea (a further 40 per cent in each country agreed). The Schultz survey showed only nine per cent of Australian journalists strongly agreeing, and just five per cent of investigative journalists strongly agreeing.

Forty-nine per cent of PNG journalists strongly favoured free expression for the media, with 44 per cent in Fiji. In the Schultz survey, 37 per cent of Australian journalists strongly favoured free expression of media and 19 per cent of investigative journalists. Twenty-one per cent of Australian investigative journalists supported free expression for public interest groups.

Eighty-nine per cent of journalists in Papua New Guinea and 81 per cent in Fiji saw investigative journalism as a very important demonstration of commitment to the watchdog role. In the Schultz survey (p. 258), 72 per cent of Australian journalists and 85 per cent of investigative journalists agreed with this view. However, insufficient resources such as lack of staff, money and time were regarded as major problems for investigative journalism in the Pacific. These problems were seen as more serious in Papua New Guinea (35 per cent) than in Fiji (21 per cent). Commercial pressures were twice as likely to be seen as a serious barrier for investigative journalism in Fiji (16 per cent) than in Papua New Guinea (eight per cent).

Table 1
How Fiji, PNG journalists view their professional media role, 2001

<i>Perceived role¹</i>	<i>Fiji</i> <i>n = 43</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>PNG</i> <i>n = 63</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i> <i>n = 106</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Watchdog of democracy	32	74%	46	73%	78	74%
2. Agent of empowerment	8	19%	19	30%	27	25%
3. Nation builder	15	35%	21	33%	36	34%
4. Defender of the truth	17	40%	22	35%	39	37%
5. Neutral, uninvolved reporter of facts	13	30%	16	25%	29	27%
6. An entertainer	5	12%	5	8%	10	9%
7. A critic of abuses	9	21%	4	6%	13	12%
8. An educator	18	42%	33	52%	51	48%
9. Communicator of new ideas	2	5%	4	6%	6	6%
10. The people's "voice"/mouthpiece	14	33%	19	30%	33	31%
11. Politicians using other means	0	0%	0	0	0	0%
12. No response	0	0%	1	2%	1	1%

1 Respondents were asked the question: B22. *As a journalist, how do you see the media's role?* Multiple choices (three) asked for. Percentages calculated in each category.

Low salaries a serious threat to autonomy

Across the board in Fiji and Papua New Guinea — and elsewhere in the Pacific — salary structures are “pretty appalling”, as at least one Papua New Guinean journalist described it, reflecting the views of more than two-thirds of the 57 reporters and media executives or policy makers interviewed during the research. One of the ironies is that although Papua New Guinean journalists are generally better educated and with a higher mean range of experience, they are far more poorly paid than in Fiji. According to the 2001 survey, the mean salary scale for Fiji journalists was F\$13,000 a year while the median for PNG journalists was a mere K11,000 a year.²

Salaries for journalists are woeful to say the least. Raw ‘journalists’ are hired straight out of school and in turn paid extremely low wages for the hours they work. This, in turn, leads to sub-standard journalism, which in turn leads to a misinformed, frustrated public. Media organizations jump on the bandwagon and offer inconsequential salary increases to lure staff who have had a trickle of experience from other media organizations, leading to staff swapping and the proverbial revolving-door syndrome so common to newsrooms in Fiji. From a professional perspective, it also means journalists are starting all over again in usually a different medium, ie. print journalists becoming radio journalists overnight, still minus the experience (Singh, interview with author, 2003).

This raises concerns about how independent the media really is with such low wage structures, or how at risk the media may be to the influence of so-called “envelope journalism”³ inducements by unscrupulous politicians, as in Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands, for example (Angiki, 2001; Fernandez, 1992: 173–185; Philemon, 1999: 72–73; Romano, 2000: 157–171; Tanner & McCarthy, 2001: 112–128; Togolo, 1999: 108–111). Ingrid Leary-Atu (2003) noted: “Pay rates are very poor. That’s the number one problem for journalism in the Pacific, and could ultimately spell the end for freedom of expression and human rights in the region”. According to former leading Fiji newspaper editor Jale Moala (interview with author, 2003), “pay is the greatest obstacle to developing journalism in the region”.

In the view of one Port Moresby journalist:

If you’re working for an absolutely meagre wage that’s not going to get you through much, your opinions are going to be able to be changed or swayed with a bit of influence. Somebody is going to be able to persuade you basically, with a bit of cash or some sort of incentive ...

Processes are not followed by public servants because somebody has a bigger need and will take a shortcut. And I don’t think we can exclude journalists. In the case of the Skate Tape⁴ revelation about journalists being allegedly paid, we had the opportunity of one incident being taped. I think it would be pretty embarrassing if other incidents were taped. I think [payment] is rife (PNG broadcast journalist, 2001).

Along with salary issues, rising corruption is also causing unease among the educators. “Lack of funding is a real problem”, argues University of Papua New Guinea’s media academic Sorariba Nash, “and ethics. I am starting to sense this massive corruption coming” into society (Sorariba, interview with author, 2001). He believes there has been a dramatic rise in junkets and freebies being used as an inducement to win over journalists.

Further research is needed to explore this issue. Certainly the main newsroom survey confirmed the “appalling” state of salaries for journalists. More than two-thirds of PNG journalists (68 per cent) were in the lowest paid bracket of between K5000 and K10,000. “I was staggered to find how poorly paid a lot of them were,” noted the ABC’s former correspondent in Port Moresby, Richard Dinnen. “I [found] people doing jobs that in Australia would earn A\$80,000 to A\$100,000 a year were getting less than K20,000 a year in Papua New Guinea to exercise exceptionally high responsibility” (Dinnen, interview with author, 2001). Journalism tutor and national columnist Kevin Pamba noted there was no structure in salary and working conditions for journalists at most PNG news organizations. Relating an experience at one media organization over a job offer when he graduated in 1995, Pamba asked them

about health cover, accommodation and other things.

The next thing I got was that they told me that I could always get out of the newsroom — so I did [and joined a rival daily newspaper] (Pamba, interview with author, 2001).

In Fiji, less than half of the journalists (44 per cent) were in the lowest range, according to the survey. Yet, it is uncertain to what extent non-participation by *The Fiji Times* journalists could have distorted findings in this category. The company is the largest employer of journalists in Fiji and anecdotal evidence points to a large proportion of lowly-paid staff. Also, at the time of completing the research, it was understood that the company had employed no graduate journalists with journalism qualifications. But Moala believes there is a career path for those who work hard.

“Salaries are comparable to the civil service,” he said, “which may not really be a good gauge for comparison because the workload, and now increasingly qualifications, are not the same” (Moala, *ibid*).

Engaging the Fourth Estate ideals

While many of the demographic and professional values such as support for the “watchdog” ideal were comparable between the two countries, Papua New Guinean journalists often volunteered more positive views on the capacity of the media for “nation-building” and as an “educator” empowering citizens than in Fiji. For example, while almost twice as many journalists in Fiji than in PNG were attracted to the “prestige” of a media career, almost three out of every four PNG journalists regarded “communicating knowledge to the community” as a crucial factor in taking up a media career. Papua New Guinean journalists were also more likely to choose “exposing abuses of power and corruption” as a

reason to embark on a journalism career. More Papua New Guinean journalists (89 per cent) regarded investigative journalism as a measure of the media's commitment to its watchdog role, but saw culture and religion as less of an obstacle than in Fiji. Constitutional researcher Jone Dakuvula is concerned about this gap in Fiji:

We do not have investigative journalists in Fiji. This is vital if we are to enhance the watchdog role. Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF) has tried to contribute to this role through [researched] articles, letters and press statements that contain information [the media] has not known, or that challenges the present Government's version of certain events (Dakuvula, interview with author, 2003).

However, too often, the information is converted into a "report" by a journalist under his or her byline, or simply not published at all. Dixit notes that while there is a vibrant and successful alternative press in most Western countries critically examining globalization and its impact on societies, communities and institutions, it is less evident in developing countries such as in the South Pacific (1997: 163; 1995: 116–118). He does not see development journalism as an answer. "In a final analysis," he argues, "there can be only two kinds of journalism—good journalism and bad journalism."

And in a sense, all journalism is (or should be) about "development". By qualifying this new journalism with an adjective like "alternative", we run the risk of consigning it to marginality. Nor are labels like "counter-journalism", "new journalism", "advocacy", "civic", "public" or "people-centred journalism" of any use. Let's not call it anything, let's just do it well (1997, op. cit.)

The philosophy of print journalism and broadcasting and ethical issues—such as independence, fairness, and coverage of difficult issues like political corruption—were at times beyond the comprehension of some Pacific journalists surveyed during this research, especially among journalists in Fiji who have had little or no tertiary education. Many are solely concerned with practical skills and a job at the end of the day. They give little thought to the wider social responsibilities of media in a developing society. Few journalists adequately background or research stories, or provide the context that is needed to make sense of a news or current affairs development. Investigative journalism is rare. During the Speight attempted coup in 2000, for example, there was little in-depth reporting of the Fiji state-owned mahogany harvesting issue, although this was a critical factor in the political upheaval in Fiji. What was published in Fiji was largely re-publication or rehashing of reports compiled by investigative journalists in foreign media.

A major change needs to happen to alter the mindset among some news media organizations that are reluctant to invest in human resource development and to recognize the importance of education. Perhaps, too, the public needs to take a more demanding and critical role about media

standards and the need for education. "The public should take part in the training of journalists", suggests Fiji non-government organization lobbyist and publisher Stanley Simpson. "We have journalism education institutions, we have in-house training, but we cannot just rely on this [alone] because we need an active public to respond to the media" (Simpson, interview with author, 2001).

According to Schultz (p. 98), the central paradox of the news media as a political institution that measures its success by the criteria of profit and audience numbers is "highlighted by the five elements central to the rhetorical and philosophical justification of the Fourth Estate". She identified the elements as political purpose and independence; commercial priorities; the importance of public opinion; the diversity of information and viewpoints presented; and the degree of accountability.

Conclusion

South Pacific news media managements need a fundamental re-think on their approach to journalism education and training. This needs to be within the context of Four Worlds news values rather than replicating Western models alone. While developed countries in the region are arguably addressing the central democratic paradox identified by Schultz, many Pacific news organizations are instead turning back the clock and adopting in-house vocational "training" rather than supporting formal journalism education.

Media managements, particularly in Fiji where they could emulate Papua New Guinea, need to shed their haphazard attitude and adopt real commitment to professional journalism education provided by the Pacific universities. An end to political in-fighting in the media industry and less of a "closed shop" attitude are crucial. Journalists with a quality all-round education with strong exposure to disciplines such as business, economics, geography, government, history/politics, human rights, language (English for mainstream media) and literature, and sociology would be a sound investment. Too many newsrooms have general reporters without the skills to do specialized coverage. Problem solving along with critical and analytical skills—strong features of the university journalism courses—are also important. As well as having a "nose for news", a good journalist needs to be inquisitive and questioning, able to analyse situations and read between the lines. A healthy interest in public administration, community affairs and the environment is also valuable.

Development journalism is not well understood in the South Pacific, even though most media often adopt such an approach without realizing this is the case. It means a form of journalism contributing to the progress of a country—economic and social development, education and culture. Journalists need to identify key issues and explore their relationship to the poor, middle class and rich sectors of the nation. It also means a lot more community reporting in the villages—far from the faxed and emailed press releases of the Pacific urban newsrooms. University education has the capacity to provide the analytical skills to successfully report real development.

For the future of journalism in the region, the universities face an increasing challenge in identifying and addressing the media industry's real needs and equipping a new generation of journalists with a sound education. Pacific journalists need to be provided with the philosophy, socio-political, historical and contextual knowledge to match the technical skills of being effective communicators and political mediators in their developing societies. And managements must develop fair and equitable salary structures for career journalists if they hope to keep staff who have the training and the skills.

From one perspective, while the shortcoming of professional expertise of some Pacific media and journalists is acknowledged, the solution is seen as self-regulation and more donor-funded training. In fact, there is little evidence that more than two decades of short-course training funded by donor agencies has made as significant a contribution to raising journalism standards in the region as the university education sector. Some powerbrokers in the media industry have, at times, hijacked training funds for their own agendas. The contrasting perspective, supported by the research cited in this paper, argues that self-regulation has manifestly failed and that it is no longer acceptable for the media to be "judge and jury at their own trial". Education for journalists and a professional ethos are a vital part of empowering the media. Educated journalists are likely to offer fresh and sustainable solutions.

Notes

- 1 Multiple choices so the percentages do not necessarily balance.
- 2 Although such a comparison can be misleading, it is interesting to note that the mean salary for a PNG journalist is less than half what a Fiji journalist earns in real terms (F\$5,900) when currencies are compared. Converted by Universal Currency Converter, 26 April 2003. www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi: 11 000.00 PGK = 5881.53 FJD.
- 3 The "envelope journalism" culture, a play on the notion of development journalism, is one in which sources offer money or other gifts to journalists. It involves a complex web of social, economic and institutional conditions that perpetuate the cultures of gift-giving, bribery and graft in some countries. This culture is explored comprehensively in Angela Romano (2000). "Bribes, gifts and graft in Indonesian journalism," *Media International Australia*, No 94, pp. 157–171. There are some parallels with the South Pacific.
- 4 See Oseah Philemon (1999). Media ethics and responsibility. In *A Fragile Freedom: Challenges facing the Media in Papua New Guinea* (pp 72–73). Madang: Divine Word University Press: On 28 November 1997, a *Post-Courier* front-page headline read: SKATE DENIES BRIBES CLAIM. The news story referred to the infamous Mujo Sefa tapes, which were broadcast by the ABC, detailing alleged bribery and corruption claims against then Prime Minister Bill Skate by his former adviser Mujo Sefa. The story included allegations that Skate had authorized K27,000 in bribes to be paid to four of his ministers and 12 backbenchers. One tape, broadcast by ABC, showed a scene in Sefa's office with then Internal Affairs Minister Thomas Pelika discussing a payment to be made to somebody in the media. The tape showed Pelika taking an envelope "supposedly containing K2000 and putting it in his pocket". The previous day, the *Post-Courier* published details in which it was alleged some K27,000 was to have been given to the minister to "pay off collaborators in the media".

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