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# Reflections: Development of Australian journalism education

L. S. Burns

*University of Western Sydney*

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## REFLECTIONS

# Development Of Australian Journalism Education

*The global development of professional education for journalists, since the late nineteenth century, has been primarily driven by reaction to criticism of media practices from politicians and the media publics (Banning 1999 and others). The resulting emphasis on the content of pre-professional programs has tended to come at the expense of considering the ways in which students might also develop professional understanding. There has been long and vigorous debate about what prospective journalists should learn, and what they should not learn, but less attention has been paid to the way professional attitudes and efficacy are developed in students through learning programs. In fact, the major influence underpinning journalism education in Australia is still the political/industrial history of journalism as a profession “sui generis”, or like no other (Lloyd 1985). This article considers the development of journalism teaching in Australia and argues that it is time to focus on the way journalism is taught.*

**Lynette Sheridan Burns**

*University of Western Sydney, Australia*

The major pedagogical approaches applied to teaching journalism in Australian universities have changed little and slowly since the introduction of journalism education in Australia in the early 20th century. For many years, the debate has focused on curriculum issues in relation to the desired attributes of graduates, with almost no attention paid to the way these competencies might be achieved or assessed. More recent research (Sheridan Burns 1995; 1997, Meadows 1997) suggests that the majority of journalism programs still tend to be imitative of the “Oxbridge” model (based on the traditions of Oxford and Cambridge universities in England) using lectures and tutorials for “theory”, while “practical” subjects are taught in skills-based workshops. It is argued here that both approaches are flawed, while more integrated approaches not only develop knowledge and skills, but also the critical thinking and reflective abilities essential to the development of professional efficacy. An approach to professional education that relies on the student’s ability to

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individually reconcile theoretical learning with technical skills and integrate these into professional understanding might be seen as fundamentally flawed, yet since journalism education emerged in Australian universities, it has been the dominant model.

Banning (2001) uses primary sources from the mid-nineteenth century to emphasize the significant link between the development of journalism education and journalists' efforts to professionalize, which is further explored in the Australian context later.

Banning traces the development of journalism education in the United States to several movements seeking to overcome widespread bitterness against journalists resulting from war reportage during the American Civil War in the 1860s. This contrasts markedly with the traditional view of journalism education as a twentieth century phenomenon. Bleyer (1927) acknowledged some efforts at journalism education in the late nineteenth century but insisted that before the twentieth century journalism education was restricted to an apprenticeship system. Dicken-Garcia (1989) also found that nineteenth century journalists openly scorned the concept of formal education. Banning concludes that call for university education of journalists in the nineteenth century marked the beginning of a professionalization process that concluded in the early twentieth century with the first English language courses in journalism education. Banning found widespread public outrage over sensational, inflammatory and racist coverage during the Civil War had left perception that journalists had actually contributed to social ruptures created by war. The late nineteenth century interest in the pre-professional education of journalists coincided with a broader movement toward improving professional education in the areas of medicine, law and teaching (Rippa 1992) and also dentistry.

Like journalism, these professions were also traditionally taught through apprenticeship, which is inherently inconsistent in the development of knowledge and understanding. In the apprenticeship, learning and knowledge were measured by the ability to absorb and recite facts and professional skills were deemed to develop innately. George Blaikie described the qualities valued in Australian journalists in the 1930s to 1950s in his 1976 memoir, *Remembering Smith's Weekly*:

"To survive on Smiths, you had to be a good hunter of news or a spectacular writer or, best of all, both...Harry Maddison had graduated from being an ace crime reporter on Melbourne dailies to being a specialist on Smiths. He was a quiet little chap who wore quiet brown suits. But murderers liked talking to him and telling him why they done it. He was also good with hangmen and other normally shy types. Detectives felt the need to tell him secrets they hadn't even told their superintendent.

"Whereas Harry hunted down his stories as a chicken hunts a worm, Adam McCay, doyen of the early Smith's writers, was an example of the pure writer who could wring an excellent story out of the air while he sipped a glass of fine sherry... An M.A (Hons, I), McCay was one of the great bohemian journalists of Sydney. To be with him in a pub was a delight, for his scholarship was profound and he employed his research as a means of entertaining. He discovered the Borgia method of cooking a duck, when he found the recipe in an ancient Latin text" (Blaikie 1976:134).

Stuart's history of journalism education in Australia traces the first published discussion of the need for formal education to *The Australian Journalist*, the newspaper of the journalists' union, which was first published in 1912. Early writers complained that Australian journalists were denied access to "instructive articles written by American journalism professors" (Stuart 1997:25) at the newly formed American journalism schools. In June 1913 *The Australian Journalist* reproduced articles by Charles Ross from the first U.S journalism school, at the University of Missouri. In these, former journalist Ross describes how a 'laboratory newspaper' can be used to teach journalism skills, answering criticism from editors that journalism couldn't be taught in the classroom. This suggests that from the outset, American journalism educators sought to replicate the workplace in their teaching methods and models rather than replicate the university environment. The British approach was to bring a more 'rounded' scholar to the newsroom, courtesy of a pre-profession education in history, politics and classics.

Around 1916, at the same time as journalism programs were introduced in New Zealand, the American approach to expanding professional education in universities began to infiltrate Australian universities. Imperial ties were difficult to break, however, and in 1957 the *Murray Report* reasserts a preference for the British education system, which Murray found received 'considerable acclaim in other parts of the world.'

According to Lloyd, an eminent journalist and historian of journalism, The Australian Institute of Journalists formed in 1892 had three categories of members the lowest of which being 'pupil members'. Pupils had to be over the age of 18 and engaged 'in training for the profession of journalism'. The association was modeled on its British 'mother institute', which sought to control entry to the profession with ground rules and regular examinations. Lloyd found this scheme of examination was unashamedly borrowed from the British institute (Lloyd 1985:33-

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“At some points, English was crossed out and replaced with Australian; otherwise the curricula were identical. Pupils were to be set papers on technical subjects with 500 word essays to judge spelling and comprehension. No candidate could be regarded as proficient in English until able to satisfy the examiners of his mastery of composition and aptitude at condensation and ‘*précis*’ writing. Arithmetic would be tested up to and indulging vulgar and decimal fractions with easy questions in algebra on the first five books of Euclid.”

To gain acceptance to the Institute, all journalists were required to pass examinations with including all of the topics above with the addition of biography (especially Australia and British Empire), shorthand and the ability to summarize a balance sheet. Several other examination subjects were listed: The English language and literature, British constitutional and political history, political and physical geography, general history and either French or German. The committee recognised the difficulty of devising technical examinations for all branches of journalism but recommended that every candidate should be examined in law of libel, public and legal reporting and general knowledge. For general reporters, who constituted the majority of journalists, there were optional exams in verbatim reporting, condensation, descriptive writing and the conduct of public and legal business. These plans were modeled on the professional institutes associated with accountancy, draftsmen and surveyors. The proposal was ultimately rejected by rank-and-file journalists, who objected to testing of any kind. As a result, employers continued to control access to journalism (Lloyd 1985: 48).

According to Lloyd, in 1914 the NSW Education Minister, AA Carmichael, had suggested that after aspiring journalists ‘had been schooled in the practical work, universities should finish them off in the higher branches. Carmichael’s view was that well-educated journalists would help ‘protect’ the English language from Australian idiom, impart scientific training in matters of judgment and inculcate a sense of professional honour. Lloyd (1985:50) describes the early courses as being modeled on British priorities and in outline, the proposed course revealed much about contemporary journalism. Australian politics predominated, reflecting the professional eminence of Federal and State political journalists. Related to political journalism was administrative journalism, the affairs of government departments and local government. The second priority was law, both in terms of constitutional and parliamentary practice and the mechanics of procedure and practice relevant to the reporting of courts and local government. Economics was given only cursory attention as part

of Australian Studies. Even though newspapers were moving to the terser, more direct writing under the influence of American and British models, the convention of newspaper articles as literary essays still prevailed.

*The Murray Report* defined the role of universities to teach and research and 'be guardians of intellectual standards in the community'. *The 1964 Martin Report* supports the need to 'preserve the character of Australian universities'. The character to which the report refers includes an approach to teaching and learning centred around lectures by scholars supported by small group discussions of readings conducted by tutors.

It may be argued that this method, designed to efficiently transfer a body of knowledge from a single expert source to a large cohort of students is an outdated, didactic model of learning. The philosophy behind this approach, it may be argued, views students as a 'empty vessel' to be passively filled with knowledge by the lecturer, who assesses the students learning by their ability to accurately recount this information. The approach allows little room for active student interaction with the issues discussed in the teaching. Dewey (1933:79-81), among others, was highly critical of the view underlying this perception of teaching and learning "...that assumed that understanding of complexity is primarily brought about through absorption, by the student, of logically formulated, ready-made material which has been made by another mind and is presented in a written form with little, if any, indication of the process by which the formulations were arrived at."

After the registration of the first national trade union for journalists, The Australian Journalists Association in 1911, national cadetship program for journalists was established under the Commonwealth Act. Stuart (1997) and others report the national objective was not achieved at that time. The cadetship remained entrenched even though from the 1960s, these on-the-job programs were attacked for allegedly focusing on the acquisition of skills at the expense of intellectual development. From the 1970s, shorter cadetships were offered to university graduates of any discipline and a minimum educational standard, matriculation, was endorsed by employers. By the turn of the 21st century, most metropolitan cadetships had been replaced with shorter 'internships' but the cadetship still exists in provincial and regional areas. Internships provide short, intensive training sessions to supplement 'on-the-job' training.

The first recorded call for a tertiary system of education for Australian journalists was published in the union newspaper *The*

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*Journalist* on August 20, 1913. *Sydney Morning Herald* proprietor James O Fairfax (son of the founder John Fairfax) told the meeting that journalism needed 'university men' who could be prepared by an 'efficient school of journalism.' The next year, the NSW Labor government's Education Minister, A.C Carmichael proposed a journalism program for Sydney University but insisted it follow the 'Oxbridge' (Stuart 1997:37) objective of 'broadening the mind' rather than imparting skills. In justifying this approach, Carmichael articulates a view that has underpinned the tensions in professional education for journalists from the beginning. For the real journalist – the born journalist – a University course must have the same broadening cultural effect that it has on 'any other brainy professional man'. (Carmichael 1915:1) Carmichael conceded that university could make for a better journalist but stopped short of the idea that a non-journalist could be educated at university without recourse to the newsroom. Some critics went further, suggesting that university-trained journalists would be ill equipped to cope with the realities of practice. In 1916 Ernest Scott, a former journalist and Professor of History of the University of Melbourne, was the first to publish the view that professional education for journalists was a misnomer.

"Journalism differs from the professions of medicine and the law in one important respect. That is, the lawyer and the doctor work independently; they make for themselves professional reputations by their individual exertions; they not employed persons. But journalists, in the nature of things, work for newspaper proprietors, who are at liberty to employ who they will" (Scott 1916:184).

The notion that journalists are 'born not made' endures into the 21st century and is the basis of on-going tension between media industries and academe. In 1999, high profile former editor and columnist for *The Australian*, Mark Day lamented the intellectualization of journalism education, claiming it had been high-jacked by 'people we sacked because they weren't good enough'. In his article '*Hack to Basics*', Mark Day applauds the *Sydney Morning Herald's* return to internal traineeships and mentorship of 'experienced old timers' in preference to university journalism education.

This attitude has changed little since the 1970s when university graduates were condemned internally as being 'intellectual and pretentious'. Yet the cadetship offered little formal preparation. For a Fairfax cadet in 1977, 'proper induction' meant one month of typing lessons and an irregular one-hour shorthand class. Speed at shorthand was the means by which cadet moved through the apprenticeship. To complete the cadetship and be 'graded' required a speed of 120 words per minute, provided the

editor thought your journalism was good enough. The challenge was the more stories you got to write, the less time there was to practise shorthand. Those who had plenty of time to practise were often floundering in the newsroom. Cadets also learned, almost by osmosis, that journalism was a complex business, as Craig McGregor recalled in his book, *Soundtrack to the Eighties*:

“When I was a cadet reporter on the Sydney Morning Herald, we were lectured on the virtues of objectivity, detachment and lack of bias - unless you were writing about a subject in which your proprietor was involved, in which case you were expected to show a certain pragmatic common sense.”

In Australia, journalism was largely a twentieth century development that followed the establishment of numerous journalism schools in the United States in the early twentieth century. Lloyd (1985:29) describes how “natural talent seizing fortuitous opportunity was the making of many a journalist”. It was widely accepted that journalists were born not made and that the task of the newspaper was to find this talent and develop it. Formal education was a secondary requirement and there was no satisfactory means of teaching the art. Journalists proved their professional status by their work, and in turn their work educated them. If they were ambitious for higher rank, some further education was necessary, usually by part-time study where it could be fitted in. Writing in 1913, the veteran journalist, Henry Gullet, described recruitment to journalism thus:

“Men became journalists by a process of unofficial selection and individual, solitary impulse which it is scarcely possible to define ... Nobody was ever educated with the specific view of becoming a journalist, unless indeed, he educated himself. Nobody ... had any idea of what kind of education that would require...Certainly it did not necessarily involve much efficiency in the sort of education imparted by schools” (Lloyd 1985: 29).

In 1917 the AJA formed a sub-committee to investigate journalism education, which recommended that a course for journalists be established at each Australian university, with fellowship of the AJA established as the mark of induction into the profession (Lloyd 1985:164). The committee argued that young journalists need not so much technical knowledge as general education, which could develop culture and breadth of outlook. Such qualities could best be provided by a traditional arts course, including classics, English language and literature, modern history, economics, philosophy and mental and moral science. Further, seeking not to offend the existing fellowship of journalists, many of whom had not matriculated, the courses should be open to all existing journalists and exclude Latin and Mathematics from topics of study. The implication was that intellectual disciplines were too



difficult for journalists.

In addition to the academic core, the committee recommended a severely practical component to supplement on-the-job training; the arrangement of news, the writing of headings, condensation, proofreading, the sub-editing of copy, the law of libel, common mistakes in the use of words. These lectures should be given by working journalists approved by the university. Degree candidates could undertake an original thesis on a journalistic subject, thus building up a library of professional literature. A journalist would have to work in the profession for at least three years to obtain the degree. However, the recommendation for professional fellowship never eventuated and the AJA continued to admit members without a degree, diploma or examination.

## **Current approaches to tertiary journalism education**

While journalism education has long been available in one form or another, half the current 22 vocational courses in Australia began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, with a third commencing in the 1990s.

Meadows (1997:3) found that journalism in Australia is offered “variously in undergraduate subjects leading to a first or double major; core subjects with surrounding electives; and informal core subject series; or as an undergraduate degree offering some journalism subjects”. Although journalism academics acknowledge the importance of mastering shorthand for those interested in a job in mainstream print media, only three courses have it as a formal part of the course. Most other courses encourage students to study shorthand in their own time. Three institutions offer external undergraduate programs in journalism and two offer external postgraduate programs.

The courses are not evenly located either geographically or by density of population across the country. South-east Queensland still has more than a quarter of the country’s journalism courses.

The Gordon Institute in Geelong was the first of the modern era of tertiary institutions to offer a journalism course - a diploma of General Studies in 1969 upgraded to a bachelor’s degree in 1974. Deakin University took over the journalism program in 1977 (Stuart 1996). Canberra CAE began teaching journalism subjects in 1970. The next institution to offer a journalism degree was the University of Queensland in 1971. In that year RMIT first offered journalism in a part-time diploma course, upgraded to a journalism degree from 1978 (Stuart 1996). Charles Sturt University (former

Mitchell College of Advanced Education) also began in 1971, offering a full-degree course from 1976. In South Australia, a diploma course commenced in 1973 at Hartley CAE was upgraded to a full degree at the University of South Australia in 1979.

In 1974 courses commenced at WA Institute of Technology (now Curtin University), the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (now University of Southern Queensland) and the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education (now Central Queensland University) - which was upgraded to a degree in 1976. The NSW Institute of Technology (now the University of Technology, Sydney) began offering journalism in 1975. The degree program at Queensland University of Technology introduced journalism in 1977. Courses including journalism commenced in 1982 at what is now Edith Cowan University, the University of Newcastle in 1985 and at the University of Western Sydney in 1986.

Swinburne University of Technology (then an Institute) first offered journalism subjects in 1989 while the Graduate School of Journalism opened at the University of Wollongong in 1990 as undergraduate and postgraduate programs at Bond University.

The only other stand-alone postgraduate program started at Murdoch University in 1991. Three new courses commenced in 1994/95 - at Griffith University, Brisbane, James Cook University in Townsville and at the Gippsland campus of Monash University. Journalism or programs have since commenced at the Logan and Gold Coast campuses of Griffith University and University of the Sunshine Coast while the University of NSW first offered a multi-media production course in 1997 and the University of Sydney commenced its program in 2000.

A 1973 inquiry into the nature of academic training for journalists at the University of Queensland recommended the study of disciplines from which journalism education emerged - history, political science and sociology. As journalism education developed through the tertiary education sector - through technical colleges through colleges of advanced education to universities- a dichotomy emerged to underpin teaching models. Professional skills were taught by former practitioners in classes designed to replicate workplace activities. Thinking skills were taught traditionally through lectures, directed readings and tutorial discussion.

Meadows (1998) found that US studies showed many journalism schools still tended to mirror the kinds of newsroom practices of the media themselves rather than encourage a more critical framework within which students might make their own judgments: "Professional practitioners are inclined to define journalism in terms of limited newsroom conceptions.... sociologists, communicologists and political scientists are inclined

to read journalism functionally rather than intrinsically and thus contribute to the levelling impulse that originates with the practitioners" (Meadows 1997: 93).

The dichotomy inevitably led to deep tensions between the professional disseminators moving from industry to classroom and scholars approaching communication studies as an application of sociology or cultural studies. In practice, the conflict is most often played out in debate over the appropriate curriculum for educating professional journalists. For example, as might be expected, given general attitudes toward journalism education, media employers focus on the acquisition of skills that can be immediately applied in the workplace, while academics tend to emphasize the importance of critical and problem-solving skills. The latter is often viewed by media employers as 'training troublemakers' who dissent against workplace practices. Given the facts that the great majority of journalists in Australia are employees - 66 per cent employed by newspapers or magazines, 17 per cent by TV stations and 12 per cent by radio stations (Henningham 2000) - the desires of potential employers cannot be overlooked.

It may be argued that educators generally meet the requirements of employers, as evidenced by the high employment rate of tertiary educated journalists. At the same time as media editors publicly hold the line that journalism education is irrelevant, they hire more and more of graduates - because today's new journalists have to be job-ready on the first day. While entry-level graduates of journalism schools are far from experienced professionals, they are immediately operational and, in the eyes of editors, that is their strength. This tension is perhaps greater in journalism than other professions where the ethical responsibilities of practice are more clearly spelled out. Because journalists cannot be legally 'de-registered' for misconduct, professional behaviour tends to be negotiated individually between journalist and employer.

Despite the resistance of editors, surveys of journalism educators show that ethical, reflective practice in graduates is given high priority in curriculum objectives. At the 1992 Journalism Education Association Annual Conference, delegates considered and ranked 34 essential skills/understandings for journalists, ranging from a philosophical understanding of truth to proficiency in word processing (Sheridan Burns 1996:12). Of the 34 competencies, 16 referred to the ability of the student to understand various concepts such as 'truth' in an environment where 'every decision is a professional decision, moral decision and a commercial decision' (Sheridan Burns 1995:2). Herbert (1997) argues that the relationship between these influences is what defines journalism as a profession., that journalism educators have

to teach journalism values that relate to the public good, which he describes as "the values of freedom, of integrity of reporting; about good writing; honesty and courage" (Herbert 1997:10). Spichal and Sparks (1988:179) argue that the role of specialised education institutions in the transmission and development of both skills and knowledge and values and interests is of central importance.

Some Australian commentators (Henningham 1988, 1989; Millett, 1989) advocate the notion of professionalism as a safeguard against the 'evils' of influence from advertisers and other commercial factors that might promote unethical conduct. They assume 'professionalism', reinforced voluntarily through a professional code or ideology, empowers journalists with the wisdom to make the right decisions on behalf of their audiences and to provide them with the strength to deter proprietorial interference (Henningham 1989:27-28). Others see the notion of educating someone to be a 'professional' is more complex. Meadows (1997: 105) argues that 'professionalism' is a conscious behavioural practice, not something arises automatically from the action of practising journalism. He describes as simplistic the notion that a person trained by a 'professional' becomes 'professional'.

"This seems to assume that 'professionalism' is somehow automatically endowed on all who make it to the tertiary teaching sector. If journalism courses are run strictly along the lines of news rooms, with no critical perspective, does this make those trained under these conditions 'professional'? Some in industry might argue in favour of such a notion but many journalism educators would oppose it vigorously" (Meadows 1997:105)

Meadows concluded that because professionalism as a concept is central to the notion of journalism, it seems unlikely it will be abandoned. He argues that its meaning needs to be renegotiated to encompass such important notions as greater accountability to community in terms of the media's role as an important cultural resource, concluding that "if the meaning of professionalism is to be extended, journalism education becomes a crucial site". Adams (1993: 76) shares the view that educators have a vital role to play that goes beyond workplace training and that the future demands that journalism educators formalise, organise, reflect and comment on our array of standards and methods to enable knowledge to be efficiently and thoughtfully transmitted. Some journalists also acknowledge that there is much to explore about journalism, and that universities are a useful site for such exploration. Spichal and Sparks (1988:186) concluded that journalism education was essential to production of professional journalists because the knowledge, values and attitudes acquired during professional education may come to be

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internalised and generalised as professional 'common sense.' This suggests that the influence of journalism education may be profound indeed if a graduate uses the values and attitudes developed in the pre-professional phase as a framework for making sense of, and negotiating, the realities of the workplace.

Splichal and Sparks (1994:39) identified six specific 'instances of socialisation' at which both individual and collective socialisation of journalists takes place:

1. Professional education,
2. Media organizations,
3. Political and social relationship with political groups and classes,
4. Professional colleagues and opinion leaders
5. Professional organizations
6. Traditions, and personal and socially recognised model-journalists.

Despite the central role assigned to professional education by Splichal and Sparks, Henningham (1993:89) identified a continuing paradox in attitudes toward journalism education among media practitioners. He found that while journalists support university education for newcomers to journalism they are far less supportive of journalism education at tertiary level. Henningham reported widespread disenchantment with the traditional workplace based cadetship system of training journalists, but found tertiary education in journalism has clearly not replaced cadetships in the perceptions of the bulk of Australia's journalists. Hartley (1999:22) describes how 'uncertainties about what constitutes appropriate training for journalists' result in low uptake, even for the industry's own schemes: only 40 per cent of British journalists held National Council for Training of Journalists qualification and a third received no in-house training at all. Less than two per cent of editors believed that an understanding of journalism history was essential, but half thought shorthand was.

Franklin (1997:64) also found media managers placed little value on journalism education: "It is undoubtedly a telling indictment of the pedestrian and uncritical grind which much of journalism has become, that editors listed the ability to rewrite handouts as the most essential competence required of trainees after six months...Some editors still display the anti-intellectualism noted by an early study of journalism published in 1923 ...editors do not seem to attach too great a significance to any form of training. Journalists are born, not made."

Henningham concluded that the best evidence of the media's collective lack of respect attitude towards university education

was its continued recruitment of school leavers to serve cadetships in the traditional way in lieu of going to university. In contrast other professions once taught by apprenticeship, such as teaching, nursing and dentistry are now regulated by formal tertiary education. It is interesting to note that academia requires no training in teaching of its academics, although teaching is a significant part of an academic's duties. Meadows (1997:102) argues that the very future of journalism education depends on whether Australian journalism educators determine where they stand in relation to not only a restructured tertiary sector but also a restructured industry.

Adam (1993:73) said: "To teach journalism in a university setting with a view to strengthening journalism practice, it is necessary to articulate the elements of journalism – the finding (based on news judgment) reporting, describing and assessment of things in the here and now – to the elements of academic culture. As a teacher I am required to do something that is alien to practitioners, and that is to bring to consciousness elements of craft that, once learned and incorporated, are barely recognised... I must make explicit what is implicit."

Bacon (1999) also argues journalism education must re-evaluate its role in society just as practising journalists must currently wrestle to reconcile their professional ideologies with the disenchantment of increasingly sophisticated audiences. She says audiences are much harder to fob off with the old line that 'we give audiences what they want'. She argues that audience responses are more complicated than previously assumed, and that audiences distinguish between media representations and their own enjoying, liking or believing what is represented (Bacon 1999:85). Journalism educators, she argues, must change their focus in they are to prepare students to practise journalism in the 21st century.

"How do we encourage students to think about (rather than simply apply) the conventions, professional notions and other practices, which are associated with journalism? How do we approach the relationship of journalists to their audiences and what is the relevance of broader notions like the public, the right to know and freedom of expression?" (Bacon 1999:85).

In addressing curriculum, Patching focused on the division between 'theory' and 'practice'. He reported that most programs had a 60/40 or 50/50 split between theory and practical subjects within the journalism component of their courses. About half offered discrete subjects in law, ethics, and/or research, while seven offered a subject in Australian politics. Charles Sturt University in New South Wales is the only course to offer a specialisation in print or broadcast journalism. Patching found that more than half

of the programs had a broadcast outlet for radio production but the opportunity for similar relationships in television is limited, although some courses have a relationship with local community television stations. Only two courses published a regular print publication but most of the others produce annual or on-line publications.

Patching found that one third of programs have compulsory work experience or internship programs while it is an elective at others (sometimes with strict eligibility criteria) or encouraged as an extra-curricula activity. While most employers accept journalism students for work experience, only CSU and Bond University have formal scholarship arrangements with industry. While Patching's research did not specifically consider the pedagogical approaches used in journalism education, other surveys (Sheridan Burns 1995 and others) suggest that three approaches are used - lectures and tutorials, practical workshops and in a few programs, problem based learning.

Adam (1993:47) argues that the primary aim of journalism education in the university is to transmit journalism's principles, "to see to it that these principles are immanent in, or to put it differently, represented strongly in the mental equipment of novice journalists". Adam (1993:6) and others argue that journalism education shares the same moral dimension as journalism practice and carries social responsibilities. He sees no conflict between the social and professional roles of journalism or journalism education's part in the process.

"Journalism is a fundamentally democratic art and through it, as others have observed, a free society engages in conversation with itself. So as a democrat, I want to protect and defend journalism as free activity. But as a reformer, I want to strengthen journalism practices, and because I believe we can only change what we understand, I am obliged to create a deeper understanding of what it is" Adam (1993:6).

Pearson (1994:104) also acknowledges a need for educators to go beyond transferring skills learned in the workplace and reminds educators that most have learned as much about journalism by teaching it as they did by doing it. He argues that every day journalism educators encounter challenges to traditional newsroom practices that have gone unquestioned in newsrooms for generations.

Underpinning the reflective approach to journalism education is the notion that practice consists of a series of ill-structured problems that are resolved by a series of decisions. Modern journalists resolve these problems in a context where

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“every decision is at once an ethical decision, a professional decision and a commercial decision” (Sheridan Burns 1995)

The approach described here therefore focuses on what Schon (1983) called “the conversations we have with ourselves” - the processes used by journalists to define, identify, evaluate and create journalism.

It sets out to show students that no matter how much natural talent a writer has, journalism is not an organic or intrinsic practice. Rather it is an approach to writing that can be taken apart and understood. Of course, the answers a journalist finds to their questions may depend on the sensitivity of the individual and the rhythm of the sentences may owe much to an intrinsic affinity with words. But the questions the best journalists ask themselves and those asked by the least talented are the same.

The answers will differ because each journalist’s thinking processes and values are unique. The reflective approach offers questions to guide the way to reliable, consistent decisions, reveals the processes underlying the active practice of journalism and provides a framework for negotiating the challenges faced by journalists.

The central proposition is that a journalist who is conscious of and understands the active decisions that make up daily practice is best prepared to negotiate the challenges involved.

The second major proposition is that every journalist has the power to practise responsibly, thoughtfully and effectively. The power is literally within the individual and is demonstrated with every decision about what news is, what questions to ask, what to include and omit and so on. Every one of these decisions has professional, commercial and ethical dimensions that must be brought into balance in the context of the story. This applies to everything a journalist writes, no matter how “small”. For example, a fair reported in the local newspaper responsibly and with flair can do real good in a small community. In the same way, a metropolitan daily’s thoughtless wording in a police brief about a road death in a western suburb of the city may cause lasting harm to those affected. It’s not the owner of the news medium who has that power, however powerless an individual journalist feels in the newsroom. It’s complicated business and individual journalists are expected to bring many qualities to their decision making.

The third proposition is that every journalist should acknowledge and accept the responsibility that comes with the media’s potential to affect people’s lives.

Journalists face the unknown every day and make the best of it. The person who writes the story sets the agenda. If this is done thoughtfully, mindful of the values brought to decision making and aware of the potential consequences of those decisions then



ethical journalism is more than feasible, it is a reasonable expectation. Put simply, given the power that to do good or harm by virtue of the decisions journalists make, under pressure each day, the least they can do is think about it. That's not the same thing as relinquishing control to the media consumer, it is re-asserting professional status.

Hartley (1992) criticized journalism education as "aspiring to produce architects while actually turning out real estate salesman". In this statement he makes a distinction between the architect, who works in the best interest of the client, and the real estate agent whose only priority is making a sale. A journalist who refuses to take on the role of what Epstein called "agents for others" exercises considerable influence on the journalism he/she writes.

One approach to teaching critical teaching reflection alongside skills is to present journalistic tasks, strips back the layers of the "problems" and identify and consider strategies for selecting and implementing decisions. Students then reflect critically on the appropriateness of those choices. This approach integrates media, communication and cultural theory with the conscious development of writing skills. Critical self-reflection has always been a feature of the work of a professional journalist.

"Critical self-reflection is a hallmark of good professional practice. When other groups, such as accountants or doctors, engage in debate about their professions, it is part of their practice, not a remote and separate intellectual discussion...Most journalists don't deny the power that the media has to define the "taken-for-granted-world". Instead they blend the development of professional writing skills with the ability to critically reflect on what they do and why" (Sheridan Burns, 1999)

## Conclusion

The late nineteenth century interest in the pre-professional education of journalists coincided with a broader movement toward improving professional education in the areas of medicine, law and teaching (Rippa 1992) and also dentistry. Like journalism, these professions were also traditionally taught through apprenticeship, which is inherently inconsistent in the development of knowledge and understanding. In the apprenticeship model, learning and knowledge were measured by the ability to absorb and recite facts and professional skills were deemed to develop innately. Later, as tertiary education was introduced, a University course for the born journalist 'must have the same broadening cultural effect that it has on any other brainy professional man' (Carmichael 1914:1).

Despite this, Lloyd (1985:29) describes how 'natural talent

seizing fortuitous opportunity was the making of many a journalist.' It was widely accepted that journalists were born not made and that the task of the newspaper was to find this talent and develop it. Formal education was a secondary requirement and there was no satisfactory means of teaching the art. Journalists proved their professional status by their work, and in turn their work educated them. Since then, tertiary education for journalists has become entrenched at Australian universities and the number of institutions offering journalism is growing again. Most commencing journalists are graduates. While there has been long and vigorous debate about what prospective journalists should learn, and what they should not learn, less attention has been paid to the way professional attitudes and efficacy are developed in students through learning programs.

The major pedagogical approaches applied to teaching journalism in Australian universities have changed little and slowly since the introduction of journalism education in Australia. For many years, the pedagogical debate focused solely on curriculum issues and the desired attributes of graduates, with less attention paid to the way these competencies might be achieved or assessed. Modern research (Sheridan Burns 1994; 1995, Meadows 1997) suggests that there have been few developments in the way journalism is taught. This article has argued that an approach to professional education that relies on the student's ability to individually reconcile theoretical learning with technical skills and integrate these into professional understanding is fundamentally flawed, and suggest that process-oriented teaching and learning, such as reflective teaching methods, is a useful model for journalism education where developing professional understanding and efficacy is a key goal. ■

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*LYNETTE SHERIDAN BURNS has been a journalist for more than 25 years. She founded the journalism program at The University of Newcastle, NSW in 1992 before moving to her current position as Associate Professor of Journalism at the University of Western Sydney in 2002. She has won numerous awards for journalism, mostly recently in 2002, and in 1999 The Australian Award for Excellence in Educational Publishing (Teaching & Learning Package) and a University Award for Excellence in Teaching. She authored "Understanding Journalism", Sage Publications (2002). Email: l.sheridanburns@uws.edu.au*

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