



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

7-1-1998

# Challenges of sustainable broadcasting training in contemporary Pacific

R. A. Hooper  
*KPBS-TV, San Diego, US*

---

### Recommended Citation

Hooper, R. A., Challenges of sustainable broadcasting training in contemporary Pacific, *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 5, 1998, 4-23.

Available at:<http://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss5/2>

# Challenges Of Sustainable Broadcasting Training In Contemporary Pacific

*While the impacts of first world media on the cultures and institutions of developing nations have been well documented, the efforts of indigenous peoples to adapt the technologies and methods of television production to the development of an independent voice for local and regional broadcasting have received little attention. This paper will address issues faced in the transfer of television production methods and infrastructure, with examples drawn from the author's work in Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Western Samoa, American Samoa, Vanuatu and Fiji, and argues for a paradigm shift in media education and development to recognise the inter-relationships between culture, program production and broadcasting.*

**Robert A. Hooper**

*KPBS-TV, San Diego, California*

Television broadcasting in the Pacific islands began at KVZK-TV, American Samoa, on October 4, 1964 (Schramm, et al 1981). Originally designed as a crash program to dramatically expand and modernize the territory's educational system, broadcast television gradually evolved into a more conventional non-commercial system affiliated with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) of the United States. By 1992, the station's original six channels of educational material were reduced to two operating channels, one of which carried the non-commercial PBS program schedule shipped in by videocassette along with a local newscast in both Samoan and English, while the other carried a schedule of commercial programming, live CNN news, and material from the (U.S.) Armed Forces Television Network. Today, KVZK continues to operate as a department of the American Samoa Government, bolstered by substantial subsidies from the US government.

Throughout the Pacific, small nations are joining the television revolution begun by KVZK. Vanuatu, Independent (Western) Samoa and Fiji are three of the most recent to launch

television services, while the Solomon Islands plans to initiate broadcast television in 1999. This paper is a collection of observations drawn from my work in several emerging Pacific island nations, where I have been invited to conduct hands-on production training for local broadcasters attempting to increase the quality, and quantity, of indigenous programming.

When I was first invited to American Samoa in 1992 to conduct a series of television training courses for KVZK-TV, little formal training had occurred since the 1960's and 70's. In the early 1970's, when KVZK was in the process of converting from an educational broadcast for local schools into a public broadcasting service, it was still operated almost entirely by expatriate broadcast professionals from the United States. These *papalagi* (literally "sky bursters", as Caucasians are labeled in the Samoan language) began a crash program to convert station production from the simple recording of classroom lectures to a broad schedule of news and public affairs, sports, and, eventually, political coverage of the territory's legislature, the *Amerika Samoa Fono*.

According to one staff member, KVZK's expatriate production manager closely supervised the production staff of expatriates and local Samoans. The production manager's micro-management of all phases of program production and editing, combined with on-the-job training for resident and expatriate staff alike, achieved the goal of a broad based schedule of local program production and broadcasting. But this was not without problems. The training which took place in the 1970's failed to take into account the local culture and values of American Samoa. The insensitivity of the outside trainers greatly affected the local staff of the station, and they recall several incidents to this day.

One problem involved television coverage of the emerging political process in the territory. About the time KVZK was converting to a public broadcasting service, the territorial government of American Samoa was evolving into an electoral system modeled after that of the United States. By 1976, when residents voted to change the office of governor from an appointed position to an elected one, political issues were routinely covered for broadcast. KVZK's expatriate production manager assigned a local producer, Sivia Sivia, to cover the opening of the House of Representatives (the lower house of the Fono, or legislature) by the House Speaker. In the editing room, the production manager demanded that Sivia Sivia remove all material that was not relevant to the opening ceremonies. This followed standard practice in the U.S., and included a few public service announcements and other material not directly relevant to the

## Inadequate Training Programs

ceremonies. The edited version was broadcast later in the evening.

Upon viewing the broadcast, the House Speaker called KVZK in great distress, demanding to know who was responsible for removing the material from his speech. The production manager blamed the problem entirely on Sivia Sivia, who took the brunt of the Speaker's rage - not the expatriate who had called for the removal of the material in dispute (Sivia Sivia 1992). Burned years before by a *papalagi* promoting new techniques for production and editing, Sivia Sivia voiced the distrust felt by some KVZK staff for innovation, particularly if it is introduced by an expatriate trainer who will not remain long enough to bear the consequences.

By the early 1990's, the original trainees held senior staff positions and informally trained more recently hired staff in techniques that had changed little over the years. The result was local programming of inconsistent aesthetic and conceptual quality, where formulaic techniques learned decades earlier proved outmoded at best and, in some instances, erroneous. KVZK management, along with members of the American Samoa Government, were aware of the problem and frequently discussed perceived deficiencies in local programming informally. (Taveuveu 1992).

The sustainability of local television production and broadcasting in American Samoa, as in much of the contemporary Pacific, is linked to government control, and frequently ownership, of the broadcasting service. The director of KVZK-TV, for example, is a political appointee of the governor of American Samoa, replaceable at the next general election. The politicization of local television, coupled with the status of station staff as government civil servants, poses a host of problems for the station as well as for the outside trainer or consultant.

Because most local Pacific islands' TV news and public affairs, along with election coverage, are in the hands of government controlled stations or information ministries, incumbent administrations have a decided advantage in general elections. In Fiji, this was potentially a factor in the general election of 1994, where televised appearances of government figures created a kind of instant celebrity not possible for members of the opposition, who were largely excluded from coverage. In producing *Fiji-TV* newscasts, government employees of the National Video Centre once placed lens caps on their cameras following speeches by government figures, in order to avoid inadvertent coverage of other views. Fortunately, such practices ceased when *Fiji-TV* was reorganized as a corporate entity in 1995,

## Control Of B'casting In The Pacific

and a news division was established within the service. A balanced and professional nightly newscast has emerged - one of the few in the region. By the time I returned to Suva in 1996 to teach production workshops for the news division, *Fiji-TV* news was reported to be the most popular program on the service (Helu-Thaman 1996).

The use of television broadcasting as government propaganda is on the rise elsewhere in the Pacific; including Vanuatu, where the government of the first Francophone prime minister since independence once forbid all coverage of nuclear testing in French Polynesia. When senior journalists at *Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation* criticized government policy, they were summoned before the Prime Minister and told: "I am the one paying your salary" (Obed 1995).

In Papua New Guinea, interference by successive government administrations with New Guinea Broadcasting Corporation radio broadcasts compromised the credibility of the government operated service. Under such circumstances, outside trainers assisting with sustainable broadcast development must walk a fine line, balancing their support of a free and democratic broadcast media with the often volatile political circumstances faced by those they are training.

Educators and trainers also run the risk of being associated with the political administration currently in power. The 1992 election campaigns in American Samoa so deeply polarized KVZK-TV staff that station operations become virtually dysfunctional. With the election of a new governor, training initiated under the previous KVZK director was suspended by the new administration, and staff were not encouraged to make use of what they learned over many weeks of training under the previous administration. In such a highly charged atmosphere, outside trainers may be viewed by staff as politically aligned with a particular station director and, by affiliation, with his boss, the governor.

Another problem of government control is that some television staff, by virtue of their status as government employees, tend to view their job with little initiative. At KVZK, production staff refused to purchase inexpensive canvas work gloves to prevent burns from hot production lights, stating that this was a job for government procurement. When the last pair of audio headphones were broken, staff simply recorded audio without listening to it. One of the station's most talented young camera operators transferred to another government agency because the job paid an additional ten cents an hour. A civil service mentality is not compatible with sustainable local broadcasting in the present economic climate in the Pacific, or anywhere else. In American

B'casting  
Equipment  
And Infra-  
structure

Samoa, the perceived decline of KVZK-TV has led to talk of privatizing the station, a move which could further reduce local programming, or even eliminate it altogether.

A dearth of television engineering expertise and technical infrastructure, including equipment maintenance and spare parts, is responsible, not only for many failures of local broadcasting, but for the pervasive dependency of Pacific island broadcasters on expatriate consultants and foreign sources of supply. UNESCO's Pacific Regional Television Survey Project (PACTEL 1993) reported only Guam, American Samoa, Papua New Guinea and the University of the South Pacific (Fiji) as having trained engineering staff - all expatriates. For some of the smaller Pacific island broadcasters, the malfunction of a single camera or editing deck can halt all local production for weeks, or longer. While developed countries already possess the infrastructure to accommodate media technologies, developing countries require considerable ancillary support to create an infrastructure from the ground up.

To acquire broadcasting expertise and infrastructure, many Pacific island governments initiate television services by entering into agreements with broadcast organizations in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and France. These arrangements, however, are not without a price; and frequently that price is a broadcast schedule dominated by imported programming and commercials. For example, it is far cheaper for Niue, Nauru, Fiji, the Cook Islands and Western Samoa to use previously licensed programs provided by *Television New Zealand* (TVNZ) than to produce local programs which require trained staff, infrastructure and a reliable source of funding. Nevertheless, once these broadcasting schemes are launched, host governments sometimes bridle at the resulting lack of local programming on their "national" television services. The director of one such service once described at length the heated debates in the national legislature over the costs of imported programming. Powerful legislators insisted that foreign programming be replaced with locally produced programs, not only to provide culturally relevant material, but in order to save money spent on TVNZ's programming (Brown 1994). In practice, however, these goals frequently prove incompatible.

Dependent on outside sources for programming and infrastructure, broadcasters in Pacific island nations tend to adopt the television broadcast formats and technologies used by their suppliers. Residents of Independent Samoa have long watched TV broadcasts from neighboring American Samoa in the NTSC

format. However, *Televise Samoa*, Independent Samoa's new television service introduced by New Zealand, the former colonial power, broadcasts in the PAL format. Thus, while citizens of Independent Samoa are now able to view their own programming, they have become further separated from the residents of American Samoa, who share their culture, language and traditions. The incompatibility of the broadcast technologies, in effect, divides cultures and ties them to their former colonizers, with profound implications on traditional relationships throughout the Samoan islands (Hooper & Gordon 1995).

An often overlooked aspect of broadcasting in many developing nations is the differing levels of visual literacy among local audiences. Viewers in traditional rural villages present an entirely different challenge to producers and programmers than do second and third generation urban populations exposed to videos, local cinema, and foreign television programs. In Papua New Guinea, this dichotomy is compounded by the existence of 867 indigenous languages reflecting significant cultural differences among remote rural populations. For local media producers, identifying a target audience and designing programming to effectively reach that audience, can prove formidable challenges.

In Papua New Guinea's highlands, a journalist pursuing a story on a beetle infestation of the domestic cocoa crop used his new macro lens to produce striking close-ups of the cocoa beetle clinging to a leaf. The purpose of using such extremely close angles was to reveal to villagers how the beetles devour cocoa leaves in such destructive quantities. Upon publication, he was subsequently astonished to find his audience confused by the picture. Although intimately familiar with the beetle in their daily lives, local cocoa farmers literally failed to recognize it in a close-up. The magnified image of a cocoa beetle, as seen through a macro lens, is simply beyond the visual experience of a rural cocoa farmer. Like other modern photographic techniques and technologies, it reflects the visual literacy of a technologically advanced society, and of the learned visual experiences of its members.

In Papua New Guinea, as elsewhere, indigenous media producers readily grasp, and even promote, the introduction of new visual techniques (e.g., the tight close-up and macro shot) and technologies (e.g., the macro lens). While their introduction will have a demonstrable impact on rural audiences, including an initial degree of confusion among some viewers, local producers feel they must not be denied access to the same state-of-the-art technologies and production techniques used by colleagues in

Visual  
Literacy  
In PNG

developed nations. Imported media has so raised the level of expectations of Pacific island viewers, and especially urban viewers, that indigenous media professionals increasingly feel they are in direct competition.

Unlike Samoa, where viewing audiences of American Samoa's KVZK-TV and Independent (Western) Samoa's *Televise Samoa* share the same culture and language, Papua New Guinea's diversity of languages and cultures proves a formidable challenge, particularly in reaching remote rural audiences with programming designed for the more visually sophisticated urban audience. The challenge for local broadcasters and media professionals is to adapt the techniques and technology of Western media to reach remote audiences who, in the face of rapid cultural change, resource exploitation, environmental degradation and political corruption, need to be informed in order to make decisions that affect their future. This is the only antidote to the forces of tribalism and superstition which can easily overwhelm the fragile democratic institutions emerging in nations like Papua New Guinea.

The underlying problem in Papua New Guinea, as elsewhere in the Pacific, is that little attention has been paid to: 1) who comprises the audience; 2) what kinds of programming they want; 3) how the broadcast service can best serve that audience; and 4) how the service can reach underserved viewers to expand the audience base. Without substantial audience research, programming decisions become guesswork for broadcaster managers. The Pacific islands, perhaps the last remaining laboratory on earth in which to study the introduction of television into indigenous populations, are in need of the same kinds of audience and demographic research data used by broadcasters for programming decisions in other parts of the world.

In parts of the developing world there is an unwritten pact between aid recipients and aid donors in which both appear to benefit in the short term to the detriment of any measurable progress in sustainable development. In Pacific island nations this is especially true in the case of local radio and television. Recipient organizations - usually government owned broadcasting services or private sector licensees with substantial ties to government - routinely view aid dollars in terms of job creation in the public sector, leaving much of the actual process of development to well paid expatriate consultants whose perceived role is to do for indigenous people what they are presumed incapable of doing for themselves.

Implicit is the assumption that indigenous staff are unable

Aid And  
Failure Of  
B'cast  
Dev't



to perform technical and creative tasks at a professional level and may even be incapable of learning them. This is a seductive scheme for the sort of aid agency manager who views progress primarily in terms of itemized lists of accomplishments on annual fiscal reports and personal resumes. In this manner, the appearance of development is promoted at the expense of actually developing a sustainable base of skills, expertise and infrastructure among the local population.

The tendency of aid donors to fund short term objectives rather than develop human resources is one of the most common causes of failure for broadcasters who lose their expatriate staff due to funding cuts or the termination of development grants. All rhetoric to the contrary, expatriates seldom transfer significant skills or expertise to their indigenous colleagues. It is simply not viewed as part of the job description, and seldom encouraged by management. Once the expatriates leave, poorly trained local staff are blamed for the inevitable decline of local television production.

Even the most well meaning of aid donors routinely fail to regard the development of local television and radio as important. Not long ago, the regional office of a United Nations affiliated agency in Fiji awarded a major contract for the production of video programs on the children of Pacific island nations to a private contractor located outside the region. The contract was funded by a large development aid grant from a donor nation. Significantly, not a single local or indigenous resident of the Pacific islands was reported to be involved in the production, not even as an intern. The rationale articulated by the program officer for hiring only expatriates, most of whom possessed little personal knowledge or experience in Pacific island cultures, was that they could provide a level of technical quality unavailable locally. The justification was that video productions produced entirely by expatriates would inspire local television professionals by serving as examples of what could be accomplished.

However, the superior training, funding and equipment possessed by the expatriate professionals could also reinforce a sense of inferiority among local broadcast professionals who are well aware of the limitations imposed on them. Such instances in which indigenous professionals are bypassed for purposes of expediency, or for a host of other reasons, retard the progress not only of the individuals involved but of an entire nation struggling to develop an identity in its media. By further weakening and marginalizing local broadcast professionals, such projects perpetuate an environment in which expatriates are seen as essential while local staff are viewed as in chronic need of development assistance.

In larger regional media markets like Suva, Fiji, expatriates

are routinely hired to research, write and produce broadcast media. Not surprisingly, the most successful expatriate consultants frequently stay to open local media production companies, hiring skilled professionals from foreign sources, including other developing nations. Such companies develop close relationships with aid donors and are awarded many of the media production contracts granted by these organizations. As these cycles take hold in small developing nations, indigenous broadcast professionals are further marginalized.

In Fiji, a perceived shortage of trained camera operators resulted, not in a training program to develop local talent, but in the hiring of two experienced cinematographers from Bombay, India. While this makes sound economic sense to local expatriate producers and ad agencies, it effectively precludes access to a career in television photography for local residents. It also does little to relieve the growing tensions between Fiji's citizens of Indian descent and indigenous Fijians, who rightfully resent their exclusion from the small but growing commercial television industry in Fiji.

Another source of failure for sustainable local broadcast development originates in the management practices of local media organizations. One large and well equipped regional media organization recently lost a substantial contract to produce a video program funded by development aid money. Not surprisingly, the program was produced by a well connected expatriate who rented most, if not all, of the required video equipment from the media organization, thereby largely avoiding the use of local staff who rightfully regard their expatriate supervisors with increasing concern. In terms of local television production, a multi-million dollar investment in equipment and facilities becomes little more than a rental house for expatriate producers who have developed cozy relationships with donor organizations.

Policies and management practices that exclude or marginalize local media professionals, in favor of well connected expatriates and their friends, contribute to the exodus of talented and motivated Pacific Islanders to developed nations. Those who aspire to become broadcast professionals immigrate because of a lack of educational opportunities and jobs at home, and better paying jobs in developed nations. In American Samoa, local broadcast professionals immigrate to the United States; in Fiji, the nation of choice is usually Australia. In Western Samoa and Tonga the top destination has historically been New Zealand, but increasing numbers are reaching the United States through American Samoa. Once trained abroad, Pacific Islanders who return home in search of broadcasting jobs often find poor working conditions and low wages compared to where they were trained.

In one particular case - the Cook Islands - the loss of trained broadcasters to New Zealand has become such a chronic problem that it seriously undermines local news and public affairs production, once a Pacific Media Award winner (PINA 1994).

Examples raised in this paper 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. My purpose is not to argue the relative merits of isolated examples, but to reveal a pervasive pattern of behavior which, whether by accident or design, defeats the local production of indigenous media in the short term and sabotages its long term sustainability. Such patterns between aid donors and aid recipients are responsible for the pervasive cynicism which afflicts many aspects of development, including broadcast development, in the Pacific islands.

In effect, I am arguing that we must first enable people to make television productions, before discussing, and funding, the programs to be made. Aid programs featuring short term training and programming goals should be replaced by longer multiple-year projects emphasizing the substantial kinds of infrastructure development and education which will enable Pacific Islanders to competently produce local programming. Repetitive basic skills workshops of the sort commonly found in the Pacific have largely failed; rather, a more advanced educational curriculum must now be developed which augments earlier training and leads to a professional level of expertise. Aid organizations long accustomed to providing "one-off" workshops, while funding repetitive and sometimes redundant studies of training needs, are ill-equipped to serve in this role.

No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire 1970).

The most insidious cause of failure of broadcast development may sometimes be found in Western based progressive media and broadcast organizations. Members of such groups promote agendas and ideologies which, while appropriate for their membership and appealing to their underwriters, including some government agencies, may not be shared by specific groups of Pacific islanders. Aspects of Native American or Aboriginal Australian experience may, or may not, apply to Pacific islanders who, as a group, are far from homogeneous.

For example, the social, historical and political perspectives

Trainers,  
Consultants  
And The  
Pedagogy  
Of Failure

of Hawaiians, whose sovereign monarchy was overthrown by acts of force and deceit, may not be shared by American Samoans, whose ancestors voluntarily signed treaties of cession with the United States. American Samoans are not, and do not view themselves as, a conquered people. The Chamorros of Guam and the Northern Marianas, the Micronesians of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, along with residents of the Polynesian and Melanesian nations (which also contain Micronesian groups) represent a multiplicity of unique perspectives and circumstances. To lump them together for the convenience of the government officials who determine policies and development assistance for broadcasting is misleading and historically inaccurate.

Pacific island broadcasters, while resigned to this myopia of convenience, nevertheless resent its implications. Ashley Wickham, the former director of radio training for the South Pacific Commission Regional Media Centre and a former general manager of Solomon Islands Broadcasting, reports:

“I see reports in many stations with recommendations saying ‘these people need this or that training.’ Who is saying this? Visiting consultant trainers who have not taken the time to study, to research more than just media matters. They forget to look at themselves first before launching themselves on others, the underlying assumption being that ‘these people don’t know, don’t care, or are dumb, ergo we will show them how we do it.’” (Wickham 1994).

A few years ago, a federally funded (U.S.) organization whose purpose is to promote media about Pacific islanders proposed to produce a television program on Samoans. Non-Samoan members of the organization wanted to present stereotypes of Samoans they felt were prevalent in the United States, ostensibly for the purpose of refuting those stereotypes. Particularly troublesome were stereotypes of sexuality and violence attributed to the Samoan community by the program’s producers. When word of the project reached American Samoa, many in the community felt insulted and humiliated, realizing that such an approach did not originate in their community and completely failed to reflect their viewpoint. They readily understood that by visually creating such stereotypes in the first place, the program would do far more damage than any number of subsequent refutations (Aga 1994).

Anyone who lives and works in the Pacific soon begins to grasp the complexity of relations between groups of Pacific islanders. Samoans residing in Hawaii are frequently criticized for wearing the *lava lava* and other traditional dress, as are Melanesians when visiting relatives in Micronesia. Melanesian

students pursuing a college education in Fiji have been brutally victimized by other Pacific island students, reflecting a long history of conflicting cultural values and the perception by some that Melanesian culture is inferior to that of the Polynesians. Broadcast development and training policies which fail to consider the differences between Pacific islanders, while seeking centralized solutions to policy questions, will ultimately fail.

To take one example: the often stated goal of regional programming exchanges, as a cost effective means of generating local television production, frequently ignores the cultural and historical competitiveness between Polynesian and Melanesian cultures, among other divisive issues. The long-standing television series "*Tagata Pacifika*", produced in New Zealand by and for Pacific islander residents, is supplied by TV New Zealand to many of its Pacific Service clients, including *Fiji TV-One*. Normally reticent Fijians have called for the program to be taken off the air in Fiji, arguing that it is dominated by Polynesian Samoans and has "no relevance" for Fijians. The series is even less relevant to residents of Melanesia and Micronesia, as it contains little, if any, material from those cultures.

The essence of successful film and television production training lies in a goal oriented, project based pedagogy providing incentives to excel in the conceptual, creative and technical aspects of program production. Rote exercises assigned by the trainer are of limited value, except to demonstrate general principles in a workshop setting; exercises which participants are encouraged to devise for themselves, particularly those involving their own community or an aspect of the local environment of interest to them, will yield more original work and vastly accelerate the learning process.

Training workshops must be visual and hands-on, where demonstrations closely accompany theoretical or written material. Many Pacific cultures have no history of a written language and training must be approached with this in mind. Everything written or diagrammed on the board must immediately be demonstrated by the trainer, followed by hands-on exercises by the participants.

Following initial workshops, most training should occur in the field, or the television studio, on actual productions designed for broadcast. This serves the needs of the host broadcasting service by providing local programming, while motivating participants to perform their best on projects which will be viewed in their own community. Awards for the best program produced during the training, publicly presented or even televised like the Emmys, serve as a further incentive when conducted in tune with

## Successful B'cast Training In The Pacific

local culture, language and values. The *Mauualuga* ("top of the peak") *Award* for best documentary produced for KVZK-TV during nine weeks of training workshops in American Samoa, along with the *Fa'amalosi* ("best effort") *Award* for second best, kept trainees in the editing rooms night after night and over the weekends. High ranking members of the local community commented on the pride and professionalism exhibited by KVZK staff as they competed for these honors, which were ceremoniously awarded and televised at the conclusion of the workshops.

This approach argues in favor of on-site training within the community in which participants live and work, as Pacific islanders are more likely to produce original programs in a familiar environment than in a distant city where they have few contacts and possess little knowledge of the local culture or environment. Unlike off-site training, which removes critical staff members from small broadcast services for weeks or even months at a time, on-site training permits staff members to be trained while continuing to perform their jobs. This is generally a more attractive option to propose to broadcast managers and government information ministers.

A disadvantage often cited for on-site training is that staff, when trained on their own island, become distracted by family and friends and will not attend the training course. Also cited are the lack of production equipment and the high cost of bringing it to the training site. However, experience throughout the Pacific disproves this. Pacific islanders brought to large urban centers like Sydney, Auckland, Honolulu, Los Angeles, or even Guam or Suva, find a range of distractions far exceeding those of their home islands. In the Pacific, the proliferation of "professional trainees" who attend workshops of marginal benefit solely for free trips to urban destinations is legendary. In addition, the cost of airfare, meals and accommodations for off-site trainees usually far exceeds the cost of shipping several pallets of TV equipment by air freight to any island nation in the Pacific. The only rationale for off-site training would be for small numbers of participants who, having benefited from on-site training, require short-term workshops of an advanced or specialized nature.

When possible, broadcast trainers in the Pacific should themselves be Pacific Islanders. Ostensibly, this has been the purpose of UNESCO's PACTRAINER projects, along with numerous "train the trainers" workshops funded by the United Nations, Australian Aid (AUSAID) and other aid donors. The failure of most such "train the trainers" efforts was made abundantly clear in an address delivered recently in Sydney, Australia. The speaker, a member of the faculty of the University

of the South Pacific, echoed the sentiments of many of those present when she cited the United Nations model as not appropriate for the Pacific. Training the trainers workshops have been going on for years, yet today few indigenous Pacific Islanders serve as trainers anywhere in the Pacific. Trainers from Europe, New Zealand and Australia arrive in Suva to run the same workshops time and again over the years. However, follow-up studies reveal that the participants in these workshops perform little or no training in subsequent years (Helu-Thaman 1996).

The problem lies as much in the initial selection of trainees as in the poorly planned and coordinated workshops themselves. Participants selected without the requisite social status in their communities rarely have the credibility to serve as trainers; their workshops will not be attended in their home communities. For a variety of reasons, Pacific Islanders will not inform aid donors that they are training the wrong candidates; this is left to the aid donors to determine, with disastrous results. Appropriate selection criteria for candidates from Pacific island cultures is the key to successfully producing trainers who will be effective in their communities (Helu-Thaman 1996).

The arguments favoring on-site broadcast training in developing nations apply to university media programs located in the Pacific islands. However, while professional courses and training can readily be provided on-site for local broadcasters, a university education in journalism and broadcasting requires an investment far beyond the means of many small Pacific island governments. The argument for establishing a regional university under these circumstances, while recognizing the compromises and potential problems associated with it, essentially is one of economy of scale. Provided comparable teaching staff and facilities, a regional university can offer a superior education at less cost than one situated in Australia, New Zealand, Europe or the United States. Importantly, Pacific island students would be educated in a more familiar environment, and be provided an academic program focusing largely on regional issues and the production of programming designed for a wide range of island audiences. However, the realities faced by the two largest tertiary institutions, the University of Papua New Guinea, which primarily serves Melanesia, and the University of the South Pacific, which serves twelve Pacific nations from its main campus and media centre in Fiji, have not been encouraging. The fundamental problem is a lack of institutional support in both cases.

Broadcast education at the University of Papua New Guinea, situated within Journalism Studies, is presently moribund

University  
Education  
For  
Pacific  
Island  
B'casters

and under threat of closure. Journalism training, including broadcasting, has received decreasing levels of staffing, funding and other support in recent years, in spite of the notable successes of the program, including award-winning student publications (Robie 1997). Additionally, equipment and technical infrastructure for radio and television training are presently in disrepair and essentially useless for instruction. A small video facility within the faculty of arts operates adequately, but it is not generally available for use by journalism or broadcasting students. With the full time teaching staff in journalism reduced substantially for the 1998-99 academic year, the departure of the program head to become the journalism coordinator at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, a chronic lack of working equipment, and little support by the university's administration, broadcast training to professional standards at the University of Papua New Guinea will likely remain unavailable for the foreseeable future.

In contrast, the University of the South Pacific (USP) is endowed with an excellent media centre featuring television studios and radio broadcasting facilities, and a large technical staff. With millions of dollars invested, the university could serve as a regional broadcast educational center and producer of quality local television programs for emerging broadcasters. However, USP rarely appears to view itself in this role. A million dollar TV studio is often left idle except for the simple taping of lectures and events, while state of the art video equipment is routinely rented out for commercial purposes. It must be noted that not only is this the best television facility in Fiji (and in the South Pacific), it is technically superior to those found in many television departments at Australian, American and New Zealand universities. However, as with the University of Papua New Guinea, the problems at USP involve a chronic lack of institutional leadership and support.

The earliest attempt to establish a video program at the University of the South Pacific, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development from 1979 to 1981, collapsed due to problems in planning and implementation (Chick 1987). The second attempt, attached to a journalism program funded by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, also failed due to a perceived lack of administrative support and destructive internal politics (Bartlett 1990). In 1993, the French government began funding for yet another journalism program at USP, to include broadcast television. I taught a section of television broadcast journalism at USP in 1994 and experienced the problems first hand. The video cameras and equipment were routinely unavailable during class hours because they had been rented out for commercial purposes; editing rooms and facilities were also unavailable because they, too, had been committed to projects



outside of the university. Serving as a commercial rental facility was a clear priority over any perceived role as an educational institution serving Pacific island broadcasters. The small number of students in the course, mostly from Fiji as a result of failures of university recruitment in the admissions process, had fallen to little more than ten by the time I taught another workshop at USP in late 1996. After five years of considerable effort and frustration, the founding head of the program retired early in 1998 to return to France, leaving a program that appeared at the time to be neither sustainable nor of great relevance to the Pacific region.

However, with the arrival of a new journalism coordinator in March, 1998, and the hiring of a lecturer in broadcast journalism, USP appears to be making a dramatic turnaround. Problems of recruitment have been addressed with the admission of thirty five first-year entrants, bringing the total student population to fifty three. A journalism web site was opened at USP in April, 1998, and internet linkages have been established with other journalism programs in East Asia and the Pacific (Robie 1998). These are promising developments; but they will only prove successful, and sustainable, if the university's administrators provide the leadership and vision to support a truly regional effort in professional media education. This can only be accomplished, if the failures of past programs serve as a lesson, by reorganizing the media centre and its staff for the purpose of supporting an educational role, by recognizing and addressing the destructive internal politics, and by curtailing outside commercial ventures that interfere with the educational activities of the media centre.

While it is preferable to educate Pacific island broadcasters at local universities situated in their communities, or at regional institutions in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, the reality is that many Pacific islanders seeking professional media education will of necessity attend universities in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Europe for the foreseeable future. Because many Islanders remain overseas to pursue careers after graduation, their impact on the development of broadcasting in the Pacific islands will be modest.

The arrival of multiple channel satellite delivered television to Pacific island states has focused attention on local broadcasting because, as in developed nations, it will redefine the role of local and community based services. In developed nations, the very survival of local television stations in smaller markets, and the viability of stations in larger markets, will depend on how well they adapt to the revolutionary changes taking place in access to visual media. While it was once sufficient to serve as a conduit for

Prescription  
For  
Sustainable  
Pacific  
Island  
B'casting

a network feed of programs, coupled with a modest amount of local news, sports and weather; local broadcasters must redefine their role or face irrelevancy. Nowhere is this more true than in the Pacific islands.

Having recently arrived on the scene, many Pacific broadcasters struggle just to fill five percent of their broadcast schedules with local programs of relevance to their audience; yet the sustainability of even this tiny amount is by no means assured. Like their counterparts in developed nations, small Pacific services will have to redefine themselves in response to expanding satellite and cable programming availability, and eventually internet programming via computer. With few resources, little infrastructure and a pervasive dependency on foreign sources for everything from trained personnel to programming and spare parts, Pacific broadcasters will face many of the same market driven forces changing the face of broadcast media worldwide. In the face of this onslaught, what can small island broadcasting services do to survive?

Like other small broadcasters, Pacific islanders cannot compete with the economies of scale enjoyed by large media conglomerates in providing a vast array of programming at low cost. What they are in a better position to do than anyone else, however, is utilize what they know best: the stunning diversity of their environments, the histories and cultures of those who live there, and the unique viewpoints of Pacific islanders, often at odds with the stereotypes presented by Western media. Possessing the technology of production, and the training to apply it effectively, creates at least the potential for presenting small island communities in their own voices - for themselves initially, and eventually for the outside world.

Ultimately, Pacific island broadcasters must begin to develop a "niche market" for themselves and invest the resources in producing programming to fill it. They must study what other broadcasters are doing, in developed as well as in developing nations, and adopt practices which show promise and are appropriate to local conditions. Practices found useful by one island broadcasting service could well serve as a model for others. However, aid donors in the region have demonstrated little interest, remaining content with the status quo.

A model for sustainable broadcasting might effectively be constructed around what are termed ancillary markets, activities that raise revenues to support program production and the broadcasting mission of the service. After completing the documentary series "*Arts of Samoa*," KVZK-TV, American Samoa, sold some of the programs to Hawaiian Airlines for screening on routes from Honolulu and Los Angeles to Pago Pago (Savali 1994).

Such arrangements between broadcasters and airlines serving Pacific nations might well benefit both, serving to promote tourism for the airlines, while raising revenues for local station productions. Importantly, it would help keep control over programming and its portrayal of culture in the hands of island residents. Other ancillary markets might include the sale of videos in shops and hotels, and even on the internet; the creation of program cooperatives with other regional broadcasters for both broadcast and video sales; video production for local business and other clients, and even commercial retail operations. If local public television stations in the United States can operate lucrative retail stores with themes tied to their broadcast schedules, Pacific island broadcasters might also consider retail outlets or similar arrangements. I am not suggesting any of these ideas as a panacea, but as a starting point for a new dialogue between Pacific island leaders, politicians, broadcasters, the business community and viewers over the survival of local broadcasting.

For those who condemn the situation as hopeless, I have attempted to document in this paper a few of the constraints and challenges faced by broadcasters that contribute to failure, along with suggestions for those who would help to make indigenous broadcasting sustainable. I am advocating that priority be placed on developing a broadcasting infrastructure which features the appropriate education and training of indigenous professionals. For while there may exist shortages of many aspects of broadcasting infrastructure, there is certainly no shortage of talented Pacific Islanders with the potential to produce original and compelling programming, if provided the opportunity. While aspects of culture and custom may indeed conflict with production methods introduced by expatriate trainers, this presents an opportunity to expand the art and craft of television production by adapting these techniques to effectively reach diverse Pacific island audiences. Paradoxically, development assistance can serve to undermine indigenous broadcast development when it operates in terms of short term objectives staffed largely with expatriate consultants, ignoring the development of a sustainable local infrastructure and the training of indigenous broadcast professionals. The challenge of sustainability lies not so much in the incompatibilities, real or perceived, between Pacific island cultures and broadcast professionalism, but in the ignorance of those who fail to grasp the complexity of relationships between them. ■

REFERENCES

- Aga, D.** (1994). *Interview, Leone, American Samoa*. October.
- Bartlett, R.** (1990). "Journalism at the University of the South Pacific," Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, Final Report. Suva, Fiji
- Brown, T.** (1994). *Interview, Apia, Western Samoa*. October.
- Chick, J.** (1987). "Television and the University of the South Pacific: a cautionary tale," *Pacific Islands Communication Journal*, 15.1: 76-85.
- Freire, P.** (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Continuum.
- Helu-Thaman, K.** (1996). Address to the Annual Meeting and Scientific Conference of the International Association for Mass Communication Research, Sydney, Australia. 20 August.
- Hooper, R., and Gordon, V.** (1995). "Conflict and Cultural Identity in Developing Indigenous Productions," *Media Development* 3: 43-45.
- Obed, H.** (1995). Address to the Pacific Islands News Association Annual Convention, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, June.
- PINA** (1994). *Pacific Islands News Association Pacific Media Awards*, Apia, Western Samoa.
- PINA** (1995). *Pacific Islands News Association Annual Convention*, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.
- Robie, D.** (1997). "Media: Uni Tavor's Future at Risk," *Uni Tavor*, 16 May.
- Robie, D.** (1998). "Fourth Estate column: Behind the hype of non news," *Wansolwara*, University of the South Pacific, June.
- Savali, V.** (1994). *Interview, Pago Pago, American Samoa*. May.
- Schramm, W., Nelson, L. & Betham, M.** (1981). *Bold Experiment, The Story of Educational Television in American Samoa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Sivia Sivia** (1992). *Interview. Pago Pago, American Samoa*. September.
- Taveuveu, F.** (1992). *Interview. Pago Pago, American Samoa*. September.
- Wickham, A.** (1994). "Get Serious," Presentation to the Panel on Training at the General Assembly of the Pacific Islands News Association, Apia, Western Samoa, June 29.

---

ROBERT A. HOOPER is an executive producer for KPBS-TV Public Broadcasting, San Diego, USA, and a Visiting Associate Professor of Communication at the University of California, San Diego. He has served as a Fulbright Scholar in Malaysia and Fiji and has conducted television training in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Malaysia, Independent (Western) Samoa and American Samoa. He was a 1997 Eisenhower Fellow to Malaysia. The author acknowledges the assistance of broadcast professionals from many Pacific island nations for their input to this article and Ashley Wickham of Honiara, Solomon Islands, for his assistance with earlier drafts. E-mail: rhooper@ucsd.edu

---