

## The Trials and Tribulations of Publishing in Fiji

Wadan Narsey

### Abstract

*This paper is broad sketch of my personal experience of publishing over the last forty years of my academic life at The University of the South Pacific. I hope that this brief account of my successes and more importantly, my failures, even if perceived in hind-sight, may be of some use to academics starting out on their publishing careers and also to academic institutions which are supposed to nurture them.*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Publishing is the process of disseminating one's views to one's own choice of target audiences - whether they are in one's academic field or for the great big world out there. The publishing agency may be a dedicated publishing company, a university or other academic institution, a government agency, some non-government organization, or the author personally. The medium of publishing may be print or increasingly these days, eBooks and the Internet, using platforms such as Wordpress or many other similar ones available.

There can be many publishing objectives, some overlapping and some conflicting: intellectual pursuit, academic contribution; personal academic advancement, assisting government development efforts, assisting international and regional organizations with their objectives, assist-

<sup>1</sup> Except for a few minor additions, this article was originally written in response to a request from young FNU academic, Prashneel Gounder to contribute to a book *Writing and Publishing in Fiji* (USP Press). Unfortunately, Gounder and his USP Press co-editor (Vinesh Maharaj), despite the article addressing the very issues agreed to originally, significantly censored the article without consultation as originally promised. The nature of this invidious and hidden censorship that currently exists at USP is exposed in a forthcoming article in this journal (PJE, 2(2)).

ing non-government organizations (NGOs), wider community education, countering censorship by the state, self expression (bearing witness), or publishing commercially for private profit or other forms of gain.

I emphasize that authors need to *consciously* make their own personal choices in publishing with respect to the objectives listed above, rather than drift into them without deliberation as I think I did. Such personal choices will largely decide their publishing future. Of course, an author's relative emphases can also change over time as authors' careers, interests and life circumstances inevitably change.

Early career academics wishing to publish can be encouraged by the examples of many successful Fiji academics, such as Professor Brij Lal and Professor Subramani. But it should be noted that their numerous publications on Fiji themes have been facilitated by their solid academic reputations and support of their employing institutions in Australia, NZ and the wider Pacific region. Other successful academics, like Professor Satendra Nandan, have a wide array of private sponsors. There are also a few Fiji academics who have published with more international publishers such as William Sutherland and Robert Robertson through Zed Press (*The unfinished business of Fiji's 2000 coup*), 'Atu Emberson-Bain through Cambridge University Press (*Labour and Gold in Fiji*) and Biman Prasad (and Clem Tisdell) *Institutions, Economic Performance and Sustainable Development* with Nova Publishers. Although these books were also on Fiji, the themes were international enough and the authors credible enough for the international publishers to agree to publish them.

Early career Fiji academics working for relatively small academic institutions who wish to publish either locally or internationally, unfortunately, face far too many difficulties, and they need to take advantage of every opportunity available despite their resource limitations. I believe that there are many practical strategies and possibilities that early career academics can explore, especially if they address the institutional weaknesses that they and their colleagues face working for small under-resourced tertiary institutions. This paper tries to bring out my own personal 'trials and tribulations' of publishing in Fiji and internationally, including the many opportunities missed during a forty year academic and consulting career mostly at USP<sup>2</sup>, albeit with the easy and shaky wisdom of hindsight.

The flow of this article roughly follows the different types of client groups and audiences and difficulties that I have faced over the last forty

<sup>2</sup> The author worked at USP from 1973 to 2012 with a few breaks in between in USP management and the Fiji Parliament.

years, that I believe are also faced by most of today's authors. I start with perhaps the most difficult challenge for Fiji authors, that of publishing for international academia with international publishers.

### Academic publishing for the world stage: the PhD thesis

Perhaps the most valued in the academic world is publishing books through dedicated international publishers, often beginning with the author's PhD or Masters' thesis, if they have completed these substantial academic milestones. By nature, PhD theses, usually with new findings, of substance and quality, are prime material for publication as books. The academic has usually devoted a minimum of three years in researching some important relevant topic and if the candidate's work is of quality with good supervisors, with the final product passed by rigorous examiners, such 'good' PhD theses ought to be converted into book form. I emphasize the word 'good' as small universities the world over are notorious for diluted standards where PhD students' work, supervisors and examiners can sink to the lowest common denominator.<sup>3</sup>

It is an unfortunate and sorry tale that my own internationally accredited book based on my DPhil thesis completed at Sussex University in 1988, was only published in 2016 by Palgrave Macmillan (*British imperialism and the making of colonial currency systems*), after a remarkable gap of twenty eight years. I had signed a contract with Macmillan<sup>4</sup> (London) in 1990 for a book which was of genuine international interest as it was a radical reinterpretation of the currency and monetary experience of the entire colonial British Empire<sup>5</sup> (with little on Fiji), stretching over more than three centuries and bringing together history and economic theory. Unfortunately, a PhD thesis as it is usually written, is not necessarily appropriate as a book and sometimes substantial rewriting is required. While I did have small bursts of rewriting after every military coup<sup>6</sup>, I allowed myself to be diverted by other life choices.

While it is a strange story unlikely to be replicated by any academic

<sup>3</sup> It should be interesting for Fiji universities to engage an outside consultant to read all the Masters and PhD theses done locally and grade them perhaps as A (excellent), B, C or D (not acceptable by international standards). Anecdotally, I can relate that USP Pacific Collection Librarians have not been impressed by the quality of many of the PhD and Masters theses they receive.

<sup>4</sup> This was a different company from Palgrave Macmillan although linked to it.

<sup>5</sup> There are chapters on West Indies, India, West and East Africa, Straits Settlements (now Malaya and Singapore), and imperial decision-making in London.

<sup>6</sup> Fiji has faced military coups in 1987, 2000 and 2006.

author, there are many lessons for budding authors as to why it was not published earlier, some to do with the demands of my employer (USP), some due to the demands of being an academic in a small society like Fiji, but most largely the result of personal choices.<sup>7</sup>

I explain them here because today's academics and potential authors in a small country like Fiji face similar pressures and diversions from their academic work and publishing, because the few good academics who remain are called upon by society for all manner of things, in ways that academics in large countries are not.

A lesson that potential authors can keep in mind is that 'opportunities can emerge from adversities' and even forced diversions can result in publications of value. I unfortunately did not take advantage of many such opportunities. Unfortunately also, the better our academics are, the more they face similar diversions from their pure academic work.

### Diversions 1

My first diversion from pure academic pursuits came around 1989, soon after I had completed my PhD. The University Vice-Chancellor (Geoffery Caston) had co-opted me into his office to prepare the USP Submission to the University Grants Committee for its triennial funding. Subsequently, he asked me to be the USP representative on a massive World Bank project researching post-secondary education in the six largest member states of USP: Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, and Kiribati. An outside consultant (Ian Morris) and I travelled to these six countries twice during an eighteen month project obtaining data and writing the six country reports. We also conducted a unique and massive six country tracer study of all the 1985 and 1988 graduates of all the tertiary institutions and overseas scholarships of these six countries, to see where the graduates had ended up by 1992, whether working locally or emigrated.<sup>8</sup> We also went to Washington and wrote up the Regional Report together with other World Bank staff. These substantive reports are all available at the USP Library and some of them may be accessed online.<sup>9</sup> Taken together and individually, there was a massive output of

<sup>7</sup> How many academics are there working for Fiji universities, who are able to concentrate totally on topics of international interest but of minimal local interest and able to withstand institutional pressure to diversify their skills?

<sup>8</sup> Such a tracer study is long overdue in Fiji and the Pacific.

<sup>9</sup> These are found at Researchgate: [https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/37867892\\_World\\_Bank\\_East\\_Asia\\_and\\_Pacific\\_Regional\\_Office\\_Population\\_and\\_Human\\_Resources\\_Division](https://www.researchgate.net/scientific-contributions/37867892_World_Bank_East_Asia_and_Pacific_Regional_Office_Population_and_Human_Resources_Division)

eight reports based on solid research and data in the critical area of post-secondary education, of great relevance to the six USP member countries and donors. Unfortunately, I did not make any attempt to convert them into books, which would have maximized the value of both the work and my international reputation, as well as advanced policy thinking in this field from an economist's perspective. Most of the problems of Pacific education systems discussed then are still valid today and deserve fresh studies.

Academics and potential authors need to appreciate that the Pacific and Fiji are lucky to have many international organizations (World Bank, UN, ADB) and regional CROP organizations (Forum Secretariat, SPC and others) who are often willing to fund large research projects in their areas of interest, provided that the academics can offer quality and timeliness<sup>10</sup>. The academics must keep in mind that the typical consultancy report has a different format from books, and that substantial work may be needed to go from the former to the latter - not difficult if the objectives are kept in mind during the writing up. Academics at large universities and departments in Australia and NZ have the luxury of support editing staff who can undertake the laborious editing and polishing tasks. It is a pity that our universities do not provide such support to their academics and consulting staff, despite the great importance of publications to the universities' KPIs.

### **Diversion 2**

Around 1991, commitment to family needs (looking after three young children) took me to Melbourne for two years while my wife (a senior University Librarian) did her Masters degree at RMIT. While there, in order to keep up payments for our house mortgage, I did a large consultancy on the Vanuatu education system for the World Bank and the Vanuatu Government. That resulted in a massive report full of solid data, financial and educational (*Financing Issues for Education in Vanuatu*). Again, I failed to convert that report into a book although I did try with the Institute of Pacific Studies but was turned down, I suspect because of racism against Indo-Fijian academics, not because the topic of Vanuatu education was not relevant to the IPS (see more below).

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<sup>10</sup> This should not be taken for granted as donors have a very poor view of academics' ability to deliver on time, especially when they are burdened by their normal teaching responsibilities.

### **Diversion 3**

Around 1993, the USP Vice-Chancellor suggested that my newly acquired knowledge of regional education systems would be of some benefit to USP if I became USP's Director of Planning and Development in his office. While I did this largely administrative work for three years (1994-1996) I also conducted considerable academic research into USP student performances and assessment across the different departments, and on internal and external USP funding patterns. While these studies resulted in some university publications (see bibliography), there was no substantial academic publication over this three year period due to the demands of administration and my failure to see the academic publication possibilities, especially if associated with international tertiary education conferences. Thankfully, when I realized I was not suited to administration and unable to cope with USP management politics, I was allowed to resign from this powerful position and go back to teaching (at a lower rank and pay). There have been several other academics who have similarly been diverted by USP management into administration and none were particularly successful either in management or their academic pursuits thereafter.<sup>11</sup>

### **Diversion 4**

In 1996, the Leader of the Opposition in the Fiji Parliament (Mr. Jai Ram Reddy) requested me to stand for Parliament and the National Federation Party in their historic attempt to co-operate with the Rabuka Government; I agreed and was elected, unopposed by the Fiji Labour Party of which I had also been a founding member a decade earlier. We did succeed to some extent, with the consensus 1997 Constitution approved by both houses of parliament, including the valuable provision for multiparty government, sadly never fully utilized thereafter by several governments. This service in the Fiji parliament between 1996 and 1999 also changed for ever the nature of my academic work, which became totally dominated by community needs, not pure academic pursuits and publications. But unfortunately also, I did not turn my considerable parliamentary contributions, in total longer than that of any of my peer group MPs, into

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<sup>11</sup> Another two examples were educationist Dr. Tupeni Baba who took up what some would call a rather sterile appointment as USP Registrar and Dr. Meli Waqa who became the USP's Director of Community Services.

academic publications.<sup>12</sup>

This difficult choice has also been faced by many other academics like Dr. Tupeni Baba, Dr. Isimeli Cokanisiga, Professor Satendra Nandan, Mr. Jo Nacola, Dr. Ganesh Chand, Dr. Mahendra Reddy and most recently, Professor Biman Prasad, who have all left successful academic careers to serve their communities in parliament, nearly always with lower incomes and more stress. They respond to social needs because academics are always told by politicians: 'come and do something about it instead of perpetually giving idle theoretical advice' from the sideline (as if that was all that university academics did). I suspect that most of the academics who venture into politics return to academic life, as some already have, enriched by their periods of political contribution. Some of course, never recover from the brutal world of politics where academics are forever and emptily ridiculed for their 'book knowledge' by Members of Parliament, many of whom could well do with some book knowledge to make up for their crass ignorance in parliament.

Nevertheless if the academics cum politicians could turn their valuable experiences in the harsh but real 'cut and thrust' world of politics into solid academic publications, it might be of great use to other academics and young leaders considering contributing in politics. There are great benefits but also great perils as those FLP parliamentarians held hostage during the 2000 coup know only too well.

### **My Palgrave Macmillan miracle**

In 2013 and totally out of the blue, two international academics independently got in touch, offering to help me publish my DPhil thesis which they considered to still have value despite the passage of time, some twenty five years after completion. One of them, Dr. Kurt Schuler<sup>13</sup> from New York said that he had just reread my thesis which he had originally read twenty five years previously and that 'having more research experience now, I am also in a better position to appreciate what a great amount of digging you did and how unusual it is for an economist'. He offered to help with contacts with publishers Cambridge, Oxford, Routledge, and Edward Elgar and if that failed, to publish the work through his own Center for Financial Stability (New York).

But the communication I followed up was that from Professor Larry Neal who had been put in touch with my work by a Visiting Professor at

<sup>12</sup> These contributions are in the Hansard records.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Schuler is a Senior Fellow in Financial History at the Center for Financial Stability, New York.

USP (Professor Salim Rashid), for whom I had fortuitously (and I admit reluctantly at the time) given guest lectures at USP on my PhD thesis. At that time I had not known of his international academic connections through his tenure at Illinois University. Professor Larry Neal who was himself an eminent and prolifically published international academic<sup>14</sup>, then helped me obtain the contract with Palgrave Macmillan (London). Also importantly he went to enormous trouble to give me extremely valuable rewriting advice on the structure of my book, a lesson which I had ironically practiced for decades with my own newspaper articles. Young authors might take heed from the writing lesson that complex stories, whether for a massive book like my PhD thesis or a one page newspaper article, can become far more readable if the important conclusions are also set out in the Introduction, so that the reader has a "Road Map" while putting together the complex jigsaw pieces throughout the work.

Dr. Kurt Schuler eventually wrote a review of my book for EH.net (June 2017) and I was invited to deliver the Breakfast Address at the Annual History Association Meeting of 2017 in San Jose, California (see Narsey, 2017). Budding Fiji authors need to keep in mind that having sympathetic internationally reputable academics as mentors can be half the battle won for international publications if not more. But they need to work on developing such international relationships and mentors, who are not going to fall like manna from heaven or foreign aid (see below).

The huge advantage of publishing with an international publisher is of course not only the resulting status and international exposure, but that the author only has to provide the intellectual product. Publishers like Palgrave Macmillan hire their own professional editors and typesetters and will even do the indexing if you so wish. In the end, I chose to do the indexing myself, as the subject matter was too complex for any non-expert indexing company who Palgrave Macmillan would have used. The international publisher of course also looks after all the stocks of books and sales while the author is given some percentage royalty.

Whatever may be the popular view, do not expect any great profit from these international books. While I am entitled to 3% royalties on the sales of my book, unfortunately the payments from this international publisher were slow in coming and has never amounted to much.

Keep in mind also that having an international publisher is no guar-

<sup>14</sup> Larry Neal has published many books with Cambridge University Press some of them being: *A Concise History of International Finance* (2015); *The Economics of Europe and the European Union*. (2007); and *The Rise of Financial Capitalism* (1990).

antee of maximum circulation internationally. Indeed, the opposite may be the case in the short term. My book is published only in hard cover at the moment and is so highly priced by Palgrave Macmillan that few Third World libraries would be purchasing it. Palgrave Macmillan tells me that it will be issued in a cheaper paper-pack after two years, which is a tragedy as it limits the circulation of the book in the meantime. Other publishers, such as Zed Press, may have ensured wider circulation by now.

### Does your book have substance?

The challenge for young budding authors, however, is that to interest international publishers, the book topic must not only be of international interest and the book itself of quality and substance, but the author must also be recognized internationally as an expert on the topic by his international peers.<sup>15</sup> This is no easy task for any academic working for a Fiji tertiary institution where the harsh fact of life is that there is little value placed by management on internationally valued academic output, whatever may be their grand statements on 'excellence' in their strategic plans or 'Vision and Mission' statements. Neither may the social and political leaders of Fiji or even one's academic peers acknowledge any Fiji academic with such international outputs while they might readily do so for some work of purely local interest.

Budding Fiji academic authors face the drawback that working for small universities and departments, they do not have the luxury of specializing in their teaching and research, which is usually necessary to produce the high quality output of interest to international academia. Most Fiji academics are forced to be 'jacks of all trades' or teach the vast range of course that comprise their academic discipline, during their teaching careers, simply to ensure that their graduates get full exposure to all the subject areas that make up subject 'major'. This burden is heavier on the long serving academics who are senior to both local and expatriate academics who come and go.<sup>16</sup>

Neither do Fiji academics have the luxury of having colleagues with the academic depth and interest to guide their academic work as

<sup>15</sup> Thirty years on I can only dimly recollect that my DPhil thesis took me seven painful years to complete after three years of detailed archive research in the Public Records Office at Kew Gardens, London.

<sup>16</sup> This was my unfortunate experience over three decades in the Economics Department at USP, watching a long procession of Fiji, regional and expatriate academics join the staff only to leave for greener pastures, higher salaries and higher positions as they came up elsewhere.

mentors, and professionally and constructively critique the draft work that they produce. It is, therefore, essential that Fiji academics also attempt to foster international academic mentors and collaboration with international academics in their field. This requires conscious efforts that few institutions encourage. I address some of the technical requirements of producing books below.

### Publishing in Fiji and regionally

A publication such as this one edited by enterprising Prashneel Gounder (Goundar, 2018) of Fiji National University would have benefited greatly if it had included an empirical and quantitative analysis of the history of publishing in Fiji, that really sets out Fiji's track record, and that of academic institutions and authors, perhaps since political independence in 1970. Only then can one objectively see what the challenges are for budding authors. Here is a good research project for an academic. I remember an excellent study by Dr. Ganesh Chand and Dr. HM Gunasekera some decades ago, 'The state of Economic Development Theory in the South Pacific' (*Journal of Pacific Studies*, Volume 9, 1983).

Perhaps I can start by making a personal assertion (which only the facts can substantiate or contradict) that no Fiji tertiary academic institution can seriously claim that they have a solid record of publishing academic books. Why they don't may be better understood by examining one moderately successful experience in the past - the Institute of Pacific Studies (IPS) at the University of the South Pacific (USP).

After USP was established in 1968 and especially in the 1970s, there was a stream of monographs and books authored by Pacific Islanders, churned out by USP's Institute of Pacific Studies, with the late Professor Ron Crocombe as a dynamic catalyst. While some may quibble about the quality of some of the output, at least those publications gave voice to numerous Pacific Islanders to 'tell their stories' to the world.

Necessary for the success of Crocombe's efforts were at least the following: (a) Professor Ron Crocombe was an eminent academic himself, recognized regionally and internationally; (b) he was not just a sympathetic guide to the authors, but also helped in the overall editing; (c) He employed adequately paid editors of good professional editing skills, (which none of the tertiary institutions currently do); (d) Crocombe received generous financial assistance from the USP management because of his personal stature and political clout; and (e) he had a well designed and planned program to expose authors right across the USP Pacific member countries, systematically covering the topics he thought impor-

tant to Pacific Studies.

Unfortunately, Crocombe’s conception of 'Pacific Islanders' did not include Indo-Fijians, with the rare exception of Dr. Ahmed Ali, who was politically influential at USP and with the Ratu Mara Government in Fiji. Few Indo-Fijian authors were ever published by IPS, despite the significance of their intellectual output which has far exceeded that of the narrowly defined 'Pacific Islanders'. I found this out personally when I attempted to interest IPS in a large consultancy report I had done in 1993 for the Vanuatu Government and World Bank (*Financing Issues in Vanuatu*), covering not just the financing issues but also educational outcomes, with a large volume of interesting statistics, still used by World Bank a decade later. The IPS editor then, an expatriate, informed me that it was 'not the kind of thing' they published. With my topic being the education system of Vanuatu, I have little doubt that it was racism against the author that was relevant, not the 'type of thing' of the content. The rise of academic platforms like Fiji Institute of Applied Studies and journals like *Fijian Studies* was partly because avenues for Indo-Fijians academics were denied by the 'establishments'.

Unfortunately for Pacific Islanders, with the departure of Professor Crocombe and changes of senior management and policy at USP,<sup>17</sup> the Institute of Pacific Studies was subsumed into another organization and its publishing activities withered away, with no senior academic to guide it and totally inadequate resources to support it. At USP, the flow of books by Pacific Islanders on Pacific topics became a trickle and eventually stopped.

Nevertheless, I suggest that potential authors can learn from the undoubted publishing success of Professor Ron Crocombe and ask themselves whether their academic institutions provide at least the following seven minimum components of the successful Crocombe experience:

- senior recognized academics who have the willingness and the time to assist and guide young authors in publishing;
- qualified editors to help attain minimum quality in the text;
- qualified book designers who can add value to any book through proper indexing and cover design;
- qualified typesetters to ensure a quality 'print-ready' output to go to the printers;
- ensure adequate financial assistance from the institution;

<sup>17</sup> These changes began with the arrival of Savenaca Siwatibau as Vice Chancellor; the same trend was continued by Vice Chancellor Rajesh Chandra from 2008.

- a systematic program to publish authors covering comprehensively areas of development that are necessary for Fiji’s development, with honest reports on their progress (or lack of it);
- adequate academic and financial reward by their employing institutions for publishing quality material.

I doubt if any of our academic tertiary institutions can confidently answer in the positive to all of the above. The USP record is worth examining.

**USP’s Record**

It is a pity that even the premier and well established academic institution like USP has lost recognized senior academics and qualified editors who are vital for a dynamic publications program. It seems that university management has had little concern for publishing quality material. Academic publishing KPIs are rarely mentioned or documented in their Strategic Plans or proactively monitored, and there is no comprehensive university wide plan for publishing by subject matter that is important for Fiji’s development, although the Strategic Plans do list a range of important subject matters.

Readers can draw their own conclusions from Table 1 derived from USP’s annual reports.

<b>Table 1: Research Output by USP Staff (2012-2016)</b>						
<b>Output</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Books	4	1	3	1	0	3
Book chapters	7	14	8	14	6.	35
Journal articles	191	162	197	152	177	169
(Source: USP Annual Report for 2016 and 2017)						

Even without any analysis of the quality of these books or book chapters, this is hardly a great record of improving excellence in international academic output, despite the existence of 'USP Press' and the frequent repetition by USP management of the mantra 'from great to excellent'. USP has given little priority, or simply has not been able to appoint the necessary quality staff who could publish successfully.

USP’s own data indicates clearly that despite the USP VC’s frequent claim of improving academic excellence, its own record of attracting and appointing senior academic staff is extremely poor. This is undoubtedly a large part of the explanation for the poor trends as shown in the previous table. The total number of professors at USP has declined from 21 in 2012 to a mere 14 in 2017 (Table 2). The Associate Professors

have also been at their lowest level for five years - hardly evidence of improving staff quality. I suspect that statistics on the output of the senior academic staff would show similar trends.

<b>Output</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
Professors	21	19	20	21	18	14
Associates Professors	22	31	24	19	22	18
Senior Lecturers	51	48	49	54	53	52
Total	94	98	93	94	93	84

(Source: USP Annual Report for 2016 and 2017)

The 2016 and 2017 Annual Reports provide USP's data on output by discipline areas, but the data is so mixed up that the reader cannot easily see how different Faculties are doing with their research output. The data and tables also bear little relation to what USP claims it wishes to achieve in its Strategic Plan for 2013 to 2018, showing that the plan is largely glorified rhetoric not backed by factual KPIs. What an indictment of the quality of USP management, a mirror of the increasing academic emptiness of the USP website over the last decade, largely reporting the activities of the management rather than the academic and research outputs of academic staff and students.

It may also seem to negate commonsense that USP management's criteria for academic reward for decades did not include publishing through USP channels, such as its through its flagship *Journal of Pacific Studies*.<sup>18</sup> International journal publications were always given greater weight even though the natural consequence was that authors preferred to publish internationally, and hence local USP publications received even less recognition - a vicious race to the bottom. The budding authors can ask themselves: do their own tertiary institutions adequately recognize and reward their academics for local publications?

One symptom of the failure of USP to address their academics' publishing needs was the success of a competing but privately funded medium of publishing, the Fiji Institute of Advanced Studies and its journal *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji*.<sup>19</sup> The associated academic entrepreneur has started yet another academic journal in the field

<sup>18</sup> I remember being on a USP Appeals Committee which with great difficulty managed to reverse USP management's negative treatment of excellent academic USP publications by Dr. TK Jayaraman.

<sup>19</sup> The catalyst for this was Dr. Ganesh Chand, assisted ironically by his academic friends and colleagues at USP and abroad.

of education - *The Journal of Pacific Education*. International observers must be wondering why such a journal was not based at The University of the South Pacific, which is often boasted of as being the 'premier academic institution' in the Pacific. In the vain hope of encouraging the Fiji public to value their academics (even a fraction of their devotion to rugby sevens stars), I previously published an article on this individual 'A rare academic entrepreneur: Dr Ganesh Chand' who was ironically removed as Vice Chancellor of the Fiji National University.<sup>20</sup>

I am of course assuming that there are potential authors who have the ability to produce work of sufficient quality that can be published by regional institutions. The tragedy is that good local academics, as soon as they establish their reputations, are attracted away to employment in Australia and NZ, or to well-paying regional institutions. They do not usually return even for professorial positions.

The outflow of quality academics will never end, for obvious reasons. Salaries and perks are at least three times more than at USP, FNU or UniFiji; research and publications support is considerably higher; family members and children have access to quality education, health and other facilities not available in Fiji; and employment in Australia and NZ is understandably seen to have far greater security and status than in Fiji.

With the continued emigration of good academics, Fiji tertiary institutions will keep facing a paucity of quality academics and authors, although a few committed and dedicated ones will remain, as some still do today, against the odds. It is also unfortunate that amongst those remaining, including some holding very senior positions at their universities, their private commercial interests take precedence over their academic pursuits, strangely tolerated by university managers because of their personal politics.

### **The Curses and Blessings of Small States**

Potential Fiji authors face what I call the paradox of 'the curses and blessings of small states'. A good academic's career suffers continuously because his or her services are in demand by the government, international (IMF, World Bank or Asian Development Bank), and regional (Forum Secretariat, SPC etc.) organizations, NGOs, and donors, if they are able to provide the quality usually provided by foreign consultants.

The 'blessings' are due to the deep sense of emotional satisfaction that academics get by serving their communities. This is not so easy to

<sup>20</sup> *The Fiji Times*, 12 October 2017.

obtain in large countries where academics are far more plentiful and thereby anonymous, unless they happen to be outstandingly brilliant.

Our former Fiji academics abroad know only too well the relative alienation that they face in large universities and countries, in total contrast to what our local deeply embedded and valued academics face. It is not surprising, therefore, to find many of our former Fiji academics return to Fiji in their twilight years in order to not just contribute but also to be appreciated by society in ways they have not enjoyed overseas. It is to their credit that academics like Professor Subramani, Professor Satendra Nandan, Dr. Tupeni Baba, Professor Brij Lal<sup>21</sup>, Dr. Padma Lal, and the many others have returned to Fiji to contribute. Such reverse flows need to be systematically encouraged by local Fiji academics and institutions as they can help to lift the academic standards in Fiji, in the same way as returning rugby players do to rugby standards in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

A critical challenge therefore for budding authors who intend to target the international academic market is to reach the right balance between work of international interest which requires extended work of intense effort subject to exacting standards, and work of local interest to governments and target communities, even if the work is possibly more important to their societies than international publications. Of course, the two need not be mutually exclusive, but the overlapping areas are usually quite minimal and the appropriate balance has to be struggled for by every individual.

Having reached the end of my working life (almost), I look back and conclude that my own personal choice was a bit too much towards local relevance because of my passionate commitment to Fiji where social appreciation is readily given and felt by the author. I could have done more towards international relevance where appreciation is usually anonymous and certainly not felt on a day to day basis. But that judgment is made in hindsight.

Each author has to reach his or her own personal choice of balance between international and local relevance, depending on their personal objectives in publishing and their personal objectives in their life work.

### **The Third Curse of Publishing in Small States: Lack of Recognition**

Fiji academics publishing locally with their university publications such as at USP, FNU or UniFiji face another 'curse of publishing in small

<sup>21</sup> Professor Brij Lal and his wife Dr. Padma Lal, returned to Fiji in late 2000's but were exiled in 2009 by the military regime; they are still a persona non grata on account of 'threat to national security'.

states': lack of international recognition. Fiji academic institutions and academics, whatever their managements' claims of international accreditation, simply do not have status' in the regional universities of Australia and NZ, either of their own personal positions or their publications.

It is unfortunately the case that some internationally successful former Fiji academics have little regard for even the most senior academic positions in Fiji, whether at USP, FNU or UniFiji. A typical response of some such academics established abroad when informed of professorial vacancies at USP was that they preferred to be lecturers at any Australian or NZ university rather than professors at USP. While that might be expected given that USP professors earned far less than university lecturers in Australia or NZ, it is demoralizing for those who remain in Fiji because of their commitments to their country of birth.

Another negative of staying local is that the publications of the 'recognized' academics abroad, even those of former Fiji citizens, all too easily and often deliberately leave out the many writings of the local academics whose work may be even assiduously mined by the international academics. This can be incredibly galling and even depressing for local academics for several reasons: local academics are the ones working at the 'coal face' of the research area; they may be perpetually running the risk of government censure and punishment especially if they are authors critical of government policy. Some Fiji academics have experienced this all too often after every military coup, but especially after the 2006 coup when media censorship (including self-censorship) was endemic. Almost always, the local academics' work is avidly and carefully read by the recognized international academics before they write up their own sanitized versions, often from the safety and security of their comfortable tenures in Canberra, Wellington or other metropolitan center where they are very profitably employed, compared to the poorly paid and stressed out Fiji academics whose work they use.

Quite often the academics publishing from the metropolises deliberately exclude the local authors from their list of references or bibliography, thereby presenting to the world the illusion that the relevant 'experts' are only those referenced in the metropolitan publications, including themselves who are usually more than amply referred to. International academia also unfortunately have 'imperialist' or 'colonizing' dimensions where local academics are marginalized or removed from the metropolitan bodies of knowledge about the very local political economy which the metropolitan authors are writing about, or making their living from. I have too many personal examples of such demoralizing treatment by Australian and NZ academics (some former Fiji citizens) to write about

here.<sup>22</sup>

There is also unfortunately the workings of 'normal science', a concept popularized by Kuhn, whereby the 'in-group' decide who are the experts to be cited, what topics are to be researched, what methodology is to be used, what qualifies as answers, and where they may be published.

### Fostering Australian and NZ support

Local Fiji academics need to take advantage of the large number of Fiji academics and former Fiji citizens who are now successfully employed in universities and other tertiary institutions in Australia and NZ. They, of course, have the great advantage of access to financial, editing and publishing resources not available to Fiji tertiary institutions.

Some overseas tertiary institutions such as Australian National University used to have strong links with USP academics whose work was published via ANU channels. Unfortunately, these were not systematic links; they weakened even further when Pacific Studies was downgraded at ANU. The weakness of this link was that it was based on personal networks; if an academic or potential publisher was not part of this personal network, for whatever reason, he would not be found in ANU publications.

The tragedy is that there is little evidence that the former Fiji academics now successfully ensconced in Australian, NZ and other universities abroad make any serious attempt to encourage academics who remain behind in Fiji, let alone in any systematic way. I issue this challenge to these successful academics and former Fiji citizens to go out of their way to mentor and build up Fiji's academics with their academic publications.

At the same time I suggest that academics in Fiji need to build up formal links with academics abroad so that the latter's resources can be better used for publishing, especially if senior academics abroad can also act as 'mentors' for the locals. This can also be a 'Win-Win' situation as Fiji academics abroad can drawn upon the continuing first hand knowledge and experience that Fiji academics have of the developments taking place locally, in ways that overseas Fiji academics usually do not, despite the pervasiveness of social media and the internet.

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<sup>22</sup> Two examples I can give are of an editor of a prominent ANU academic publication (*Pacific Economic Bulletin*) and an editor of a NZ university publication (*Pacific Scoop*), both of whom refused to reference my article they had themselves gladly published in their own journals, on the themes they were later writing about. It would not be unfair to state that these metropolitan writers are parasites on the local writers.

I would suggest that it would be useful if Fiji academics mounted an international conference in Fiji bringing together former Fiji academics now working abroad to examine all the possibilities of co-operation which can add value to the publications of Fiji academic staff and themselves in a fair and transparent fashion (see next section).

### Publishing through Conferences

Even if budding Fiji authors do not have any substantial personal pieces of work that can be published as a book, they must not forget the great potential of relevant national or regional conferences to bring together similar academics and professionals whose *combined* contributions can result in solid book publications. It has always fascinated me that there has been an unending series of conferences in Australia or NZ in which the majority of the contributors have been Pacific Islanders but the credit of the resulting publication has gone to the Australian or NZ institution, often without the involvement of Pacific editors.

Academics who are employed by tertiary institutions can easily interest regional and international organizations in activities in their area of interest to fund such conferences, with the potential of leading to solid academic publications of great use to the organizations, government ministries and the general public who wish to make policy decisions based on hard data and policy presentations.

USP has hosted many such conferences, some of which have not resulted in any solid publication for a variety of reasons while some have, both types being experienced by me personally. In 1988, for instance, I was Co-Chairman with Dr. Rajesh Chandra of a regional conference on industrialization<sup>23</sup> organized by the then School of Social and Economic Development, now the Faculty of Business and Economics. It was well attended and the papers were supposed to be published as a book which unfortunately never eventuated. That was a good opportunity missed.

There was a major improvement in 2009, however, when the United Nations Fund for Population Development (UNFPA) provided some F\$400,000 to USP to co-host a regional conference on population and development. The Planning Committee comprised both senior USP and UNFPA staff<sup>24</sup> and an extremely successful conference was held

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<sup>23</sup> I agreed to the topic which was the subject of Dr. Chandra's PhD thesis.

<sup>24</sup> The Planning Committee was chaired by Professor Wadan Narsey. Also from USP were Professor Biman Prasad, and Kesaia Seniloli, UNFPA members were Dr. Annette Robertson and Eduard Jongstra.

from 23 to 25 November 2009, with solid, policy oriented papers delivered by dozens of experts. A solid publication was put together, edited by Wadan Narsey, Annette Sachs Robertson, Biman Prasad, Kesaia Seniloli and Eduard Jongstra. Technical editing assistance<sup>25</sup> and typesetting services were also funded by UNFPA, and an excellent quality publication and teaching and learning resource was produced: *Population and Development in the Pacific Islands: accelerating the ICPD Programme of Action at 15* (UNFPA and USP, 2009).

What budding authors should note is that the publication (freely available on the Internet) gave a fantastic opportunity for academics from USP, FIT/FSM (later FNU) and UniFiji to not only contribute as authors, but to do so alongside well established regional academics, senior professionals and bureaucrats from all the major governments, ministries, reserve banks and institutions, in wide ranging population and development fields.<sup>26</sup> It produced an excellent output, both academically and in physical appearance, and is which a valuable resource now for students and teachers in this area.

Such a publication rested on the confidence of an international organization (UNFPA) that the institution (USP in this case) and its academics could successfully organize a major conference attended by regional experts giving quality papers. That confidence enabled the international institution to make available the required funds not just to run the conference (with all the attendant costs) but also the resources to assist in the editing and the technical production of the resulting report.

### **Publishing on Special Themes**

Academics in Fiji ought to be aware of the possibilities in bringing together academics, local and expatriate, who can write on special themes considered important at the time. Two publications on the theme '2014 Elections' are worth examining in greater detail for the lessons they contain: the first is a Special Edition of the *Journal of Pacific Studies*, edited by Vijay Naidu and Sandra Tarte, on which I have written elsewhere; the second is an ANU book in their Pacific Series, *The People Have Spoken*, edited by Steven Ratuva and Stephanie Lawson (2016).

For both of these publications, readers might wish to explore their choices of contributors, and the well-known authors they choose to leave

<sup>25</sup> The company WordWorks was hired, with inputs from editors Seona Smiles and Barbara Hauofa.

<sup>26</sup> This 400 page publication can be downloaded from the USP archive repository.

out, in the context of their overall conclusions about the 2014 Elections.<sup>27</sup> Fiji academics cannot publish optimally if they are excluded by editors for reasons which are not purely academic.

Of course, the ANU publication brings credit to and strengthens the academic reputation of ANU. Yet there is no reason why a Fiji academic institution could not have hosted such special publications, given that there is no shortage of local academics and colleagues abroad.

Of course, it is taken for granted that the academics and the technical people from the funding organizations are able to identify themes which are valuable in themselves and of interest to all the stakeholders. A future conference of Fiji and regional academics could usefully explore what might be future themes for producing solid academic books and perhaps draw up a five year plan so that long term planning can take place. There are many themes which are obvious.

The following themes come to mind readily: economic growth strategy and fair distribution of benefits, food security, regional agreements, sports, entrepreneurship, environment protection, regional geopolitics, roles of foreign donors, constitutions and electoral systems, corruption and good governance, roles of religion and culture, and climate change. There are many more themes relevant to Fiji and the Pacific, which have not been explored through regional or national conferences. Interested academics, in collaboration with interested international and regional organizations might wish to brain-storm to see what national conferences can be held on what themes, and which can result in solid publications for academics and professionals from government and other NGOs, of use to policy makers.

### **Publishing through NGOs**

Budding authors need to keep in mind that there are some active Non-Government Organizations, donors and international organizations which do considerable developmental work in Fiji and the Pacific, have good external funding, and are willing to fund initiatives which can facilitate quality publications that add value to the work they do. I provide one example – that of a monograph co-published by ECREA and USP, but there are more.

In 2005, ECREA sought my services to examine the failures of the Wages Councils to bring about any major improvement in real wages of

<sup>27</sup> I have written on my blog (NarseyOnFiji) about the biases in the JPS Special Edition on the 2014 Elections (Narsey, 2017).

workers not covered by the unions. The governments at the time and the ministers for labour gave me full access to the Ministry of Labour files which had the records of Wages Councils meetings for thirty years. These were analyzed, the report written up for ECREA and the resulting monograph (*Just Wages for Fiji: lifting workers out of poverty*) was launched at USP by the then Vice President of Fiji, the late Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi. Accepted by the government then, it led to the reorganization of the Wages Councils, with Father Kevin Barr eventually appointed by the Bainimarama Government to lead the reforms.

Authors should note that such a publication was funded by an NGO which was strapped for funds. This meant that for the modest fee received the author had to do every bit of the work required: analyzing the data, writing the report, doing the pre-press work (type-setting, cover design, obtaining USP cataloguing entry which was acceptable internationally), and publication (ensuring quality printing and delivery).<sup>28</sup> I suspect that no external consultant would provide this range of services for such a moderate fee.

There are many Fiji NGOs which receive far more generous funding from donors. They ought to be amenable to allocating funds to academics who can deliver quality research outputs which can be converted into monographs. But academics have to take the initiative and discuss the possibilities with NGOs and potential donors who can fund the costs.

### **Publishing with Government**

One of the most valuable contributions that academics can make in society is to research solid development topics, analyze hard data to obtain relevant statistics, write and publish easy to read reports with practical policy recommendations, and run workshops which disseminate the findings to the stakeholders in society. I call this the 'virtuous cycle' for data providers and academics who genuinely care about the wise and productive use of taxpayers' money for academic research that does not just bolster the academic status of the author while remaining useless on shelves gathering dust (in the old days) or lost in the virtual world electronic databases and the Internet

I have engaged in all these activities with the Fiji Bureau of Statistics using their incredibly costly national surveys of households such as Household Income and Expenditure Surveys or Household Employment and Unemployment Surveys. These studies have been made possible be-

<sup>28</sup> I suspect that few academics at USP or the other tertiary institutions have single-handedly done all such work.

cause there are donors such as AusAID or NZAid which were willing to fund consultancies that could facilitate rigorous data analysis, writing the resulting reports, and providing policy recommendations in easy to read English and tables, while producing print ready materials.

My personal published outputs in this area have had some bearing on the Fiji governments' development and social policies on poverty and income distribution, rural development, unemployment, food security, gender equality in all the areas of concern, and many others, of interest to governments, the public and donors. While I prepared the detailed intellectual content into print ready format, the official Bureau Reports were printed by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics itself, often using donor funding. Some associated monographs were printed at the expense of the Department of Economics of USP or other donors.

Without doubt, USP management used to place great value on this involvement with government and the resulting outputs. A succession of USP Vice Chancellors (including the current one) and senior management used to launch the official reports and monographs, while the workshops, attended by many government ministries, donors and NGOs, used to be opened by major donors like AusAID and senior management of universities, both USP and FNU.<sup>29</sup>

Such publications by academics gained great goodwill with the Fiji government which provides the largest proportion of USP's funding. The only exception in my personal experience was the Bainimarama government's refusal to publish a report which I had completed for the Fiji Bureau of Statistics based on an FBS 2011 Employment and Unemployment Survey, and was print-ready in 2013.<sup>30</sup> That Report has still not been published to date.

I would urge academics who have the inclination to do serious quantitative research, to work with the massive amounts of relevant data that government ministries (including the Fiji Bureau of Statistics) have, to produce and publish work which would be of great use not only to the government of the day, but also a whole range of social organizations whose policies need informing by hard data.

The major challenges such work would face would be: obtaining

<sup>29</sup> A few videos of these launchings are on YouTube. The generous words of praise are somewhat ironic now given that not too long after, I was asked by the USP management to resign.

<sup>30</sup> This publication was titled *Fiji women and men at work and leisure*. It, unfortunately, had a very small number of results on employment and real wages which did not reflect well on the Bainimarama Government's performance upto 2011.

access to the data, conducting the necessary sound analysis, writing good easy-to-read reports with appropriate policy recommendations, and getting such work properly and professionally edited. Of course, obtaining university acknowledgement of the value of such work and reflecting that in the academics annual KPIs and rewards, would help considerably.

Academics might wish to note that most Government departments and ministries (and surprisingly even our own universities<sup>31</sup>) are either outsourcing consultancy services to outside consultants using their own internal budgets, or they are using very generous donor funding which typically go towards foreign consultants rather than our own academics who are denied the opportunity to develop their own expertise. The irony is that the foreign consultants often rely on local experts who are rarely acknowledged or recompensed, as I have found.

**Community Education**

While the word 'publishing' usually refers to academic publications, I personally have felt that publishing for community education through daily newspapers or business journals has been one of the most long-lasting and satisfying academic contributions I have made over the last thirty years. Like any academic journal or published hardcopy books, newspaper archives are physically on record for ever, even if not too accessible for the earlier issues. But increasingly, one can access most of the recent publications though the internet, and hence they are available to the world also. I am in the process of publishing all my community education articles and presentations in book form, both print and eBooks, not just to maximize their use by the public but also for the record, . They will comprise four volumes I have titled *Fiji Developing*.<sup>32</sup> To place them in context, I quote from my own Preface: 'It is a pity that many universities (including The University of the South Pacific) do not treat community education writings on par with "academic" articles, even though serving their communities is usually explicitly stated in their Mission and Vision statements'. I also quote from the late Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi's earlier words which I am using as a foreword to the four volumes:

I believe the articles and essays will find a ready following with the ordinary men, women and children of Fiji. It is about them. How they might, with the assistance of larger players as the State, find a niche in an increasingly competitive open market.

<sup>31</sup> USP for instance appears to be spending around \$5 million annually on outside consultants.

<sup>32</sup> The title is intended to convey the idea that Fiji is a work in progress.

And it is in large part about what roles they might or can play in a country that has to adapt in some manner or form to a globalized world. ... Any person in a position of some influence or authority will welcome it as throwing much needed light on a variety of issues that will remain current for quite some time. .. For that reason, the publication will become a convenient and handy reference for some time to come.

Such articles reach the ordinary people, the very taxpayers who fund governments and universities.

Potential authors of newspaper articles might wish to note the enormous volume that thirty years of sustained writing by just one person can accumulate to, as Table 3 clearly shows.

**Table 3: 30 Years of Wadan Narsey's Community Education Writing**

	Title	No. of Articles	Pages	Words
Volume 1	Growing the Fiji Economy	143	606	258,000
Volume 2	A Fair Go For All Fiji	110	425	150,000
Volume 3	A Decent Fiji Society	61	282	102,500
Volume 4	Fiji's Political Meanderings	117	426	159,000
	Total	431	1739	669,500

With each article on average taking roughly a week to research and write, these four volumes represent about 8 years of equivalent full-time researching and writing. While some articles were written over a few days, there were many based on months of quantitative analysis with the findings having to be distilled into 800 word newspaper articles that newspapers demand, often no easy task. With most PhD theses usually of about 80,000 words, these collections of newspaper articles are the equivalent of about 8 PhDs.

Unfortunately, I did not deliberately plan the overall content of all these writings which cover economics, social and political issues. But by coincidence, I was able to divide my two first two volumes on economics into the two great challenges faced by all economies globally - growing the economy and fairly distributing the resulting benefits. The detailed content of the first volume covers growth strategies and entrepreneurship, land and agriculture, money and banking, government budgets, government regulation of the economy, international relations, rugby, the economic costs of coups and the value of objective official data and auditing. Volume 2 covers the need to be fair to workers, women, children, savers, pensioners, education, health, USP, media and environment. To make

these two volumes more useful for students and teachers, I have gone to the trouble of ensuring that each reading has 'key words' which are linked to the comprehensive index. Each volume has a glossary of specialist economics terms, a glossary of common Fiji expressions, a list of acronyms and abbreviations popularly used in Fiji and a list of past governments and their political parties- all of use to international readers as well as Fiji students and teachers. At the end of each reading is a set of 'student/teacher questions' to widen the scope of the reading and, where possible, bring the issue up to current times. There is also an annex of key statistics that give a broad brush picture of the evolution of the Fiji economy since 1970.

Volume 3 covers my writings on 'A Decent Fiji Society' and the many contentious social areas where there has been so much conflict and disagreement over the years, some holding back Fiji's development: ethnicity and racism, culture, religion, social accountability, and our terrible vices such as violence against women and children. There are also sections on sports and a few of our 'good people' who have enriched my life and, I believe, of Fiji at large.

Volume 4 covers my writings on the last thirty years of 'Fiji's Political Meanderings' which have proved so destructive of the economy and people's standards of living: population changes, the destructive party politics, constitutions and charters, electoral systems, media censorship, the 2014 Elections, and what I can now call 'fake democracy'.

I have described the content of these four volumes to illustrate how 'applied' social science community education can be. It also illustrates clearly how an expert discipline (in my case, economics) can also have multi-disciplinary frameworks for their research and writing, particularly in critically important and inter-related fields of social science (politics, sociology, psychology, law and many others). I am self-publishing these works since I have no employing institution to fall back on for support. I also have no desire to approach academic institutions in Fiji (which would be reluctant to publish my works, in any case) or institutions abroad whose priorities do not include publishing the work of retiring community-oriented academics from Fiji.

It is my hope that a whole new generation of academics, teachers, students and journalists can make use of these 500 plus articles. While I believe that much of the content is still relevant, readers, teachers and students do not have to agree with my views. What is more important perhaps is the approach taken in addressing some major problem or issues. The student may easily write similar articles with opposite views.

Early career academics starting out might wish to think more about

the exact content of what they write for newspapers so that they cover their particular fields in some systematic manner, instead of just responding the 'current issues' as I have done over the last thirty years. It is only by good fortune rather than planning, that my economics writings have covered most areas of theoretical interest to economists and Fiji policy makers, although some gaps clearly remain. May I issue a challenge to Fiji teachers and students to identify the gaps which they or others can fill in future?

I emphasize that that most academics do not appreciate that writing simply for the public to understand is not just far more difficult than writing an academic paper, but it also improves the academic's writing skills.

I remind university managements that the region's taxpayers could not care less about 90 percent of the academics' articles in journals, most of which are never read by university stakeholders. But they do care about what academics write in the public domain which they can understand, especially if these are about complex public policy issues which politicians rarely explain clearly.

It is somewhat of a pity that the Fiji newspapers have not taken up my suggestion a few years ago that they ought to encourage more academics to write and convey their specialist knowledge for the general public, by giving out awards annually in all the different fields of interest to the public. This could be a win-win situation for not just for the media and the contributing academics, but also for the universities who would be fulfilling in a real way their 'Mission and Vision' statements of commitment to their communities.

### **Publishing for profit**

Printing for private profit has been one of my least successful ventures and I would not recommend this to budding young authors unless they are prepared to overcome some of the massive logistical hurdles which I discovered some ten years ago.

A decade ago, after I had resigned temporarily from USP for medical reasons, I tried to go into publishing textbooks for schools, beginning with a collection of my newspaper articles (*To Level the Playing Field*). It was a failure for many reasons which are still relevant today. First, the author will personally need to do all the intellectual and editing work, as well as typesetting, cover design and getting the work to print-ready form. Second, there is a serious likelihood of personal financial losses. The unit costs of producing such books in Fiji are not particularly high - perhaps around twenty to thirty dollars for print runs of more than a thousand for

600 page books. The problems come after the printing, as I found recently in trying to decide on the print runs for my pending four volumes of *Fiji Developing*. Retailers are reluctant to pay a fair price even if they agree to sell (which most don't, for various reasons), they set the margins too high, making the publication out of reach of Fiji buyers. Retailers also do not want to hold stocks and authors themselves may have to hold unsold books for which they have already paid the printers.

Authors need to start from the buyers' end. What price are buyers willing to pay for books in a society where reading print books is increasingly going out of favour? Retailers such as Motibhai's and Tappoos demand an incredibly high mark-up which can be up to 100 percent, making a mockery of the relative value of the intellectual work. Even USP Book Centre, which has been subject to commercialization pressures from USP management, sets a markup of at least 40%. None of the retailers in Fiji will agree to keep more than a few dozen books in stock, which means that the author has to keep all unsold books. As a rough guide (and it all depends on unit costs and the price received by the author after retailer margins), if the author does not sell more than 50 percent of the print run, then the author will make a loss. The author might reach the decision to simply print the minimum number which the author confidently thinks will be bought by institutions and interested buyers.

It is no wonder that many authors today are turning to eBooks which have none of the financial nightmares that print books have. They could equally make them freely available on the Internet. But even there, there remains the strange problem that if the work is made free for download, potential buyers can think that it is not 'worth it'. People value what they pay a price for!

It is unfortunate that Fiji does not have dedicated book shops, not even at universities, which considers the encouragement of reading just as important as making a profit. Yet university governing councils could address this problem, if they so wished and if they were enlightened enough, by ensuring that they do not force their book shops to work as pure commercial enterprises.

In the 1990's the Fiji Institute of Applied Studies had established a bookshop in Raiwai, Suva for making books accessible and encourage reading. The shop attracted a number of academics, who visited the shop regularly for the lunch-time discussions. But the shop failed to earn enough to cover the costs, leading to the closure of the shop in a year. The stock from the shop eventually became part of the first batch of books for the library of the newly established University of Fiji in 2005. There also used to be Lai's Bookshop which was privately run, but eventually col-

lapsed because of a lack of demand.

It would be useful if other academics who have gone into publishing their own works would share their experiences with young authors.

### **Publishing on Blogs**

Early career academics might want to explore more the whole area of publishing through the internet, under their own names, whether through personal blogs or Facebook or other media. These 'publications' are, of course, recorded for posterity and are freely available to the entire world.

I began my own personal blog, *NarseyOnFiji*, during that dark period in Fiji's history (2011 to 2014) when the military government tightened its hold on the media through its control of the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) and media censorship and intimidation. I soon realized that the blog was being widely read by students and researchers in Fiji and globally. It was then an easy next step to put most of my writings on it, suitably catalogued by special topics.

The free Wordpress platform provides many advantages to authors such as 'ready-made' themes and structures for the blog and index systems. *NarseyOnFiji* for instance not only lists the latest posts, but allows 'pages' which represent broad themes, year of writing, date of publication, key words associated with each post, and even the most important topics in the accumulated writings, by the size of words listed by the blog. Some of these can be set up by the author, and some are done automatically. An avenue which I have explored recently but not taken advantage of is the ability that the Wordpress platform provides to authors to sell their writings for a living, either as eBooks or printed books, through embedded 'Buy Now' buttons.

I emphasize that authors must publish 'under their own names' as there must be personal accountability for whatever is posted. Sadly, this is totally absent in much of the anonymous, often cowardly and sometimes obscene postings that go on many blog-sites, all encouraged by the anonymity allowed to authors by some blogsites. Racism thrives where there is no personal accountability.

### **Conclusion**

This autobiographical account of my publishing has tried to cover not just my personal publishing 'trials and tribulations' but to outline what I see as the many opportunities available to Fiji academics, some I have availed of and some missed totally for various reasons I outline.

I have tried to emphasize for young academics the following: making a deliberate personal choice between local community relevance and international academic recognition; obtaining employer co-operation to facilitate publishing locally and internationally; trying to encourage academic mentors both locally and from abroad; trying to encourage academic institutions to provide all the technical assistance needed to create a sustained record in publishing; encouraging linkages with international academics, especially former Fiji academics to collaborate with local academics in research and conference programs; encourage collaboration and linkages with governments, NGOs, international organizations, regional organizations and international universities.

Above all, young academics need to keep in mind the dedication, discipline and hard work needed to ensure that at the end of one's academic life, there will be some physical record, some hard tangible evidence, of an academic life well spent, with meaningful commitment to one's community and international academia, in whatever proportion that is personally chosen. It is there for future academics to critique and to build upon for future generations.

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