

Distance Education in Asia and the Pacific:

SOUTH PACIFIC (THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC):

Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

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The focus of this paper is wholly on USP and the distance education which it has developed to serve twelve Pacific countries lying within the area extending approximately W. 155° - E. 150° longitude, S. 25° - N. 17° latitude. These are the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Western Samoa.

USP is a regional university and, as such, a type rare in the international community. It is regional not just in outlook, programmes or staff but in its operational structure: financial, physical, political and academic. USP is owned by twelve Pacific countries which, as proprietors, exercise collective governance.

The point to be made at the outset, therefore, is that USP does not only exist, like all institutions, within a broader, regional context; it is, more importantly, the region's planned creation, an institution *of* it, as a legally established entity.

USP, after two years of formal operation, was established by Royal Charter in March 1970 in accordance with the wishes of eleven island states, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati and Tuvalu (formerly Gilbert and Ellice Islands), Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands (formerly British Solomon Islands Protectorate), Tokelau, Tonga, Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides) and Western Samoa. In 1991, the Marshall Islands joined the USP consortium, thus extending the University's membership to twelve countries. The major part of its recurrent budget is provided by its twelve regional proprietors. It maintains two Campuses (in Fiji and Western Samoa), two Complexes (in Vanuatu and Tonga), and ten in-country Extension Centres. The land and these physical facilities are provided to the regional entity by each of the respective member governments.

Its student body is largely regional - Polynesian, Melanesian, Micronesian and Indian - and, in the main, determined by government scholarship systems. By 1985, 60% of its staff were regional citizens.

From its inception, the University was conceived as a dual-mode teacher and, as such, has pioneered in the field of distance education delivery.

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REGIONAL CONTEXT

All member countries, with the exception of the Republic of Nauru, have aid-dependent or at least aid-augmented economies. Sources, levels and applications of bi-lateral aid vary from country to country and even from time to time.

TABLE 1: Income and Percentage (%) Education Expenditure

Member State	GDP per capita (A\$)	Education % of Budget 1990
Fiji	2440	16.2
Solomon Islands	790	7.2
Western Samoa	901	11.0
Vanuatu	1266	20.0
Tonga	865	17.9
Kiribati	489	18.4
Cook Islands	1822	10.0
Nauru	n.a.	7.0
Tuvalu	450	16.8
Niue	1490	9.0
Tokelau	n.a.	22.3

Source for Column 1: *South Pacific Economies Statistical Summary*. The dates for GDP range from 1983 to 1986.

It is not possible, on the basis of publicly available data, to separate out the distance education percentage of the respective national budgets from their overall education expenditure. The percentage Education Vote does include each country's contribution to the USP recurrent budget, but this in turn includes undifferentiated funding for the aggregated FTES of both on-campus and distance students. Moreover, separate from some of the percentages cited in some countries, there is varying and indirect external support of distance education by way of bi-lateral aid (funding for local tutors, third country scholarships and equipment); employer assistance with fees; and professional promotion incentives.

TABLE 2: Current Development at Senior Secondary School Level

Member State	Schools with Form 6 (yr 12)	Schools with Form 7 (yr 13)
Fiji	82	28
Solomon Islands	4	-
Western Samoa	18	1 (1)
Vanuatu	2	1 (2)
Tonga	14	2
Kiribati	3	1 (3)
Cook Islands	3	1 (3)
Nauru	1 (4)	-
Tuvalu	-	-
Niue	-	-
Tokelau	-	-

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1. Offered by National University of Samoa, using some adapted USP Extension materials
2. USP Extension Programme based at USP Extension Centre
3. USP Extension Programme based in secondary school
4. Available, but no students enrolled in 1991

Tables 1 and 2: 1989 Data from *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific*

TABLE 3: Ethnic Composition by Region

	Population (000)	Major Ethnic Group(s)	Density Pop. Per Km ²
Fiji	727	Melanesian, Indian	39
Solomon Islands	314	Melanesian	10
Western Samoa	163	Polynesian	53
Vanuatu	154.7	Melanesian	9
Tonga	103	Polynesian	146
Kiribati	68	Micronesian	88
Cook Islands	17.9	Polynesian	74
Nauru	8.8	Micronesian	387
Tuvalu	9	Polynesian	283
Niue	2	Polynesian	10
Tokelau	1.6	Polynesian	

TABLE 4: Life Expectancy Rate by Country

	Live Births per 1000	Deaths per 1000	Infant mortality	Annual growth %
Fiji	25.9	5.0	26.0	1.1
Solomon Islands	43.8	-	72.0	3.3
Western Samoa	32.8	7.0	49.0	0.6
(figures only for Samoa)				
Vanuatu	40	7.5	53.0	3.3
Tonga	30.4	7.2	-	3.9
Kiribati	32.9	12.9	107.0	- 0.3
Cook Islands	23.7	4.9	24.7	1.1
Nauru	-	-	-	1.5*
Tuvalu	-	-	-	12.5(1989/p)
Niue	25.2 (1988)	6.4 (1988)	-	11.3 (1989)
Tokelau	-	-	-	-

* Figure taken from United Nations Population Chart 1990 (revised)

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TABLE 5: 1990 Data from United Nations Population Chart

	Life Expectancy at birth	Pop % 0 - 4	Pop % 65+
Melanesia (includes Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu)	46	15	3
Micronesia (includes Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru)	65	12	4
Polynesia (includes Cook Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Western Samoa, Niue, Tokelau)	71	15	4

The linguistic profile of the USP region is complex. The estimated number of languages in current use is approximately 265.

Cook Islands - The students are generally bilingual, speaking Cook Islands Maori and English. (Cook Islands people hold New Zealand citizenship.) Schools are taught in both languages.

Fiji - The Bauan dialect is the most widely used of the Fijian tongues. The majority of Indians speak Hindi. English is the official language, however.

Kiribati - English is the language of official communication but the Kiribati language, a Micronesian dialect, is the lingua franca.

Marshall Islands - Marshallese is the official language, belonging to the Malayo-Polynesian language family. Quite distinct or different dialects are spoken on different islands. English, because of United States administration, is widely spoken also.

Nauru - Nauruan is the local language, widely spoken. As a written language, it has lost its currency. English is used for all written communication.

Niue - Niue students are generally bilingual, speaking Niuean (which is a Polynesian language closely related to Tongan and Samoan) and English (because of close ties with New Zealand and their dual-citizenship).

Solomon Islands - Although English is the official language, the lingua franca is Pidgin. Approximately 87 different dialects are spoken. There is no common vernacular.

Tokelau - Tokelauans speak a language similar to Samoan and Tuvaluan. English is taught as a second language.

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Tonga - Tongan, universally spoken, is a dialect of Polynesian. English is also spoken generally as a second language.

Tuvalu - Tuvaluan is a Polynesian tongue, similar to Samoan. On the island of Nui, a Gilbertese dialect is spoken. English is also used.

Vanuatu - The national language is Bislama, Vanuatu Pidgin. The official languages are Bislama, English and French. It is estimated, however, that approximately 115 languages are spoken in Vanuatu. Post primary schools are Anglophone or Francophone.

Western Samoa - The national language is Samoan, a Polynesian tongue. Although English is widely spoken and the official language in the Public Service and commercial sections, rural and older Samoans do not usually speak it well.

The education systems of USP's twelve member countries are generally separate, different and autonomous. Preceding a brief outline of each, however, some random points of interest can be made as follows:

The education systems tend to reflect colonial/missionary history. This means that a British derived model is prevalent; that Nauru, Vanuatu and the Marshall islands are rendered unique, in different ways, within the consortium of countries.

The Marshall Islands for historical reasons will be the sole provider to USP of students educated within a North American model (Grades one through twelve, curricula and standards, and a September - June teaching year). Vanuatu, once governed by both Britain and France, administers two quite separate education systems : an English-based model and a French-based model. Nauru, from former association with Australia as one of its Trustees, alone within the region follows the State of Victoria curriculum and assessment.

Some member countries' systems have had common external assessments such as the New Zealand School Certificate Examination (Form five or Year eleven), and the New Zealand University Entrance Examination (Form six or Year twelve). Some currently share subscription to the New Zealand Bursary Programme (Form seven or Year thirteen).

Since the abolition of the University Entrance Examination within New Zealand, countries which formerly used it have adopted either the replacement Sixth Form Certificate model or the Pacific Senior School Certificate, an assessment designed specifically for the region's schools. Fiji as one exception has developed its own National Sixth Form assessment (the Fiji Leaving Certificate).

The South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) has been established as a regional body, providing professional consultancies to governments on assessment matters and overall standards monitoring/moderation for the south and central Pacific.

In Fiji, education is not compulsory, but 98% of primary age children attend school. Education is free or partly free, with remission of fees for low income families. In 1985, there were 668 primary schools, 139 secondary schools and 42 technical/vocational institutions. The majority of schools are government supported in some way but are committee-run, not state schools. Tertiary institutions include the Fiji Institute of

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Technology, the Fiji School of Medicine, the Pacific Theological College, the Fiji College of Agriculture, Fulton Missionary Teachers College, Fiji School of Nursing, Fiji College of Advanced Education, Lautoka Teachers College, the School of Maritime Studies and the Telecommunications Training Centre.

In the Solomon Islands, approximately two-thirds of children have access to schooling. There are 423 primary schools run by Provincial Assemblies and fifty-four run by the churches. Provincial Secondary Schools, of which there are twelve, offer vocational training; National Secondary Schools, of which there are eight, offer academic training (in four this extends to Form six). Tertiary institutions include the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, the Honiara Technical Institute and the Telecommunications Training Centre.

In Western Samoa, a tripartite system of primary, intermediate and secondary schools operates in Western Samoa. Instruction within the primary school is given in Samoan. Tertiary institutions include the Technical Institute, the Primary Teachers College, the Secondary Teachers College and the National University of Samoa. The last provides the only local Form seven or Year thirteen education and also offers degree programmes.

In Vanuatu, in 1984, there were 140 primary and seven secondary schools (English), and 104 primary and three secondary schools (French). The national language, however, is Bislama/Bichelamar. Tertiary institutions include a School of Nursing, and an Agriculture College. A Teachers Education Centre within the Vanuatu Institute of Education provides training for primary school teachers, using both English and French as the media of instruction. Secondary teachers are trained overseas. The Vanuatu Technical Institute is predominantly a French-language institution.

Tonga's education is compulsory at primary level and is provided free between the ages of six to fourteen. Primary education has been compulsory in Tonga since 1876. Of the 118 primary schools (1986), 100 are government schools. Tertiary institutions include the Institute for Vocational Education and Training, the Maritime Polytechnical Institute, the Teachers College, Queen Salote School of Nursing, the Tonga Police Training School, Sia'atoutai and Pierson Theological Colleges, Mango Agriculture College, a Rural Training Centre for men and a Technical College for women. The Atenisi Institute confers degrees.

In Kiribati, government policy is the provision of compulsory and free education from Classes One through Seven (primary). There are 110 government primary schools and six secondary schools (three of which offer Form Six and one of which offers Form Seven). Tertiary institutions include the Tarawa Teachers College, Tarawa Technical Institute, a Marine Training School and a Theological College.

On Cook Islands, education has been compulsory and free between the ages of six to fifteen since 1966. Schools use both English and Maori as the language of instruction. There are thirty-eight schools, including nine colleges, twenty-six primary schools and a Teachers College. Institutions are government, Roman Catholic and Seventh-day Adventist Mission operated.

In Nauru, education is compulsory and free between the ages of six to sixteen. Government schools include five infant schools, two primary and one secondary. Church schools number one of each category. English is used as the language of instruction (except in the Location School for children of the Phosphate Company workers). An Australian curriculum is followed and selected children are sent to Australia and New Zealand from the upper primary level for further education. A Trade School offers vocational training.

Absenteeism at all levels is high. Most tertiary level students study in Australia, although some go to Papua New Guinea, Fiji and New Zealand.

In Niue, education is compulsory and free between the ages of five to fourteen. In 1983, there were seven primary schools and one secondary school. All are Government institutions. At Form Seven and tertiary levels, students go mainly to New Zealand, although some go to the Solomon Islands and Fiji.

In Tokelau, primary education is available to all children and is New Zealand assisted. Attendance is almost 100% and schooling is free. Children generally attend primary school from the ages of five to fifteen. Education is aimed at preparing children for life in Tokelau or a career in New Zealand (of which Tokelau is a non self-governing territory).

Communication systems - their efficiency/non-efficiency and even their existence/non-existence - are the most important (because problematical) features of distance education in the Pacific. In its regional endeavours to bridge teacher/learner distance, USP runs the gamut of all system and policy obstacles in each of the countries. Communication services (including transport systems) are critical features of distance education in the Pacific region. Services which may be taken for granted in other regions - as being comprehensive, reliable, affordable and frequent - cannot be taken for granted even on a weekly basis. Given the immutable vastness of the student catchment area and the multiplicity of service providers (both national and international), the challenges of communications and transport abate neither with time nor money.

Between the Campuses, Complexes and Centres, communication and information transfer is effected mainly by USPNET (using INTELSAT), facsimile, telephone, and mailbags.

USPNET: USP pioneered the use of satellite technology for educational support, beginning in 1972 on ATS-1. This was a PEACESAT enterprise, in which USP's participation was assisted by NASA, the Carnegie Corporation and USAID. After the gradual demise of ATS-1 between 1981-85 and some years of preparatory negotiation, USPNET was re-established on INTELSAT in 1986, first under the Project Share agreement and later with major support from Cable and Wireless Public Ltd (Hong Kong).

Currently, USPNET connects ten of the twelve member countries. Five Centres have direct access to the satellite space segment: Tonga, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Fiji and the Cook Islands. (The Kiribati Centre, formerly part of USPNET, was disconnected in 1989 due to local charging policies which could not be afforded.) Five other countries access USPNET on HF Radio relay: Nauru, Niue, Tuvalu, Western Samoa and Tokelau. International carriers supporting the network are Cable and Wireless Public Ltd, Fiji International Telecommunications Ltd (FINTEL) and Telecom New Zealand. The national carriers which facilitate the ground station services are Telecom Cook Islands, Fiji Post and Telegraph, Solomon Islands Telekom, Tonga Telecommunications Commission and Telecom Vanuatu. All of these autonomous providers are parties to the network agreement with USP. Any changes to contract conditions would require re-negotiation with each party.

The network is heavily used for administrative purposes, on a schedule of weekly meetings in specific areas: Extension Studies, Continuing Education, mailbag despatch and receipt checks, and Directorate sessions with Centre Directors. It is used regularly but less heavily for regional tutorials. As a half-duplex system, with often poor quality reception

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from the HF Centres, it is not overwhelmingly attractive to many members of academic teaching staff.

Being a dedicated network, USPNET is also available for point-to-point communication at any time of the week between scheduled meetings/classes. The system's virtues are undeniable, technically linking staff with staff and staff with students. It maintains in addition a sense of community within constituent isolation which might otherwise be overwhelming. Without it, USP would be bereft, in both practical and morale terms.

Without gainsaying this, it must be noted, however, that USPNET currently gives cause for much concern. This has both technical and political bases. Matters of concern include the following:

The current USPNET agreement expires in 1992. Under it, the national carriers of five member countries and three international carriers agreed to provide, respectively, ground station services and space segment access. Since the agreement was forged, however, several providers have become privatised or corporatised. USP cannot be certain, therefore, that the present arrangements will be able to continue beyond 1992, or will continue at a new cost that could be afforded. It is hoped that the 'loss' of Kiribati will not prove to be a precedent.

Between the local ground stations and the USP Centres, use of local P&T lines is necessary. These vary in reliability and local maintenance. Centres can be off the network for weeks at a time. In the five countries where ground station services have not been made available to USPNET, the reasons are either technical or a matter of local policy. The HF radio option adopted for these countries is certainly better than nothing but frequently unsatisfactory. USPNET's greatest need is for full duplex, interactive facilities. Given that the present generous concessional rates for a half-duplex system are all that can be afforded, pricing policies for full facilities are likely to be prohibitive.

Facsimile services between the main campus and the regional Centres became comprehensive during 1991. (Until then, the lack of available circuits in some countries had delayed connection). Facsimile is very heavily used for communication between Extension Services and its outlying staff, taking up a considerable proportion of two Communication Assistants' time. Services are by and large reliable but not wholly so. Three countries in particular experience occasional transfer-loss (Vanuatu, Western Samoa and Kiribati). Local charging policies relating to international transmission (which all facsimiles are from USP Centres) precludes frequent use by the Kiribati staff. In two countries, the Centre telephone and the facsimile machine must share the same circuit.

Telephone facilities are comprehensively available between the main campus and the Centres but are not so heavily used as facsimile facilities. This relates not only to the often detailed nature of information to be conveyed but also to the unreliable quality of voice-circuits, and to voice send/receive delays.

The system of USP mailbags was introduced in 1976 as the more reliable alternative to normal postal and air freight services. The mailbags to and from each Centre to Extension Services Headquarters are despatched weekly using a multiplicity of carriers. These include Air Pacific, Air Nauru, Samoa Air, Solomon Islands Air, Air Vanuatu, Air New Zealand, Air Marshall Islands. Weekly mailbag checks are undertaken via USPNET, tracking safe receipt and the lost or off-loaded despatches. The latter are a continuing difficulty on some airlines because of limited carriage space and competing cargo.

A slow scan electronic mail system, sharing the common satellite channel, is also being gradually introduced. To date, however, only the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have been connected, due to funding and technical difficulties.

There is, also, in the advanced planning stages an intention to establish during 1992 a computer network linking the regional Centres to the on-campus Student Records and Finance databases. This is intended to be effected by Banner software and funded from New Zealand aid. The actual means of the data transfer is proving to be problematical, however, given that not all Centres have direct access to the satellite and use of telephone circuits cannot be guaranteed.

Materials transport is mainly effected by the mailbag system, in accordance with the following conditions. Individual materials-items must: not exceed a monetary value of F\$50.00 (a carrier-specification); not be toxic or potentially hazardous; and not (for obvious reasons) exceed the mailbag's capacity. There are no weight restrictions. Materials which do not comply with these conditions are transported in whichever of the following ways is most appropriate: by normal postal services; by courier; as air cargo; as sea cargo; or as hand carried or accompanied baggage. It is worth noting, perhaps, that at particular times of the year (such as those coinciding with heavy tourist traffic or food shortages), shipping services can be more reliable than air services to some countries; that, because of frequent staff travel to member countries, the hand carried/accompanied baggage alternative is used as much as possible for examination script and equipment transportation.

The countries of Niue and Tokelau deserve a special mention, neither being serviced directly between itself and Fiji. Mailbags to and from Niue must be despatched through Western Samoa (Air Pacific) and thence (Samoa Air) to American Samoa and Niue. Alternatively, they can be despatched to Nadi (Air Pacific) and thence to Auckland (Air Nauru) and on to Niue (Niue Airlines). Tokelau materials must be transported initially to Western Samoa, out of Nadi. Thereafter, carriage must be effected by a shipping service which operates only once a month. Transport of materials in and out of Tokelau (including assignments and examinations) can be effected only on this monthly basis. All of the preceding information about communication and transport systems applies only to the primary (or easier) legs: those between services on campus and the in-country USP Centre. The latter in all cases is located in the main town on the main island/atoll.

The more difficult but equally important communication/transport links to be sustained are those which lie between the national Centre and the outlying islands and atolls. For a Centre which has ninety-five or sixty-six or thirty of these which are populated, the challenges are obviously formidable. A few islands might be serviced by a domestic airline; some others might be serviced by a small shipping agent. Some might have neither on a regular basis; there will be even some that have no telephone facilities. All of these vagaries must be accommodated as far as possible and planned for, without any degree of institutional control. Where available, the domestic air and boat services are utilised and relied upon. In-country HF and national broadcast radio are also available in some instances. In two countries - the Solomon Islands and Kiribati - the Centres are involved in the planning and establishment of in-country teleconference systems. Both ventures will be supported by externally negotiated funding. For some outlying communities, however, little can be done until the national communication and transport carriers develop more comprehensive systems.

For a distance mode teacher in the south and central Pacific, the distance learner's profile is perhaps the most important feature of Regional Context that he/she needs to know.

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An understanding of that profile brings one closer to knowing the region. The students will probably be male, unlike the majority of distance learners in developed countries. (Female enrollment overall is 30%.) They will probably, nonetheless, be seeking first-chance training. The language of instruction might not be their first language. It will usually be their second and sometimes third. They will likely be the product of an education system not fully endowed with qualified teachers, adequate physical resources and strong preparatory programmes. Their profile will vary somewhat in relation to their home-country. They will probably have left school several years earlier without the formal qualifications for university admission. (Full secondary school programmes and easy access to them are still not available for the majority in the region). They will likely have many commitments, financial and of time, to Church, family and village community. They may possibly, before enrolling in courses of ultimate choice, need to undertake upper school level courses in English and/or Mathematics. (USP through Extension, still teaches Forms Six and Seven). They cannot be presumed to live near the local USP Centre, or a frequent airline/boat service for the transport of materials. Fortitude aside, they cannot be presumed to have access to resources other than those provided in the teaching/learning package. They cannot be expected to afford expensive materials, to meet the full costs of the chosen USP course, or to own or have access to technical equipment. The average rate of attrition is around 30%, due, in the main, to external factors. (These usually relate to employment or to materials-transport delays). Study through USP Extension is often their sole higher learning option.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The University of the South Pacific was established on the recommendation of a Higher Education Mission to the South Pacific which reported in 1966. The Mission was set up by the governments of the United Kingdom and New Zealand, with the cooperation of the Australian Government. It was chaired by Sir Charles Morris and had the purpose of ascertaining the viability and appropriate character of a university which would serve the needs of the region.

Sir Norman Alexander was subsequently appointed Academic Planner to the proposed institution and, in this capacity, consulted key personnel throughout the region for their responses to the Morris Report. The Alexander Report of early 1967 provided both an affirmation and some refining of the Mission's essential concepts and proposed ways in which these could be practically realised in a Pacific regional university.

By mid 1967 the Legislative Council of Fiji had approved an enabling Ordinance for the establishment of an Interim Council. At its January 1968 meeting, the Interim Council appointed the University's first Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Colin Aikman, Professor of Jurisprudence and Constitutional Law from Victoria University of Wellington.

The regional University for the South Pacific was established at Laucala Bay, Suva, Fiji, on the site of a vacated Royal New Zealand Air Force flying-boat base. The first students were admitted in February 1968. After an initial period of two years, the University was formally established in March 1970, by Royal Charter.

University Centres (with their running costs initially funded by the Carnegie Corporation) began to be established the following year. Those in Honiara (Solomon

Islands), Tarawa (Kiribati) and Nuku'alofa (Tonga) were the first, in 1971. The Rarotonga Centre (Cook Islands) and the Apia Centre (Western Samoa) followed in 1975. One year later saw the establishment of the Centre in Suva, followed in 1977 by the Centre in Niue. The Vanuatu Centre in Port Vila and the Tuvalu Centre in Funafuti were both established in 1980 and most recently Nauru in 1986. Capital expenditure on the Centres during this period of two decades has been financed bilaterally by the governments of Australia and New Zealand. (Tokelau is served through the Western Samoa Centre. The Centre for the Marshall Islands will be established in Majuro during 1992).

The many factors which contributed from the outset to a commitment to regional distance education from this new university can probably be reduced to a few: USP was established to serve an area three times the size of Europe, with a diameter one sixth of the earth's circumference. Clearly it would need to spread itself in new and dramatic ways to reach much of its market. Much needed higher education in many vital areas had traditionally to be sought outside of the region in developed world countries. As such it was accessible to relatively few people. The conventional option of full-time internal study (which would also have to be residential for many students) was not an appropriate singular response to the needs of a region in which existing education systems still amounted to variants of under-development and which generally had a low capacity to provide for expenditure on higher education. Bridging study, part-time study, and home-based study while retaining employment were (and continue to be) appropriate other responses.

The University began with three On-Campus Schools: Natural Resources, Social and Economic Development, and Education. Responsibilities for 'Extramural Studies' were located in the School of Education but, in 1971 - renamed as Extension Services - became lodged in a separate entity with its own Director. USP in formal terms was at this time one year old.

The first distance education courses were offered in 1971, in the area of urgent need - secondary school teacher training. These courses constituted the Diploma of Education, a sub-degree programme, fully supported with sets of distance learning materials. The Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Fiji and Kiribati enrolled diploma students in that initial programme. By 1975-76, this programme had become completely revised, and the development of preliminary, foundation and first year degree courses was underway.

The Renwick Report (1991) records that the number of courses grew from six in 1971, ten in 1974, twenty-three in 1977, and thirty in 1979 - 80. Twenty of these were for preliminary/foundation and ten for degree/diploma (Page 16). By 1989, 148 distance courses were available: sixteen for preliminary, twenty-four for foundation, thirty-two for certificates, and seventy-six for degrees. In 1990 the number of courses stabilised.

TABLE 6: Number of Extension Courses Offered (by Level)

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Preliminary	19	16	12	17	12	16
Foundation	22	22	23	23	23	24
Cert/Dip/Voc	11	13	22	29	30	32
Degree	23	35	45	59	76	76
TOTAL:	75	86	102	128	141	148

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The University's expertise in instructional media, centrally located, is capable of producing for distance education CAL packages, high quality video, and satellite conferencing. The extent to which one should choose (or not) to do so is a separate issue, however, relating to regional student-access. USP's traditional contract with its distance students has been that teaching packages developed for home study will provide all that they need for learning and mastery. Except in the few courses with laboratory components, this contract continues still to be largely honoured in the planning of instructional media. Teaching strategies dependent on computer access, video playback facilities, even libraries or electricity have to be weighed with care when being assigned a role. The weightier or more central that role is to course delivery, the more exclusive becomes the course's potential market. In brief, media selection is always a philosophical matter related to a mission and inseparable from context. While no choice is value-free in any medium selection, in a developing world region diverse within itself, course writers and developers have especial burdens of judgment.

USP began its distance teaching in the early seventies providing core instruction with printed materials. Print remains today the basic instructional medium. Audio tape material soon became a significant second medium, from the Learning Resources and Communications Unit established within Extension Services. By 1980 it had accrued a staff of eleven which, at that time, was half of the Section's staff. Audio tapes today are standard instructional package components. For the now stand-alone Media Unit (which provides university-wide professional services), 80% of its tape production and copying work is undertaken for the distance education programme.

Instruction augmented by live satellite teaching was experimentally implemented from 1973. Then, as now nearly two decades on, this medium provided instruction to enhance the print package: that is, not as a core or integral course component. Unlike audio tape materials now integrated with print, satellite instruction remains optional because of limited student access. An experimental project in the later seventies for the satellite transmission of visual materials (graphs, diagrams, slides and video) was abandoned for technical, management and cost reasons. There are no immediate plans to reactivate the endeavour. All that is deemed necessary is pre-produced and packaged. Computers are not used as an instructional medium. Students have little access to them, and durability and maintenance are difficult in tropical conditions.

The various ways in which USP's Extension Studies programme is funded are described later. In its essential parameters, the core funding pattern has not changed over time. It is the regional member governments which provide the base funding: up to 90% of the University's recurrent budget. Member governments have always assumed responsibility for the major financial support of their institution, and distance education - like on-campus education - has always been funded as an integral mode of teaching.

Illustrative details of how the recurrent budget is augmented from year to year by External Aid are provided later. The pattern exemplified is not new in 1991. Most donors are traditional and the forms of support recurrent. Details are also provided of the specific benefits to distance education from both the institutional and bi-lateral aid programmes.

Acknowledgement should be made, however, of some particular, early assistance given to the University's extension activities. Although some have been subsumed or have passed with project completion, their founding timing and contribution were developmentally critical. For the establishment of the first USPNET (on PEACESAT), NASA, the Carnegie

Corporation and USAID provided the vital support. For the second USPNET (on INTELSAT), the Project Share signatories provided the vital support. Since the Project's ending, Cable & Wireless Public Ltd. (Hong Kong) has provided satellite segment-access free; the many telecommunications carriers have heavily subsidised USP's use of local ground stations. For the initial running costs of the early USP Centres, the Carnegie Corporation provided funding support. The Governments of New Zealand and Australia have provided capital funding for all Centre buildings through externally negotiated funding.

Several trends can be noted in USP's distance education. It has developed from an initial programme of teacher training courses into a University-wide programme emanating from all Laucala Campus Schools: Humanities (SOH), Social and Economic Development (SSED), Pure and Applied Sciences (SPAS). The initial Diploma in Education programme was phased out after the major contributing countries indicated that their respective Teachers Colleges had become sufficiently well established. In the first year of its school-based distance programmes, 1981, and ten years after the Education courses were launched - SSED extension enrollments were second only to enrollment in the compulsory courses in English and Mathematics. In Semester One 1990, of the 79 courses offered the discipline breakdown was School of Humanities, 28; School of Pure and Applied Sciences, 14; School of Agriculture (Alafua Campus), 1; and School of Social and Economic Development, 36. Among these courses, enrollments were markedly heaviest in Accounting, Economics, Mathematics and Management.

The increasing development of distance only programmes has been and continues to be a feature. Beginning slowly in the mid-seventies with occasional courses developed only for extension delivery, the range now includes several full programmes such as the Certificate and Diploma in Legal Studies, the Diploma in Librarianship, the Certificate in Management Studies, the new Diploma in Early Childhood Education, and the Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language. The proposed new Certificate and Diploma in Ocean Resources Management are establishing yet another model by developing a dual mode programme in which the distance mode precedes in development its on-campus equivalent.

Another trend is worthy of note. With the introduction of the Diploma in Librarianship, the Certificate programme was gradually phased out. This was due to staffing shortages and a general USP trend away from Certificates. Eight countries have objected with clear concern at the loss of the bridge to higher level study. The University Library is reconsidering re-introduction, therefore. Following on from this, the new Diploma in Early Childhood Education was proposed for development with the extant Certificate programme (also distance only) firmly entrenched in the Admission Regulations. The increase in the number of degree level courses and a balancing decrease in sub-degree courses continue slowly but surely. Degree level courses in 1989 accounted for 51.3% of the total programme. (In 1979-80 they comprised barely 25%.) This trend will doubtless accelerate in light of the Council's policy decision re-affirmed in 1990 to scale down sub-degree activity.

LEGAL STATUS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The extent to which distance education from USP could be deemed to have a legal status is to be found in the Royal Charter under which it was constituted. Therein

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ELIZABETH THE SECOND by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of (Her) other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith' decreed as follows:

WHEREAS Our Principal Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has on behalf of the Interim Council of the University of the South Pacific and in accordance with the wishes of the Governments of the British Solomon Islands, Fiji and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and after consulting Our High Commissioner for the Western Pacific as regards the interests of the people of the New Hebrides, represented unto Us that it is expedient that We should constitute and found a University of the South Pacific ...

AND WHEREAS the Governments of the Cook Islands, the Republic of Nauru, Niue, the Tokelau Islands, the Kingdom of Tonga, and the Independent State of Western Samoa have also expressed the wish that such a University should be established.

NOW THEREFORE KNOW YE that We by virtue of Our Prerogative Royal in respect of Fiji and of Our especial grace, certain knowledge and mere motion have willed and ordained and by these Presents do for Us, Our Heirs and Successors will and ordain as follows:-

There shall be and is hereby constituted and founded for the communities of the South Pacific a University with the name and style of "The University of the South Pacific" (in this our Charter referred to as "the University"). ...

The Chancellor, the Pro-Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor and all other persons who are for the time being members of the University pursuant to this our Charter and the Statutes of the University are hereby constituted and henceforth for ever shall be one Body Politic and Corporate with perpetual succession and a Common Seal by the name and style of "The University of the South Pacific"

Under the powers to be invested in the new institution, two are of particular relevance. The former grants general authority for determining the categories of admission while the latter refers quite specifically to an external teaching mode.

To prescribe in the Statutes, Ordinances or Regulations the conditions under which persons and categories of persons shall be admitted to the University for the purpose of pursuing any programme of course of study herein.

To provide through programmes and courses of study and otherwise instruction and training at such levels and by such means, including extramural tuition, as the University may think fit

In summary, therefore, under the Charter the University became a legal entity of the region, 'one Body Politic and Corporate'. Its powers, mission and mandate are those which have approval of the eleven Governments cited. Extramural provision is particularly identified as an institutional activity to which it is encouraged and for which it has been empowered.

OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Aims and Objectives

In the University's two preparatory Reports (Morris 1965 and Alexander 1967), the founding vision of USP was dramatically established. The new institution was to observe the traditional values of higher education; be responsive to the needs and special character of the region and its peoples; and be mindful and inclusive in its teaching mission of the dispersed communities beyond its walls.

Morris refers to the provision of 'university studies to towns and villages throughout the region'. Alexander envisaged, through USP outreach, a significant means of 'raising the general standard of village life'. The Programme Planning Seminar held in 1968 went on to identify a role for Extension Services; for some correspondence courses for university credit, and for the possibility of off-campus staff.

The over-arching aims and objectives of the University have thus included from the very beginning a commitment to outreach and distance education. These aims and objectives have not changed since 1968. They are encapsulated generally in the Charter of the University (1970). USP is therein established for

the maintenance, advancement and dissemination of knowledge by teaching, consultancy and research and otherwise and for the provision at appropriate levels of education and training responsive to the well-being and needs of the communities of the South Pacific.

Distance education, as the Morris and Alexander Reports illustrate, was always perceived to be a major means of fulfilling this mission. The unchanged nature of the aims and objectives and the role of outreach in their achievement are substantiated by the following reaffirmations throughout the ensuing twenty-three years.

In the 1973 Report on the Long Range Future of the University, major space and attention are given to the 'role and function of Extension Services in the task of taking the University to the village and to the people across the whole Pacific'. In 1975 in his Statement to the University of the South Pacific, the Vice-Chancellor, Dr James Maraj, considered the projection of the University as a Regional Institution. Central to this projection were, he observed, 'an upgrading of our Extension Services and a strengthening of the University's outreach'. In 1979 the Tenth Anniversary Review (Springer Report) observed that 'heavy emphasis should be placed on the growth of Extension Studies ... the attempt must be made ... to reach the population wherever it is'.

The 1983 Regional Conference on Future Directions for the University of the South Pacific recorded that

the clearest and most consistent message from the region was the need for USP to establish a stronger presence in the countries it serves. The work of USP Extension Centres obviously is valued and appreciated, and most countries would welcome enlarged facilities and an expanded role. In particular, requests were made for the wider availability of diploma and degree courses via the extension mode

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In 1991, the Vice-Chancellor, Mr Geoffrey Caston, reaffirmed in practical terms the University's sustained commitment to distance education as follows:

Each extension student, on any course, has a claim to the attention of the Department which is *equal* to that of each on-campus student on the same course. (Teaching resources are allocated to departments according to this principle.)

It follows that every academic staff has an obligation to participate in distance education, to the extent and in a manner that the head of department, after appropriate consultation, specifies.

Beyond these aims and objectives which are entrenched, institutional commitments, there are aims and objectives approved for each new programme development and, within the programme structure, specific course aims and objectives.

The aims and objectives of the different levels of course offering can only be generalised, for obvious reasons. The purpose or role of a course is inseparable from structural context. Foundation level courses in the Foundation Programme differ somewhat from their purposes as vocational diploma components; courses comprising certificates which lead on to diplomas, or courses comprising diplomas with some degree-credit arrangements, differ somewhat in their purposes from those in stand-alone/end-stopped programmes.

The programme of Preliminary Studies was conceived originally as a topping up of schooling. It and the following Foundation Studies programme were (and remain still) a means of providing opportunities for students 'to get their basic education up to acceptable levels'.

As the majority of member countries have now established Form Six or Year Twelve education, partakers of the Preliminary Programme as a comprehensive substitute have declined. The courses as individual components remain, however, and only in the distance education mode. Their purposes are remedial or bridging. The Foundation Studies programme as a comprehensive or part-time substitute for a national Form Seven or Year Thirteen remains heavily subscribed. (Indeed, it is being strengthened in its distance mode of delivery, in the light of Council's decision to shut down the on-campus mode at the end of 1992.)

Foundation level courses also contribute to some of the sub-degree certificates and diplomas. Their purposes in this context are not quite the same as bridging (any more than a 100 level degree course is a bridge to 200 level, or a 200 level course is a bridge to 300). They have a formally structured place in these vocational programmes as initial points of entry, or introductions to advanced level courses.

Certificate and diploma programmes are variously constituted. They may include (but gradually less so) foundation level courses, and appropriate degree courses at 100 and 200 levels. Some also may include courses designated C or D level: that is, courses designed and offered to meet the programme's specific aims and objectives. These are vocational in their focus (e.g. on Management and Legal Studies, Applied Computing, Accounting, Educational Administration). While they often, in practice, provide bridging for some students to advance their studies to degree qualifications, some candidates are already university graduates acquiring a vocational specialty.

The aims and objectives of the degree programmes which are available through distance education are the same as those for on-campus delivered degrees and, presumably for the BA, BEd and BSc everywhere.

At all levels of offering - preparatory, sub-degree and degree - the distance education courses and programmes clearly share, beyond their specifics, one overall objective: to make themselves available to students remote from campus.

Control, Organisation and Management Structure of Distance Education

The distance education programme is a regional establishment, proceeding from a legally constituted regional entity and academically autonomous. While some co-operative relationships do exist at various delivery and support levels, they are not 'established' arrangements affecting provider-status.

USP is a dual-mode institution; its courses and programmes of study for distance delivery are subject, therefore, to the same overall academic controls and procedures as those applying to internal courses and programmes; to the same overall budgetary and auditing controls and procedures as those applying to internal operations. For academic controls and procedures (course approvals, withdrawals, regulations, curriculum changes, continuous and final assessment), the Boards of Studies, the Academic Committee and the University Senate have ascending responsibility. The introduction of a new programme requires also the approval of the Academic Planning Committee and all new programmes require the approval of the University Council. Both the Director of Extension Services and the Deputy Director/Head of Distance Education are members of the Academic Committee, the Academic Planning Committee and the Senate. The Director is also a member of the four Boards of Studies and attends the Council *ex officio*. For budgetary matters (staffing costs, support services, programme resource needs), the Resource Management Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee have responsibility. All fiscal matters (including any developments with funding implications) are reported ultimately to the University Council for final decision/approval. Both the Director of Extension Services and the Deputy Director/Head of Distance Education are *ex officio* members of the Resource Management Committee, and the Director currently is a Senate appointed member of the Finance Committee.

Within the terms of reference of this infrastructure, distance education at USP is holistically managed; it is subject to university-wide and integrated jurisdiction. This has its philosophical virtues as well as its practical drawbacks. The theoretically integrated infrastructure for control precludes any simple answers in the areas listed. There are the obvious and expected tiers of responsibility which lie below it, or are delegated from it as the ultimate government. There are others, however, which remain collective or shared and difficult to attach clearly to accountability.

Responsibility for the administration of the distance education programme is perhaps the easiest to identify, belonging clearly to Extension Services. Although all distance students belong to the respective academic departments in the same way as their on-campus counterparts, they are the administrative responsibility of Extension Services staff. This responsibility includes pre-enrollment counselling and all enrollment processing; maintenance of student files and records (admissions, withdrawals, programme completions); materials production and distribution; assignment tracking, logging and all assessment records; production/ distribution of test and examination scripts; organisation of examinations; and collection of student fees. In none of these tasks are the on-campus and distance education

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administrative systems integrated, even within the area of academic records.

Within Extension Services itself, to whom these tasks solely belong, administrative responsibility is undertaken regionally by its staff in each of the national Centres and in the Headquarters on the Laucala Bay Campus. Given the lack of computer links, and of reliable communication and transport systems to traverse the thousands of ocean-kilometres between them, it is formidable administration on a daily basis. It comprises responsibilities, however, which Extension Services would not welcome sharing. Administration designed to service a small body of largely resident, full-time students has little in common with that needed to service large numbers of part-time invisible students, resident in four time zones.

In terms of academic standards, the University is subject to triennial, overall review by the University Grants Committee. Distance education, being integral to teaching and support services, is reviewed quite naturally within this evaluation process. Each academic *department* is also reviewed regularly and separately by External Assessors. These persons are uniformly distinguished scholars from internationally reputable institutions. They review the department's distance teaching performance along with its internal teaching performance. Within its internal structure, the University has also a committee on overall Student Performance and procedures for dealing with individual Unsatisfactory Performance. Distance students are not exempt from these monitoring jurisdictions. All *staff* must be reviewed for confirmation of satisfactory performance once every three years. Review of cases of unsatisfactory performance within this period is undertaken annually. Academic standards and credibility in the distance education programme are additionally sustained by curricula and examinations common to both modes of delivery. Although initial admission criteria are purposefully different, course content and final assessment are purposefully not.

Resource planning ultimately lies with the University Council. Resource plans related to academic developments and staffing emanate usually from departments, passing through the Boards of Studies, the Academic Planning Committee, the Resource Management Committee, and penultimately to the Finance and General Purposes Committee (which recommends the following year's Annual Budget to the October meeting of the Council). Along the way within this process, particular committees exist for the disbursement of funds allocated for resources such as computer hardware and software (Computer Services Committee); for capital expenditure (Sites and Buildings and Medium Works Committees); support requirements (Equipment and Furniture Committee). The planned resource needs of the ten national Extension Centres and of their distance students are considered and met within this structure. Independent of their centrally allocated resources, Centres also accrue local funding from or for local activities such as continuing education and non-formal courses, project funding from aid sources, and grants and donations. These resources are managed separately by each Centre's Advisory Committee, comprising key community people with interest and influence in local education.

As is usual in dual-mode teaching institutions, the distance education provisions are published in the official annual Calendar. This is not widely useful, however, for the majority of current and potential Extension Studies students because it is published in December, in time for ensuing on-campus enrollment. By this time, for obvious practical reasons, most national Centres have completed their enrollment procedures. It is relatively expensive for many distance students who, unlike their full-time on-campus counterparts, are generally unsupported by government and employer scholarships. Moreover, it contains information which is largely irrelevant or unnecessary for students living on remote islands

and atolls, pursuing study in only one or two courses and under open entry conditions.

Most distance students, to the extent that they have access to and use any official publications at all, use the Handbooks published by Extension Services. In the new format introduced in 1991, these now comprise a set of nine small booklets: a Student Handbook containing basic, general information; six others which are subject/programme specific in Education, Librarianship, Language and Literature, Legal Studies, Mathematics, Computing and Science, Accounting, Management and Economics; and one for miscellaneous courses not specific to a programme, and one devoted to the non-credit Continuing and Community Education programme. This information is produced centrally for regional distribution, to Centres and thence to students, the Public Service and Education Ministries. It is probably the case, nonetheless, that the most useful student information is that which is provided more informally by the local Centre. This is effected verbally in face-to-face counselling, by newspaper advertisements/ announcements, regular local radio programmes, Centre newsletters and answering telephone queries.

Relationships between distance and non-distance education institutions which exist within the region have a variety of bases. These include materials transfer, shared students, shared facilities, consultation and standards-monitoring, and course or programme accreditation.

As USP is still the only indigenous provider of distance education within its own twelve country region, its materials-transfers tend to be outward. They occur, it should be noted, not for the purposes of further distance education by the purchasers/recipients but for those of resource-acquisition for classroom teaching. The National University of Samoa, the University of Papua New Guinea, the College of the Marshall Islands and some Teachers Colleges and secondary schools are materials buyers. Superseded editions of coursebooks and textbooks are donated free to interested institutions.

The sharing of students brings USP into formal relationship with several institutions. Form Seven (or Year Thirteen) students in Kiribati and the Cook Islands are full-time USP students attending the local high school. They are theoretically distance students, supported by Government scholarships, but with face-to-face teachers provided by their respective schools. Unlike students in institutions in the materials transfer category, these students pay standard USP tuition fees, receive USP support and gain university credit for completed courses. King George V High School (Kiribati) and Tereora College (Cook Islands) participate in this type of arrangement.

Facilities-sharing between institutions occurs in two directions, use of USP facilities by others, and use by USP of others' facilities. In Fiji, for example, several strategically placed secondary schools have been designated Sub-centres, accommodating distance learning materials and local after-hours tutorials. In the Cook Islands, use is made by USP of the College's science laboratories. In several countries the USP Centre library is used regularly by other institutions' students.

Consultation and standards-monitoring are relatively limited within the distance education area. This year the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education, a non distance education provider planning a distance mode, placed one of its senior officers within Extension Services for eight weeks on consultancy/attachment for staff development purposes. The National University of Samoa, which uses adapted USP distance materials in some internal courses, gains accreditation for these, dependent on institutional monitoring.

There is another type of relationship between distance and non-distance education

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increasingly being forged within the region by the University's Institute of Education. It involves, not another institution per se, but the Institute (IOE), the country's Ministry of Education, and specified Extension Studies courses. Two examples of this exist in Kiribati and Tuvalu, where IOE has assisted the respective Ministries in the establishment of a national In-service teacher training qualification which includes some USP components to be studied at a distance. A consequent Tuvalu Diploma in Education will be, therefore, a credential awarded by the Ministry, and one in which USP courses have a structural accredited place. In a major new venture in 1992, the Fiji Government Ministry has taken, for its secondary school teacher trainees at the College of Advanced Education, more than 100 course places in the USP distance programme. The eventual qualification being earned is not USP's but the 100+ course-enrollments are for the semester's duration.

Perhaps the closest relationship in the region between distance education and relevant non-distance education occurs within USP itself and so is easily overlooked. It is a crucial relationship, however, dynamic and needing care. Togetherness in practice does not always produce equality.

Historically, the distance mode courses have grown out of or by conversion of existing on-campus equivalents. This is still (but decreasingly) the predominant procedure. There is a very positive assumption that, as far as possible, courses developed for internal students should be made available to part-time distance learners. (In the programme proposals now, departments are required to state their schedule of development for eventual distance delivery). The negative assumptions which tradition has nurtured are that the non-distance mode chronologically and in priority comes first in the system, that what is appropriate for on-campus students can be appropriately adapted for distance students only with loss of academic quality and mode-equity. However, distance-only programmes are on the increase. In these, the negative assumptions are welcomely absent.

The internal close relationship between USP's distance and non-distance education has not only been forged by equivalent offerings in which the off-campus courses follow on in development. Once developed with teaching packages, these distance courses also become resource-materials providers for internal application. The process thus becomes circular in a sense. The on-campus course is developed, the off-campus equivalent follows, and the latter's teaching materials are subsequently re-applied on campus.

There are positive and negative considerations raised by this. There is the danger of the internal mode's needs inappropriately and unconsciously (or even consciously) determining the content and design of the external course. There are the virtues of ensuring that what is provided for distance students is not second best in quality, and of providing additional incentive for teaching staff to make the distance mode conversion.

Financing Distance Education

Major financial support of USP is provided by its twelve member governments, as a recurrent commitment within their respective national Education Votes. Collectively, government contributions to the University's recurrent budget amounted to 90% of approximately F\$20 million in 1991, and will amount to 90% of approximately F\$24 million in 1992. The Fiji Government's contribution represents 60% of total contributions. Amounts levied against each member country are not voluntarily or arbitrarily struck. They

are determined on the basis of a funding formula directly related to the number of students enrolled from each country. Both internal and distance enrollments are included in the funding assessment, converted to FTES also in accordance with an approved formula. In very simple terms, the more students which a country sends to the campuses or has enrolled in Extension Studies, the more it will be required to contribute to the University's recurrent budget. The formula itself and the level to which the University should be funded are regularly reviewed and determined for the triennium by the Ministers of Finance of member governments in collective decision. The remaining 10% of the recurrent budget is provided by the Government of Australia (6%) and the Government of New Zealand (4%).

Outside of this basic support funding, USP receives substantial assistance from a multiplicity of other sources. The amount of this external support received in 1991 was F\$12,356,400. Additional to this are other longer-term funding arrangements which support specific programme developments, such as Development Studies, Ocean Resource Management, and Tourism and Population Studies.

It is not possible even to begin to separate out the expenditure on distance education from these preceding sources of funding. Because the two teaching modes of the University have been integrated and holistically managed from the outset, funding to the teaching departments and service sections is allocated (and expended) untagged either for on-campus or distance activities.

The only exception to this is Extension Services itself, which has work requirements related solely to the two outreach operations of distance education and continuing/community education. That Extension Services received in 1989 only 13.6% of the overall budget (for expenditure on both of its outreach operations) but had within its care 38.7% of the FTES roll, indicates the extent to which distance education is also substantially supported or buried within all other sections' budgets.

In brief, therefore, money and staff time are generally expended without any system of differentiation between their internal and external purposes. This inclusive style of budgeting has both its obvious virtues and its obvious dangers. (The Renwick Report, in its review of two decades of distance education at USP, has voiced concern about this on-going procedure. The Team concluded that under the procedure, the claims that distance education students can properly make on the University's total quantum of resources are not being met. The Report and its recommendations on this issue have yet to be formally considered by the University community.)

Students, as everywhere, also contribute partially to the budget by way of their fees-payments. For the distance courses (not differentiated by subject), current fees are pre-degree, F\$40; 100 level, F\$51; and 200-300 level, F\$68. Materials and textbook fees are additional charges made on a cost-recovery basis. For each course taken, students pay a Centre fee also, of up to F\$15. Unlike their on-campus counterparts, most Extension Studies students are not funded by scholarships. Some, however, have their costs reimbursed by employers on a successful completion basis.

Geographical Coverage of the Provision of Distance Education

The physical context of USP has dramatic features: 6,500 km across and three times larger than Europe, the region's population of only 1.3 million is dispersed on land masses which,

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aggregated, are no larger than Denmark. One country alone comprises one hundred populated islands, one other eighty, another twenty-six. Two more have island-counts of fifteen and thirty-three. The Republic of the Marshall Islands, by its recent membership, has brought to USP another thirty-four. In-country land mass dispersion is as follows:

TABLE 7: Land Mass Dispersion of USP Countries

Member State	No. of Islands	Inhabited Islands	Distance (km) from capital to most remote settlement
Fiji	322	95	420
Solomon Islands	c.400	6.60	1400
Western Samoa	6	4	120
Vanuatu	c.80	66	550
Tonga	170	30	590
Kiribati	33	21	3500
Marshall Islands	c.32	26	1100
Cook Islands	15	13	1350
Nauru	1	1	n.a.
Tuvalu	9	8	490
Niue	1	1	n.a.
Tokelau	3	3	n.a.

It is not a simple matter to state accurately the number of islands and atolls covered by the USP distance education programme. Theoretically, all populated land masses of each member country have access to distance education through their in-country Centre. Many, however, do not yet have the transport and communication systems which make participation a feasible possibility. In the Cook Islands, for example, the 1991 roll indicates that only six of the thirteen populated islands had registered students. These were Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mangaia, Mauke and Matiaro. Palmerston, Pukapuka, Nassau, Rakahanga, and Manihiki lack the necessary communication/transport systems. Penrhyn only acquired them in 1990. In Vanuatu in 1991 only nine of the sixty-six populated islands had registered students (Efate, Santo, Malekula, Tanna, Epi, Pentecost, Ambae, Ambrym, Tongoa). Two of these islands had a single enrollment, two others an enrollment of two. Kiribati recorded enrollment on fifteen of its thirty-three atolls, with the lowest percentage of total enrollment at 0.19%.

Instructional Systems

The major components of instruction and delivery methods for distance education from USP can be classified as those which are centrally generated for regional purposes, and those which are locally generated for national purposes. These classifications can be applied to the separable components of teaching materials and learning support services.

Core materials for all distance education courses are centrally generated for regional consumption. They are developed by Course Teams, usually comprising an academic content specialist (Course Writer), an instructional designer (Course Developer), a media specialist and a course development assistant. Core materials usually consist of at least two printed texts: the Introduction and Assignments booklet and the Coursebook. Ancillary components

might include a Reader, textbook(s), audiotapes and, perhaps, a videotape.

The Introduction and Assignments booklet introduces the course as a whole, with reference to an introduction to the course writer/tutor; the overall aims and objectives of the course; a summary of the course content; a list of the course materials; a suggested study schedule; the forms of assessment used; help available through Centre resources, local or satellite tutorials, and course tutor visits; details of tests and assignments; content update and enhancement; a sample of an exam paper (new course); or a past exam paper (continuing course); and a course evaluation form. The Coursebook provides a study guide for the course; learning opportunities through the content and self-assessing exercises; integration of all the materials for the course; and readings, although these may be presented separately also in a Reader. Audiotapes are used for presenting information impossible to print such as dialects variation in a language course; personalising a course and bringing tutor and student closer; presenting further clarification of difficult topics; and enhancement of content. Commercially produced textbooks are prescribed for many courses but can occasionally present problems with their unfamiliar concepts and examples; their internationally determined prices; lengthy delivery lead-times; readability levels not appropriate for second language readers; and content sometimes irrelevant to Pacific learning needs. Given the geographic and economic circumstances of USP distance students, the use of videotapes is not generally encouraged for the transmission of core information, and computers cannot be used as an instructional medium.

Instructional Support Services

Those centrally provided for regional purposes include Satellite Tutorials on USPNET (the regional telecommunications link based on INTELSAT); visits from campus-based Course Tutors to national Centres; Summer Schools in national Centres and outer islands; and personal correspondence with students.

Satellite tutorials are voluntarily convened and taught by the on-campus Course Tutor, so there is no institutional requirement that they be offered. Course Tutors who do provide such services to their distance students usually commit themselves to a regular weekly or fortnightly schedule of one hour sessions. Tutor Visits are vigorously requested both by students and Centre staff, and there is no lack of willing on-campus teachers to undertake them. The major difficulties in meeting demand, however, are always cost and often on-campus understaffing levels which preclude travel. Costs of Tutor Visits can be very expensive simply because international air services in the Pacific are very expensive. Generally, each Centre receives two or three Tutor visits in each semester and these tend to be in core courses or those with high enrollment demand. As eighty to ninety distance courses are offered in each semester, Tutor Visits seldom occur for many of them. Those that do take place are quantifiably effective, however, not only in lifting student morale but also in familiarising on-campus staff with the local and often difficult circumstances of their students.

Summer Schools are not officially distance education offerings. They are administered by Extension Services, however, because they are off-campus activities. They are provided only for students enrolled through the Extension Centres; they are the only means of delivering particular types of courses (e.g. those with practicum components) which are required for students to complete their distance programme but which are not available at a

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distance; and they are the only means of delivering particular courses such as those in Science for which a well-qualified Local Tutor/demonstrator is required but has not been available. Summer Schools provide full-time tuition over a period of four to six weeks, with local students all coming to and residing at a central site. The complete semester curriculum is covered during this time and students are formally examined at the conclusion of the School. Funding is again an inhibiting factor on the numbers of Summer Schools which can be annually mounted. Minimal enrollment numbers per country have been set, therefore. Because the University's policy is that Summer Schools must be self-supporting, fees are high relative to Extension Studies courses (in 1991 F\$200 vis-a-vis F\$30), and running costs still require subsidy from external aid. This has come in the past mainly from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC). This funding is to end in 1991. The future of the Summer School mode is rather in doubt at present, although the Renwick Report has strongly urged its dramatic expansion. Some individual member governments are using bi-lateral aid funding in the meantime to ensure the survival of Summer Schools in their country.

Correspondence with students is undertaken by some on-campus Course Tutors but could in no way be regarded as a general activity. As in all distance teaching institutions, Teaching through Assessment as an opportunity for learner assistance is viewed positively by some and ignored by others. Comments on assignments range from pages-length to a mere grade. Overall and not unusually, most fall somewhere in between. There is no institutional policy on how responses should be formulated.

Instructional Support Services provided in-country by the national USP Centre for local purposes include various combinations of regular radio programmes; occasional television programmes; face-to-face tutorials with a Local Tutor; peer tutorials without a Local Tutor; teleconference tutorials on an in-country HF or public switched network; Centre bulletins/newsletters for students; library services (books, audio and video cassettes); computer facilities and study space; study skills and course counselling (either at the Centre or by Centre staff travelling); practical laboratory sessions (where possible and required); and bridging courses. The Centre serves as the clearing house for all materials/assignments, provides liaison between students and remote teachers and is USP in the member country.

Languages of Instruction

The one language of instruction for both on-campus and distance courses is English. For the majority of the University's students, this is their second language or, at least, not their mother-tongue. For some students, English is even a third language. Students are not permitted to work in their vernacular for formal assessment purposes, for seldom if ever could work be marked in its original form. Even if students were to use their predominant native language (and not one of the other 264 recorded as still spoken in the region), the designated Course Marker in Suva or Port Vila would be unlikely to share any one student's linguistic profile, let alone the multiplicity of them within the course's enrollment.

In the Extension Centres around the region, some tutorials and many spoken transactions between staff and students may be conducted in the local languages. (This does not and could not generally apply on the two residential campuses, where both the student body and staff comprise multi-ethnic and linguistic groups.) Some Centres which produce local radio programmes for students present two versions, one in English and one in the vernacular.

Three separate points are perhaps worth noting. First, research undertaken by the University's Language Resources Unit indicates clearly that students' academic performance in their initial year of (on-campus) study is directly related to their English competence. Competency-testing, which is systematically undertaken in the full-time pre-degree programme, has proved a most reliable predictor of results. Second, because of the particular language difficulties faced by the group of Ni-Vanuatu students who are Bislama/Francophones rather than Bislama/Anglophones, a limited range of distance courses has been allowed, exceptionally, to be translated into French. Three (LLD28 Elementary Translation Techniques; GE102 Cultural Geography; BIP02 Preliminary Biology) have been completed. Work is on-going for Preliminary courses in Mathematics (2), Chemistry (1), another in Biology, and one for a foundation course in Geography. Third, the Pacific Preschool Teachers Certificate, offered through Extension as a USP Continuing Education award, has now been translated into several major local languages. Even though this Certificate is not a qualification carrying academic credit, when offered in its local language it must become a confined local award (that is, not granted by USP's Continuing Education section).

Enrollment in Distance Education

Enrollment statistics in USP's distance education programme have several particular characteristics. First, they exclude enrollments in distance mode courses and programmes of study which are not offered for academic credit: that is, institutional terminology differentiates between Extension Studies (credential courses and programmes) and Continuing Education (non-credential courses and programmes). Students enrolled, therefore, in the Pacific Preschool Teachers Certificate - who study at a distance, pursuing a formally structured, examinable programme over three semesters - are counted neither in the distance education statistical head-count nor in the University's FTES annual returns. Second, under the Extension Studies Regulations and the University Regulations for Part-time Students, enrollment in the distance education programme is normally limited to two courses per semester. Exceptions to the two-course regulation are occasionally permitted in individual cases (where, for example, a Centre Director might assess an unemployed adult student to be sufficiently competent for three), or where a member government specifically requests that a full-time programme be locally available. Three such exceptions exist in this category and all at the secondary education level. (In the Cook Islands, Kiribati and Vanuatu respectively, a full-time Form Seven or Year Thirteen programme is available to approximately twenty selected students.) In 1982, statistical data established that 78% of extension students were taking only one course, 20% two courses, 1% three and 1% four. (Fifty percent of these courses were at the pre-degree Preliminary/Foundation level.) Although time may have altered these specific course-load percentages to some extent, the load of one or two courses per semester remains the overwhelming pattern.

A third characteristic is that extension Services, responsible for the administration of all enrollments in the distance education programme, uses aggregated course enrollments (i.e. head-count) for the production of statistics. Statistics for internal students, however, are produced in terms of full and part-time student numbers. In servicing, for example, a particular Solomon Islands student enrolled in MGD01 throughout their course of study, it is not relevant in practical terms that they perhaps carry the same identification number as

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an enrollee in LLF11. These courses belong academically to two different departments and for all intents and purposes are taken by two separate people.

A fourth characteristic to note is that when extension course enrollments are converted into FTES percentages of the total university roll, they are not simply divided to produce a notional full-time student body. A Discounted Student Unit (DSU) formula is applied to conversions. In 1989 it determined that one full-time campus student equalled one FTES, one part-time campus student equalled one-third FTES, and one discounted Extension registration equalled one-fourth FTES. Because of significant dropouts during the semester, the enrollment figures of 1 April are discounted by 30% for preliminary registrations, 25% for Foundation, Certificate and Diploma, and 20% for Degree registrations.

A fifth feature is that admission to Extension Studies courses is governed by regulations which differ from those applied to the equivalent on-campus courses. Although in terms of subject content and performance assessment, the distance and face-to-face modes of a course are stringently kept as equivalent as possible, enrollment access to the home-study option has deliberately been established as more open. This policy relates directly to the perceived (and indeed originally conceived) role of USP as the University of a developing world and specifically to the philosophy of its extension activities. Access or admission to courses in the distance education programme is, under the University's mature entry regulation, open to all students over age twenty-three, so that formal criteria applied to internal students undertaking identical courses do not apply to this age group.

Moreover, until 1991, enrollment ceilings or quotas (which must for practical reasons apply to the face-to-face mode of courses) have generally not been applied to the distance programme. This, in addition to the mature entry factor, has obviously contributed to the high level and growth rate of distance programme enrollments. From 1991, this circumstance has altered, with enrollment controls now instituted on the advice of the University Grants Committee and by subsequent ruling of the University Council. Seven years of a frozen recurrent budget (1984-1990) and increasing student demand have severely impaired the delivery of quality teaching. Only a minimal growth rate in overall FTES will be permitted in the current triennium (1991-1993). Course ceilings have, therefore, had to be firmly imposed within the distance education programme.

TABLE 8: Semester One Statistics of Extension Enrollments by Country

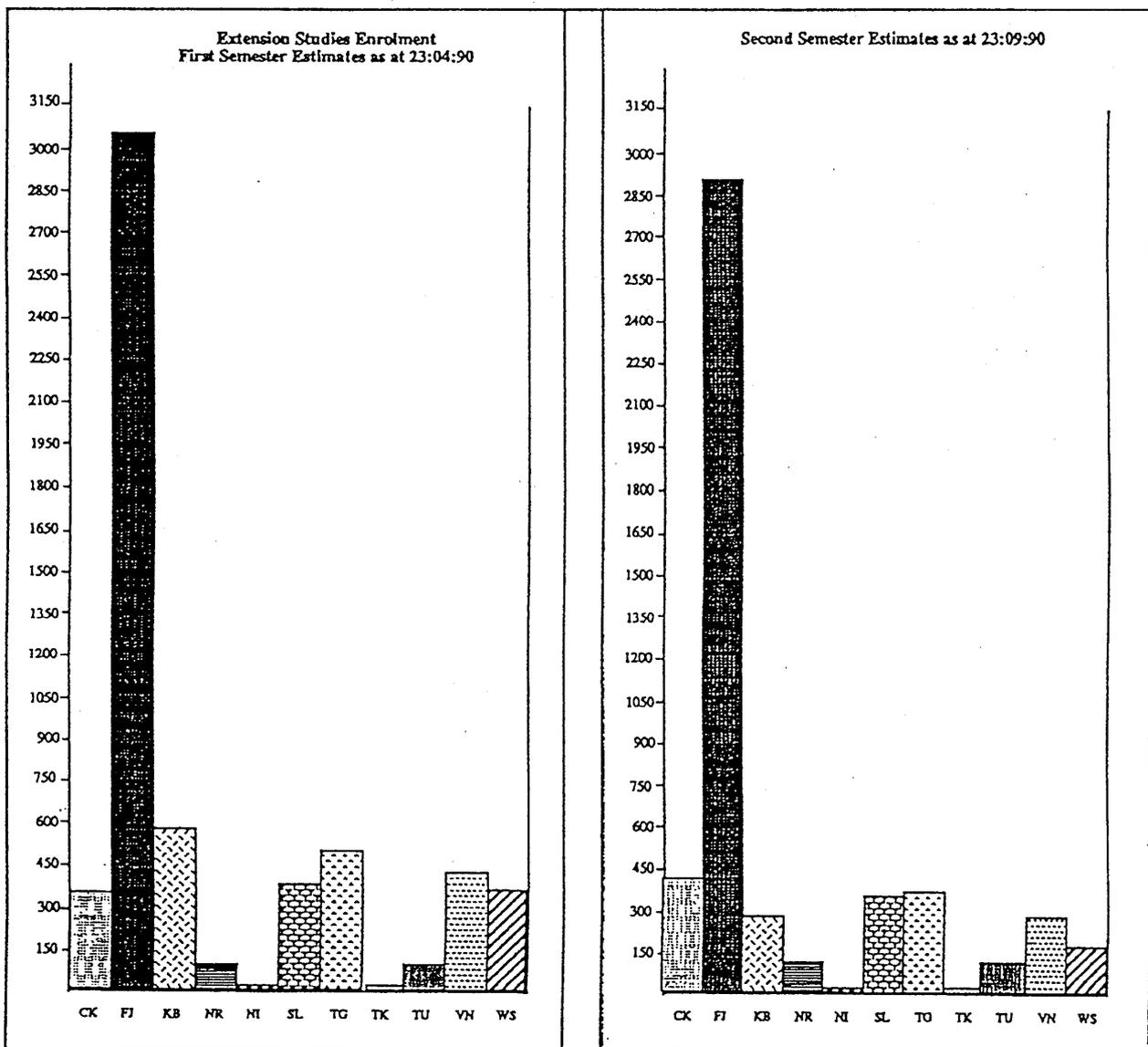
	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Cook Islands	204	177	247	253	422	400
Fiji	1603	1692	2047	2115	3445	3755
Kiribati	266	185	285	377	599	448
Nauru	11	42	235	117	*	114
Niue	41	26	23	33	*	26
Solomon Islands	194	249	290	362	537	362
Tokelau	49	40	37	76	84	26
Tonga	622	766	465	490	838	523
Tuvalu	22	36	25	23	112	103
Vanuatu	152	201	188	301	291	396
Western Samoa	270	288	243	257	369	298
<u>Total:</u>	3419	3699	4085	4404	6648	6451

* No enrollment due to materials transport difficulties

The following graphs present eleven countries - specific profiles, indicating national course enrollments at the four available levels of distance education. Preliminary level equates with Form Six (or Year Twelve) within the secondary school system, Foundation level with Form Seven (or Year Thirteen).

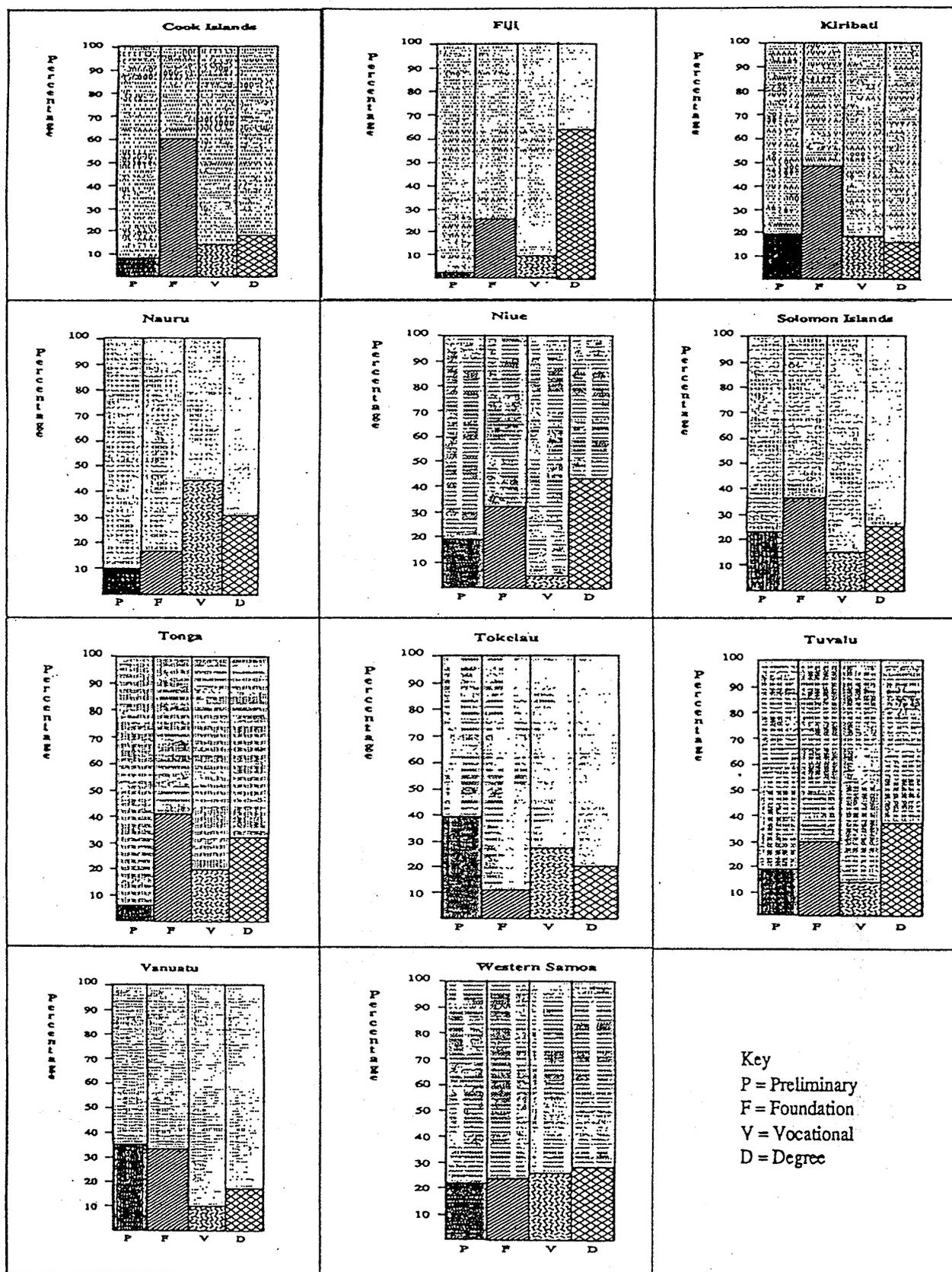
Vocational courses are generally those which lead to certificates and diplomas as sub-degree qualifications, although many of the programmes include degree level courses. Degree courses are offered at 100, 200 and 300 levels (with the number available declining significantly at each successive level).

Table 9: Semesters One and Two Statistics of Extension Students by Country (1990 only)



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TABLE 10: Percentages of Total Course Enrollments by Country by Level in 1990

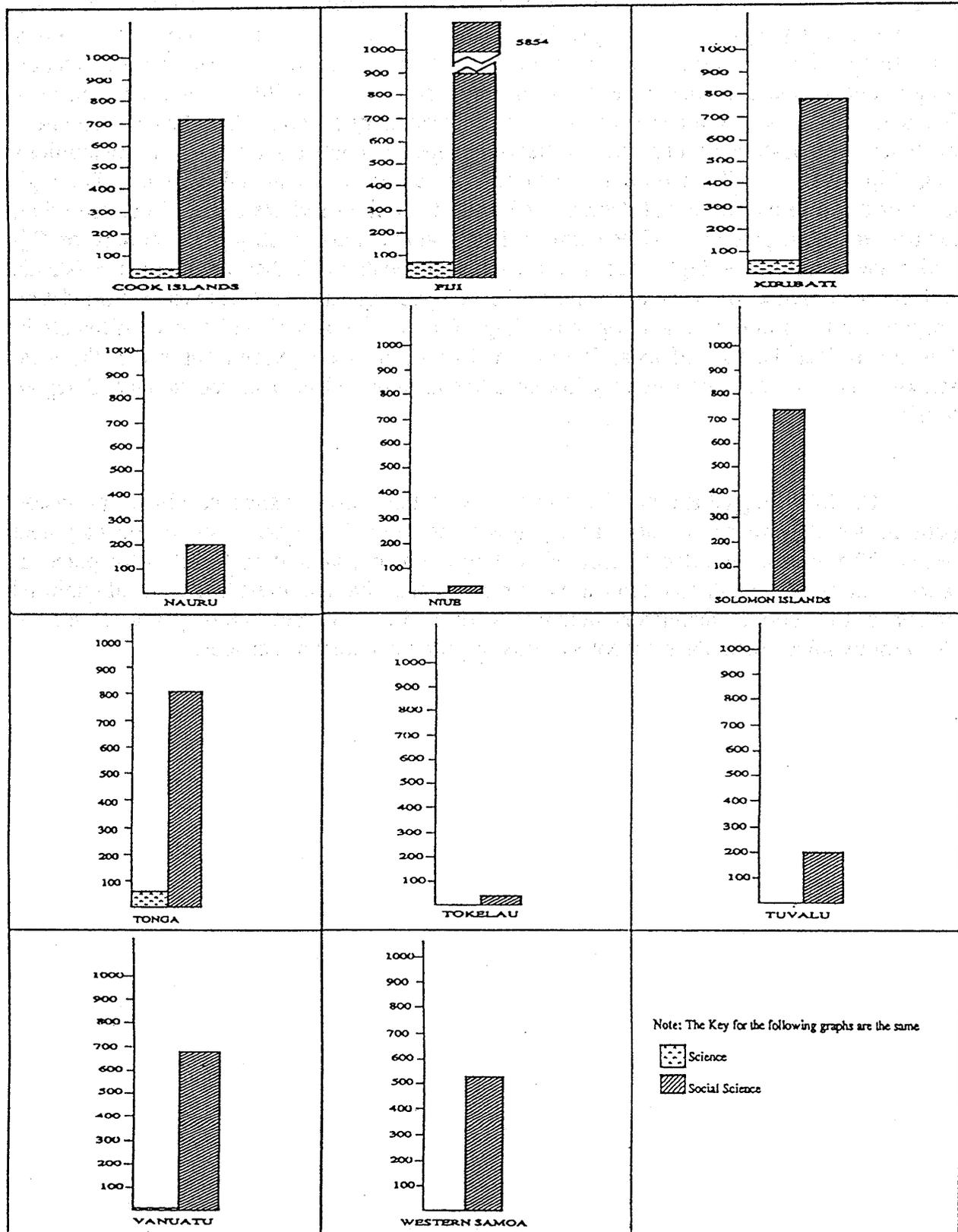


The above Table generally reflects the strengths or otherwise of the contributing national school systems. The Fiji graph, for example, with its very low Preliminary and relatively low Foundation enrollments, reflects a well-developed, widely available Form Six in the secondary system. This precludes much of the need for the USP Preliminary programme; has prepared students well for admission to the on-campus Foundation programme in the subsequent year. It also reflects the availability of Form Seven as a Foundation Programme alternative in some Fiji secondary schools. The lower enrollment of students in vocational programmes reflects perhaps the number of other tertiary institutions (e.g. Fiji Institute of Technology), which offer a variety of vocational training. The high level of distance enrollment at degree level almost certainly reflects some of the preceding factors, the high profile of USP within a host country and the stronger economy of Fiji within the region. The high Foundation level enrollments in Kiribati and the Cook Islands reflect the absence of a national Form Seven (making the USP extension Foundation programme the single available option). High Preliminary and Foundation enrollments in Vanuatu reflect the lack of local facilities and of Form Six to Seven options in the local schools. This in turn produces very low enrollments at the subsequent vocational and degree levels.

The following tables specific to science education show distance enrollment/provision patterns which give cause for concern, given the region's human resource development needs. The imbalance reflects a lack of existing in-country laboratory facilities for practical work; lack of USP funds to establish its own comprehensive facilities; lack of local qualified personnel to supervise mandatory practical work; and lack of adequate preparatory work in the various lower secondary school systems to produce potential enrollees.

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TABLE 11: Student Enrollments : Social Science Against Science



The requested differentiation between full and part-time distance enrollment is not easily provided. Extension Services records only course registrations; and the University's FTES conversions by definition do not reflect actual full-time enrollment. It is probable that in Semester One of 1990, however, approximately 600 course enrollments were carried by full-time students. (60 x 10 in Foundation Studies).

Tables 12 through 21 have been taken from the University's Submission to the University Grants Committee, for the 1991-1993 Triennium.

TABLE 12: Share of Extension FTES in Each Country's Total FTES

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Cook Islands	77.4	77.1	73.3	68.7	72.7	77.7
Fiji	17.8	22.8	20.0	21.5	24.9	32.3
Kiribati	39.1	50.0	41.6	55.1	63.1	71.8
Nauru	58.3	40.0	63.6	95.4	76.0	0.0*
Niue	50.0	42.3	26.7	44.4	50.0	0.0*
Solomon Islands	22.8	22.9	26.0	29.3	28.9	40.9
Tokelau	56.3	46.2	30.8	30.4	25.0	46.7
Tonga	44.3	49.3	55.4	41.3	47.0	59.3
Tuvalu	35.1	15.4	24.0	22.2	48.3	51.3
Vanuatu	26.2	28.8	29.8	30.7	43.3	42.3
Western Samoa	42.4	32.1	35.1	30.5	36.4	46.8
TOTAL:	26.0	29.0	27.1	28.0	31.1	38.7

* Note 1. Nauru and Niue had no enrollments in Semester One 1989 because of transport difficulties. In 1988, however, their distance enrollments comprised 79% and 50% respectively of their country's total FTES.

Note 2. Distance enrollments, as almost 39% of total FTES, peaked in 1989. The percentage has fallen slightly in 1990-91.

Note 3. In submitting this data to the UGC in 1990, the University drew attention to the fact that for most countries other than Fiji, study through Extension comprised more than 40% of all the FTES that they contributed. In the Solomons, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu the proportions have been increasing, and in the Cooks and Kiribati most markedly of all (over 70%). Even for Fiji, the proportion has been increasing since 1984.

Mode of Study Comparisons

TABLE 13: Credit Enrollment (Head Count) by Mode of Study

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
UNDERGRADUATE*	5014	6837	8046	6367	6481	8933
Full-time	1469	1438	1685	1772	1602	1752
Part-time	471	378	452	466	475	568
Extension	3074	3419	3699	4129	4404	6613
POSTGRADUATE	52	36	64	106	61	66
TOTAL:	5066	5271	5900	6473	6542	8999

* Includes Preliminary, Foundation and Diploma students.

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The table shows that in the period 1984-89, the gross numbers of students (head count) taught by USP in credit courses increased from 5066 to 8999, a massive increase of almost four thousand students or 78%. By far the largest proportion of this increase was through the Extension mode which added 3539 students with a growth of 115%, although the full-time and part-time student head counts also increased by 19 and 21% respectively.

TABLE 14: Credit Enrollment (Head Count) Percentages (%) (by Mode of Study)

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
UNDERGRADUATE	99.0	99.3	98.9	98.4	99.1	99.3
Full-time	29.0	27.3	28.6	27.4	24.5	19.5
Part-time	9.3	7.2	7.7	7.2	7.3	6.3
Extension	60.7	64.9	62.7	63.8	67.3	73.5
POSTGRADUATE	1.0	0.7	1.1	1.6	0.9	0.7
TOTAL HEAD COUNT	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

TABLE 15: Credit Enrollment (FTES by Mode of Study)

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
UNDERGRADUATE	2213	2219	2542	2718	2580	3204
Full-time	1469	1438	1685	1772	1602	1752
Part-time	157	126	151	155	158	189
Extension	587	655	706	791	820	1263
POSTGRADUATE	52	36	64	106	61	66
TOTAL FTES	2265	2255	2606	2824	2641	3270

The table shows that while the full-time and part-time students increased by 19% and 21% respectively (adding 315 students), the Extension mode saw an increase of 115%, adding the equivalent of 676 students. While the proportion of full-time students declined from 65% to 54%, that for Extension increased significantly from around 26% to 39%.

TABLE 16: Credit Enrollment (FTES) Percentages (%) (by Mode of Study)

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
UNDERGRADUATE	97.7	98.4	97.5	96.2	97.7	98.0
Full-time	64.9	63.8	64.7	62.7	60.7	53.6
Part-time	6.9	5.6	5.8	5.5	6.0	5.8
Extension	25.9	29.0	27.1	28.0	31.0	38.6
POSTGRADUATE	2.3	1.6	2.5	3.8	2.3	2.0
TOTAL FTES	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Mode of Study Comparisons, by level

TABLE 17: Credit Enrollment (FTES) Preliminary/Foundation

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Full-time	379	361	432	440	414	447
Science	209	218	267	254	238	268
Social Science	170	143	165	186	176	179
Extension	272	225	203	288	264	629
TOTAL:	651	586	635	728	778	1076

TABLE 18: Credit Enrollment Percentages Preliminary/Foundation

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Full-time	58.2	61.6	68.0	60.4	53.2	41.5
Science	32.1	37.2	42.0	34.9	30.6	24.9
Social Science	26.1	24.4	26.0	25.5	22.6	16.6
Extension	41.8	38.4	32.0	39.6	46.8	58.5
TOTAL:	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Within the Preliminary/Foundation programmes, the full-time student numbers increased by 68 students, mostly in science (Table 17). However, the extension students increased by 357 students, or by 131%, most of these being in Social Science. Significantly, the proportion taught through Extension increased from 42% to 59%.

TABLE 19: Credit Enrollment (FTES) Diploma/Certificate

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Full-time	259	223	346	335	266	370
Extension	56	99	167	188	137	168
TOTAL DIP/CERT FTES	315	322	513	523	403	538
Perc. Full-time %	82.2	69.3	67.4	64.1	66.0	68.8
Perc. Extension %	17.8	30.7	32.6	35.9	34.0	31.2

The Diploma/Certificate programmes show an overall increase of 223 students, a 71% increase over 1984. The full-time and extension both show about the same absolute increases of around 111 and 112, although the proportionate increase for Extension Diploma/Certificate programmes was 200% compared to only 43% for full-time students.

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TABLE 20: Credit Enrollment (FTES) Degree

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Campus Degree	990	987	1060	1154	1078	1119
Full-time	884	890	955	1068	992	1030
Part-time	106	97	105	86	86	89
Extension Degree	259	331	336	315	319	466
Under-Graduate Deg.	1249	1318	1396	1469	1397	1585
Post-Graduate FTES	52	36	64	106	61	66

TABLE 21: Percentages of Total Degree FTES

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Percentage Campus	76.1	72.9	72.6	73.3	73.9	67.8
Percentage Extension	19.9	24.4	23.0	20.0	21.9	28.2
Percentage Post-Grad.	4.0	2.6	4.4	6.7	4.2	4.0

As in the overall student enrollments, degree students taking courses through the Extension mode increased by 207, growing by 80% and taking their share of all degree students from 20% to 28%. Campus students increased by only 129 students, with a growth rate of 13%. Their overall share of degree students declined from 76% to 68%.

Figures on distance education graduates in this section are of limited value because students are recorded as Extension graduates only if they apply through Extension Services to graduate. They generally do (for logical reasons) only if they are completing the final course(s) of their programme of study in the distance mode. While a substantial number and range of courses are available at a distance, only a limited number and range of programmes are able to be completed fully and finally in this mode. Many USP graduates not classified as Extension, therefore, may either have begun their studies as a distance student and then transferred to one of the campuses, or have completed all but their final course(s) as a distance student, or have simultaneously studied throughout their programme as part-time in both modes. Finally, some USP graduates classified as Extension, moreover, may have pursued most of their studies on-campus and completed only their final course(s) as a distance student.

While foregoing considerations cause obvious difficulties with data on distance graduates, they arise quite positively from a policy of free movement available to all students between the two modes of study. With the modes' being regarded as equal in credit and quality, students may move to and fro without academic and administrative barriers. Only in those programmes unique to the distance mode, such as the Diplomas in Librarianship and

Legal Studies, and the Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language, are Extension graduate numbers not able to be subsumed in internal graduate data.

The breakdown for 1988-1991 is as follows:

	<u>1988</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	
Certificates	102	118	84	91	
PGCE	10	?	17	6	
Diplomas	20	29	23	58	
Degree	<u>1</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	
	<u>123</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>128</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>419</u>

Note 1. PGCE, the Postgraduate Certificate in Education

Note 2. The 1991 figures do not include all of this year's students who will complete their studies but who are awaiting final results.

As Extension enrollments during this short period were 41,959, the graduate total indicates the extent to which students do move between modes and choose to/or must complete their studies on-campus.

International Affiliation and Co-operation in Distance Education

USP is an institutional member of the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), the Australia and South Pacific External Studies Association (ASPESA) and is currently, in collaboration with the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE), seeking to establish a South Pacific Association of Distance Education (SPADE). Individual members of staff hold membership in the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) and the Distance Education Association of New Zealand (DEANZ).

The Vice-Chancellor of USP is an associate member of the Council of the University of Papua New Guinea (a mutual arrangement), the New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, the Councils of the National University of Samoa and SICHE, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the South Pacific Organisations Co-ordinating Committee (SPOCC) and the South Pacific Forum.

Co-operative relationships of many kinds exist between USP, other institutions and international agencies. These tend generally to be department, discipline or programme specific. Their multifarious nature is perhaps unsurprising in view of the facts that, in statutory terms, USP is itself an international entity; that 40% of its staff (these mainly at senior/academic level) are citizens of countries outside the South Pacific, bringing with them to USP many international contacts; that a developing institution in a developing world appropriately looks beyond itself for particular resources; that aid-funding in itself can create institutional linkages, in terms of the conditions adhering to donation; that, in an increasing number of academic research and teaching areas, the University is establishing international expertise (e.g. in the Environmental and Marine Sciences, Pacific and Development Studies).

Examples of linkages which relate particularly to the University's extension activities, however, would in 1990-1991 include the following: with Simon Fraser University and the South Pacific Commission for the development of Nutrition Training materials;

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with the French University of the Pacific (L'Universite' Française du Pacifique) in a formal Accord for support of Francophone students; with the University College of Central Queensland and the AIDAB Centre for Pacific Development and Training for the development of a diploma level course in Economics; with Massey University and the University of Papua New Guinea for the examining of their students resident in the USP region; with numerous New Zealand and Australian universities for staff development attachments; with UNICEF and the Pacific Preschool Council in the development of a distance Diploma in Early Childhood Education; with the Commonwealth of Learning in research, staff training and materials-sharing activities.

The external aid/support profile of USP is exceedingly complex in that grants are numerous; made by many donors and various types of donors; may be direct to the institution for regional application, or indirect to national USP ventures through bi-lateral aid to respective member governments. It can be recurrent or project-related; it can be financial, technical or instructional. As an indicative profile, however, a summary of external aid directly received by USP in 1991 is provided.

TABLE 22: Statement of Aid Income and Expenditure 1991

	F\$	F\$
Income	12,356,400	
Expenditure		
Budgetary	1,973,000	
Capital Development	2,264,700	
Project Support:		
Staffing Assistant	2,506,966	
Staff Development	586,588	
Other Projects	5,025,147	
		12,356,400

Foreign Aid

A few examples of the diverse practical ways in which the direct and bilateral aid programmes have supported the University's extension activities in 1991 are new Extension Services Headquarters, Laucala Bay campus (Australia); new Library Building, Solomon Islands Centre (New Zealand); Early Childhood Education post, Extension Services Headquarters (UNICEF); Science Laboratory Equipment, Vanuatu Centre (Canada); Library Assistant posts, Vanuatu and Tonga Centres (New Zealand); Instructional Design and Mathematics Consultants, Extension Services Headquarters (Commonwealth of Learning); Preschool Co-ordinator post, Extension Services Headquarters (Nederland); Nutrition Training Project (Canada); Distance Education and Summer Schools Scholarships, (CFTC); Science Co-ordinator's post, Vanuatu Centre (France); Regional Survey of Science Teaching Facilities (Australia); Small Business Skills Consultant, Western Samoa Centre (New Zealand); Continuing Education Volunteer, Fiji Centre (Japan); Staff Development and Instructional Design Workshops, Port Vila, Suva, Sydney (Commonwealth of Learning).

Table 23: Aid Distribution by Donor Country/Organization

	Budget Support	Capital Aid	Staffing Assistant	Staff Development	Other Project Aid	Total Fiji\$
Australia	1,191,000	1,060,000	812,823	356,568	641,510	4,061,900
Canada			82,693		465,707	548,400
France			86,000		102,000	188,000
Japan			120,000		274,000	394,000
N.Z.	782,000	404,700	328,200	66,270	668,830	2,250,000
U.K.			861,250	163,750	90,000	1,115,000
U.S.A.			51,000		871,000	922,000
C.F.T.C.			165,000		187,500	352,500
EDI/WB					229,000	229,000
E.C.		800,000			1,228,000	2,028,000
U.N.F.P.A.					267,600	267,600
Total Aid Income						12,356,400

Growth and Expansion

For USP, growth and expansion in terms of FTES, both internally and externally, is not a priority. Indeed, the policy in overall terms is for consolidation, control and the enhancement of quality. The University Council has imposed specific growth-limits, at least for the triennium (1991-1993); these are being strictly observed and will be reviewed by the next University Grants Committee for the 1994-1996 triennium. The Grants Committee's advice in October 1990, which became accepted as a future policy guideline, was that the University's 'standards are certain to fall further if it continues indefinitely to impose additional loads on already seriously overburdened staff'; that 'in terms of overseas aid, USP is likely to find it increasingly hard to attract such large sums as in the past'; that 'the University must ensure that the quality of existing services is not sacrificed in the interests of expansion, and that new initiatives are not introduced unless and until the additional and available resources needed for their successful operation on a continuing basis'; that 'special and particular attention' be given to the urgent needs of Extension Studies.

The recommendation, accepted by the Council, was that no significant increases in enrollment numbers should be allowed in 1991. Any increases in 1992 and 1993 should be kept to an absolute maximum of 5%. Thus maximum FTES enrollments for the three years would be 3,500, 3,675 and 3,755 respectively.

As the University Council comprises majority representation from member governments, the non-expansion has clear political support regionally. The freeze on

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expansion and call for consolidation come after the seven years of a frozen budget, a frozen staff establishment, soaring numbers and a 40% F\$ devaluation. In response to the new policy, approximately 4,500 distance course enrollments were declined in Semester One 1991.

The projected increase in distance enrollments for the 1991-93 triennium was as follows in 1990:

TABLE 24: Projections of Extension Enrollments (FTES)

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Estimate 1 (Total FTES)	1263	1496	1749	2022	2314
Estimate 2 (Total FTES)	1263	1398	1533	1669	1804
Regression (Total FTES)	1263	1199	1312	1425	1538
Number of Courses	151	160	186	202	229

Estimate 1 (a high estimate of 83% growth between 1989 and 1993) assumed that the average annual aggregate FTES increase for all students between 1985 and 1989 would continue, and that the proportion of Extension students would continue to change linearly as it has from 1986 to 1989 (so that by 1993, they would be 54% of the total). Estimate 2 simply continued the 1984-1989 average annual increase of 135 in Extension FTES to 1993 (giving a 43% increase between 1989 and 1993). The regression estimate fitted a linear trend to the Extension FTES figures for the different programme levels between 1984 and 1989 and extrapolates the aggregate to 1993. Clearly little of this will be able to occur.

Problems and Issues

The following is a personal assessment and evaluation of hindering factors. In "Distance Education at the University of the South Pacific", the Commonwealth of Learning's review of USP's first twenty years, the international consultant team observes the context as follows:

There can be no other part of the world with as many challenges to the development of effective distance education as the region covered by the USP. ... The problems which other institutions have to some degree, USP has on a massive scale.

The factors of this particular developing world context, which impinge on the effective implementation of distance education, are distance, regionalism, money and demand.

The common obstacles presented by distance itself in all distance education endeavours are massive for USP for one obvious and simple reason: the geographical vastness of its catchment/client region. This vastness factor is exacerbated by unreliable transport systems, erratic communications technology, small communities' dispersal on minuscule land masses remote even from one another and from their national Centre.

Regionalism, on the one hand, is an enriching unique feature, but on the other hand, it presents organisational difficulties, educational constraints, multiple agendas and learning

needs.

Common financial concerns affecting education internationally are writ large for a provider dependent for its survival on aid-supported proprietors for 90% of its recurrent budget; on Australia and New Zealand for the further 10%; and on global aid-politics for its year to year non-recurrent budget. Long term planning; academic development and commitment; the recruitment and retention of experienced staff; costly equipment purchases and general capital expenditure are continually and/or underlyingly fraught with insecurity. From 1984-1990 the University operated on a frozen budget, diminished further within that time, in addition to inflation, by a major devaluation of the Fiji dollar.

Demand has exacerbated the financial situation. The student roll increased over these years by 44%. Separating internal from external increases, enrollments expressed as FTES grew by 19% on-campus and in Extension Studies by 115%. In real terms as a result, recurrent expenditure per FTES fell by 32%. Not surprisingly, these general factors - distance, regionalism, money and demand - affect the external programme in quite specific ways.

Course materials and their range are limited by these factors. The effects of USP's developing world budget have been a frozen staffing establishment for the past seven years, staff salaries which are internationally uncompetitive, and frustrations with under-resourcing and work conditions. Academic staff turnover is, therefore, exceedingly high (60% of staff have held their posts for less than two years). The establishment at times must operate on 30% vacancy. Clearly, the long-term development and professional design of course materials are severely constrained by such unstable conditions. A course writer might leave during a development or revision process, be difficult to replace and not in time for process-completion. His/her eventual replacement is likely to come with little or no experience of the region and distance teaching, or with preferred other styles, course texts or focus. The results are that courses long due for revision often re-run unrevised for several semesters; that Extension's Course Developers - likewise too few on the ground - must often rush materials to production with little design input; that departments can make, with certainty, only short-term commitments to Extension course offerings (new, current and revisions).

Economic and distance considerations together combine to constrain materials-design in other ways. Our average distance student cannot be expected to meet the costs of expensive basic texts or additional materials other than print or audio cassettes. (Although the USP Centre can provide access to computers and VCRs, distance and islands-transport prevent this access from being general). Course design which fully integrates various media is precluded, therefore, in the interests of equity in the course market. Economic and educational factors constrain the provision and quality of external science teaching. No practical science courses are offered at degree level, and enrollments at lower levels amount to less than 3% of total enrollment. The constraints are a lack of suitable laboratories, either at the Centres or in local schools, and a lack of qualified in-country staff to conduct practical sessions.

Support services are also influenced by distance, money, demand and the regional context which create impediments like the following to effective learner-support. Some students, because of distance and/or cost will seldom or never get to their national USP Centre, thus conducting their course of study entirely at a distance; Centre libraries cannot offer outer-islands lending, through lack of qualified staff and sufficient books; in-country transport options and associated costs can preclude much outreach by Extension Centre staff;

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qualified Local Tutors cannot be found in many subject areas; tropical conditions and power supplies which fluctuate damage technical equipment (for which there may be no local servicing); Centre visits and Summer Schools are costly exercises, requiring aid-fund support for which demand exceeds supply; the satellite network, reliant on local land-lines, sometimes fails in accordance with P&T resources, or is impaired by voice-distortion from the HF radio sites. Staff and students are, therefore, very reluctant to support tutorials, although the system is available to them twenty-four hours a day. Assignment turn around remains a major support problem, hampered by distance rather than by money; most work is marked on-campus (for consistent standards and/or a lack of qualified local staff); it, therefore, must run the gamut of regional transport systems. Islands shipping to the nearest Centre may be regular but only monthly; mailbag services thence to Fiji are regular but only weekly; assignments, course materials and even examinations can be off-loaded at any time by our servicing airlines, in deference to higher priority cargo. These time-lags and hazards are obviously encountered twice - inward and outward in the despatch process. Most students, therefore, face final examinations without having received back all or most of their coursework.

The attitudes of teaching staff towards distance education vis-a-vis face to face is a problem. At USP, as elsewhere, old habits and values die hard - or, perhaps, USP's being young and dual-mode from the outset makes it more apt to say, imported habits easily flourish. Although, as elsewhere, exceptional teachers do abound, valuing their distance work and students as equally important, the competing ethos is that real academic work is conducted on-campus, by way of personal research and teachers with an audience. The particular problems for USP in the existence of this attitude are that the distance education programme and students are, nonetheless, such a large proportion of its institutional commitment; they are not an ancillary or optional obligation as they can be in more traditional universities; that the regional mission of USP depends significantly on effective outreach education. Indeed, both the Renwick Report and the 1990 UGC Report to Council chose to remind the establishment of this fact:

Many universities have enlarged or added to their extension functions during the last twenty years ... What makes USP different ... is the high percentage of students studying for Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees through Extension modes. What makes it unique is the contribution its extension programmes make to the reality of USP as a regional University.

The delivering of Education through Extension is at the heart of USP's role as a regional university.

USP's holistic or integrated organisation of dual-mode education is both virtuous and dangerous. Its dangers are informal and, therefore, difficult to address. It bespeaks equal care for on-campus and distance modes and a collective institutional responsibility for outreach. It creates in practice, however, few day-to-day champions and defenders of distance causes. It attempts to administer a non-orthodox, new kind of institutional mission along the traditional lines of an orthodox model.

It courts the dichotomy which can arise between the theory and practice of integrated, collective management: that integration easily becomes dispersion, with control, responsibility, accountability and mandate so blurred in community that managing for change becomes dishearteningly complex.

There are further impediments to the effective implementation of distance education in this developing world; these could be said to relate to colonial attitudes. These seem to exist as strongly within the region and its citizens as without the region. Addressing the extra-regional attitudes first, colonialism and entrepreneurship tend nowadays to come in tandem, making assumptions about the Third World which are culturally/educationally arrogant. Developed world institutions in some parts of the globe presume that developing regions, per se, must be in need of them; that whatever they have to offer will be better or good enough. USP quite frequently turns away salespeople offering academic products in subject areas in which USP itself holds international reputation; offering distance education materials to an institution whose external development experience often far exceeds their own. This is not at all to say that USP has no interest in course acquisition from other providers; this is only to say that developing should not be (but often is) presumed to mean amateur or any seller's market. A quality distance programme in a developed country is not always a quality distance programme for the South Pacific. Yet through long colonial habit (and the wider human tendency to see the exotic as more prestigious), some regional governments buy in educational programmes which may be more expensive, less relevant in content and less appropriately taught than those available from USP. Both in the imported courses provided in-country and those which are accessed by physical re-location, there are curriculum issues with human resource development ironies: students studying the law of other countries' legal systems; not studying the Pacific environment to become regional geographers, Pacific History/Politics or Literature to become regional teachers; not studying Tropical Agriculture, Pacific Nutrition or Land Tenure. Such students inadvertently are being trained for export. Not always are these choices freely made within the market. Increasingly, aid to developing regions comes with tighter strings and more obvious entrepreneurship. These can preclude shopping for the most relevant programme, as bilateral funding is channelled back into the donor country. There must be concern, also, about scholarship-funding from aid, which in its application, can remove from a developing region (and thus from a USP) the most promising of its young people. Thus, colonialism and entrepreneurship from outside the region and traces of colonial cringe within it can combine ultimately to impoverish the region: its self-esteem, its local resource development and its young people themselves.

It would be valid to say that USP's distance education programme does require improvement in the quality of resource materials provided to students, and in access to these; the quality of support services available to students, and in access to these; the quality of academic and production support provided to course writers and teachers; the quality of administrative systems both at Extension Services Headquarters and the Centres, and the interface between these and the University's wider systems. These improvement needs are observably not unique to USP, but they are consequent at USP of quite unique factors: frozen funding, frozen staffing, soaring enrollments and regional conditions.

Despite these on-going challenges, however, there still is much to celebrate in the quality and effectiveness of USP's distance education programme. Against those odds described in the Renwick Report as being 'on a massive scale', the institution has produced - and continues to produce - courses at least equal in quality to much elsewhere. It has become a course vendor over recent years, not from entrepreneurial aims but in response to demand. It has honed within itself, over twenty years' endeavour, many professional skills in distance education. An unrelenting context is one of the finest training grounds, and this

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one in particular demands patience and daily commitment. Extra-regional agencies of distance education would be advised to come with courage, humility and respect for its features.

For Pacific Islands students, whose environment is USP's own, the programme content, design, and support are planned responsive to their needs. Moreover, a pattern is now quantifiably emerging that USP trained students, more so than others, tend to remain in the Pacific returning their skills to the community. Such retention is a dire development necessity in all professional/vocational fields.

Auguring well for the future quality of USP's region-wide distance education are the further facts that the funding freeze has been lifted in 1991, with the Finance Ministers' decision for a 30% increase; that expansion of student numbers has at the same time been constrained; that distance education and extension support functions have been accorded initial priority in the increased level of funding; that many resources which will be freed by the withdrawal of on-campus Foundation Studies (almost 25% of 1989's internal FTES) are being applied to enhancement of the distance equivalent programme; that the major review of USP's distance education performance - funded by the Commonwealth of Learning and a full year in production - will shortly be received with its nineteen substantial recommendations; that the will continues strong to endure practical difficulties, to improve institutional performance in enhanced, expanded programmes; that the students keep on coming, in their thousands year by year, seeking distance study options as their only or more desirable means of access.

In his farewell address to the people of Kiribati, at the Graduation Ceremony held in Tarawa this year, Vice-chancellor Geoffrey Caston reviewed USP's special nature: its cultural wealth, its fields of excellence, the ways in which it serves. After his eight years of leading the University, it seems appropriate to accord his view the summary place:

USP offers to the people of Kiribati and the other countries of the region a university education and university research which are designed for the needs of the island countries themselves. As any international university should, it surveys the whole world of international scholarship and research, and selects and adapts from it those parts which are of most use to the particular communities it serves. It may not be possible to provide, for such a small population, economically viable programmes in all of the areas of higher learning, such as specialised engineering, architecture and so on. But I am certain that in those areas of higher education which we do cover, (and that is most of them) we provide far more effectively for the needs of Pacific Island students than the universities overseas which are the only alternative. ...

The quality of the work of this University is seen in the Commonwealth and elsewhere to be quite outstanding when compared to that in many other universities in other developing countries. Moreover, it is an international university of a kind which is almost without parallel elsewhere. Not just "regional" but truly international, with its students drawn from many nations, small though they may be, and its staff drawn from even more. The importance of this should not be underestimated. Many of the values for which all universities should stand - and only a few do - are those which transcend nationality and race. This has resulted in the creation at USP of an intellectual community of a kind I have not seen elsewhere. The Solomon Islander, the Tongan, the Fijian, the Indian, the i-Kiribati or indeed the European or American student coming to the University of the South Pacific has an important educational advantage which is denied to, say, the Australian or the British student going to a university in their own country. In the same way, the Samoan or American or British or i-Kiribati scholar working at USP finds himself or herself constantly challenged and stimulated by contact and even conflict with scholars from other cultures than his own.

The University shares with the countries that make it up the extremely unusual characteristic in the world of being both very very small and very very big. In my experience, its smallness helps it provide a caring and intimate environment for learning, while its bigness and immense diversity can enlarge the outlook and the capacity of all those, both students and staff, who come to work there.

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Research Activities

Although distance education at USP has always been an institutional rather than a sectional endeavour, research into aspects of distance education has tended to be undertaken only by the staff of Extension Services. To some extent perhaps, this is understandable in that career imperatives for academic teaching staff require that research reputation be established and maintained within their subject discipline and not in the field of teaching itself; in that the development, maintenance and support of distance education are the particular and primary tasks of Extension Services personnel.

Of the 120 substantive Extension staff members - located on the Laucala Campus and in the 10 USP Centres - 37 hold academic contracts. Although the tasks-requirements of these positions are markedly different from those held in teaching departments, the capability for and requirement of research still apply.

The on-going difficulty during the recent years of greatly expanding enrollment has been understaffing for the major administrative and support tasks which are immediate and daily. Pursuit of personal research activity has been, and continues to be, therefore, a luxury within working days. As J. Wallace has indicated in 'Extension Studies at the University of the South Pacific : An agenda for research', there is a wide and rich research field as yet untilled.

Over two decades, many research projects have been initiated by Extension Services. Of these, many have foundered through lack of sustainable resources (time and funding) or because of high staff turnover. For the many that have been completed, however, there has been an unfortunate lack of any central recording or systematic filing. Those that have been intermittently recorded are not accompanied by the details of the research team size requested.

The following list is not at all comprehensive, therefore. From those research projects known and recorded, a selection has been made with the intention of reflecting a useful range of interests.

Selective List of Completed Research Activities

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Ongoing Research Activities

"Barriers faced by Women in Distance Education in the USP Region, 1986 - 1990".

Joint research project in progress: USP and the Commonwealth of Learning. Duration 9 months, funding F\$35,000. Co-ordinating Team of 14 plus 10 Co-researchers. The Project Report will be published in the second half of 1992.

"Study of the Distance Education Institution in the South Pacific".

Joint research project in progress: "USP and the National Institute of Multimedia Education, Japan". NIME funded. Research Study team of 14; first monograph published July 1991.

"A Survey of Distance Education in Asia and the Pacific".

USP as contributor to joint project: NIME with UNESCO, 1991.

"Survey of English Language Acquisition Programmes available in Australia".

Joint project between the Commonwealth of Learning and Extension Services, USP. COL funded (\$A23,000). Consultancy to be undertaken and completed in the first half of 1992.

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"Survey of Science Teaching through Extension".

Research study to be completed December 1991. Survey Team of 4; funding of F\$20,000. Monograph to be published early in 1992.

"A study of the Performance of Extension Students who use Centre facilities".

Data collection and analysis completed. The report will be finished in 1992. Research Team of 3.

"Preliminary Investigation to Determine the Effects of Peer Group Tutorials in Reducing Drop-outs in Extension Studies Courses".

Phase One completed and report pending. Research Team of 3.

"Science Teaching at a Distance: The Effects of Using Audio Visual Aids for Practicals". In abeyance in 1991 for lack of funding.

"Measuring the Common Characteristics of Adult Learners Studying in the Distance Mode at USP".

Field Survey phase completed. Team of 2.