

COMMENTARY: MONGOLIAN AND AUSTRALIAN JOURNALISTS AND
ACADEMICS WORK TOGETHER FOR STRONGER, MORE
INDEPENDENT NEWS COVERAGE

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Abstract
If we scan the News Media landscape around the world, we might glimpse a few green shoots where new ideas and new enterprises are emerging, but almost everywhere else the view is dominated by rubble, collapse and dilapidation.

Even powerful media moguls such as Rupert Murdoch of the giant News Corporation admit that it is tough in this environment to make a profit with traditional newspapers and television stations— the result of interrelated factors: falling sales, declining readership/viewership, rising costs and new digital alternatives.

Of course, the closure of thousands of newspapers, magazines and other news sources worldwide has led to the layoffs of tens of thousands of journalists as well.

Just as these pressures have been damaging the viability of commercial news operations, governments around the world have sought to cut back on funding for public broadcasting organizations such as the BBC in Britain, the CBC in Canada, NPR and PBS in the United States and the ABC in Australia, in order

to deal with government budget pressures.

As a consequence of all these moves, the news industry worldwide has been hollowed out. Quality has declined and opinion has frequently replaced factual reporting because it is cheaper. Indeed the news industry has been opened up to interference. This was most clearly illustrated by the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections where there was evidence of meddling by organizations such as WikiLeaks and even foreign governments such as Russia which have propagated 'fake news' stories.

Politicians have been quick to take advantage of these developments as well, and even the new President of the United States has engaged in a concerted campaign to denigrate and undermine journalists and their news outlets who do not agree with him.

At the same time, highly partisan news organizations have sprung up to support extreme points of view and even conspiracy theories.

In this climate, journalists urgently need to decide how to respond. Some are fighting back and forming what they call

‘a resistance’. Others are declaring their opinions bluntly and joining the Opposition attacks.

A better approach, in my view as both a journalist and a University of Queensland academic teaching journalism, is to revert to our best professional methods of old: to become more analytical, more questioning, more investigative, more impartial, more stringent in pursuit of the facts - in other words, ever more journalistic.

Over the course of nearly a year, between June 2016 and May 2017, my UQ colleagues and I have worked with a group of about 20 Mongolian journalists on a program to do just that. The focus was on Specialist Reporting of the Mining and Resources Industry, but the underlying goal was to find ways to deal with this new world order that we find ourselves in. How could we become better, truer, deeper, more respected journalists?

This commentary attempts to explain what progress we have made.

This ambitious project was generously financed by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the German Federal Government owned international development company. The project works with the GIZ program Integrated Mineral Resource Initiative (IMRI) based in Ulaanbaatar. IMRI assists Mongolian journalists to improve the quality of economic and business reporting and increase the coverage of critical mining related topics for sustainable development.

Introduction

The *‘Theory and practical trainings of Mongolian economic and business*

journalists’ program was delivered by The University of Queensland (UQ) across four phases between June 2016 and May 2017. Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the program were delivered in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and surrounding areas from 8-12 July 2016, 11-15 October 2016, and 3-6 February 2017 respectively. Phase 4 was delivered in Brisbane, Australia and surrounding areas from April 26 – May 3, 2017.

The goal of this program in working with Mongolian journalists was to improve the quality of economic and business articles in the media and further, to increase the coverage of critical mining related topics for sustainable development. The training aimed to assist Mongolian journalists to adopt methods and skills of objective economic and business journalism into their work in Mongolia, and produce articles according to international journalistic standards. Approximately 20 journalists from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia were chosen to participate in the training from across a range of organizations. The curriculum and course structure aimed to build the capacity and skills of Mongolian journalists in the areas of fact-based reporting, objectivity in journalism, subject related knowledge and research capabilities by:

- Providing an understanding of the economics of the mining sector to inform their reporting;
- Improving the standard of economic and business articles to international journalistic standards in the media; and,
- Increasing the coverage of critical mining related topics for sustainable development including mining economics; macro-economic effects in a resource-driven economy; environmental management in mining regions;

gender issues related to mining; local value chains and business diversification; and, revenue management and utilisation of income from the resource sector for sustainable development. It was anticipated that as a result of the training, participants would be better placed to contribute to their individual organization's objectives to achieve better quality media coverage of the economic issues and benefits of a resource-driven economy.

The training was designed and led by Robin Evans, Associate Director at UQ's Sustainable Minerals Institute (SMI) and Bruce Woolley, Lecturer in Journalism with UQ's School of Communication and Arts (SCA). During the second phase, Dr Munkhzul (Zulaa) Dorjsuren, Honorary Research Fellow, Centre for Mined Land Rehabilitation, SMI stepped in as facilitator in place of Mr Evans. While the pace of the training program was busy with a large number of topics and activities to cover in short periods of 4-10 days in each of the phases, the UQ team was able to deliver an impactful program focused on contemporary issues in mining and best practice in international journalism. Participants were provided with formal and applied learning opportunities, exposed to a range of case studies, experts and organizations in Australia and Mongolia with expertise in media, mining and cross cutting issues.

The training was comprised of theoretical components as well as a number of practical activities such as: panel discussions, expert roundtables, carousel interviews, a forum, story writing workshops, field trips, and visits to public and private sector institutions

and mine sites. As part of the training, participants met with representatives from Mongolian and Australian governments and local councils, mining industry associations, mining and gas companies, national and local media, and civil society organizations.

Theoretical bases for the training

There were four major pillars to the training program:

- 1) arranging for the Mongolian journalists to obtain accurate, reliable and detailed information from high-ranking sources in mining and resources companies and government departments in Mongolia and Australia;
- 2) embracing what is termed 'Knowledge-based Journalism', which is an innovative approach to reporting developed by Thomas E. Patterson, Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press, who teaches at the Joan Shorenstein Centre on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government;
- 3) incorporating the 'Three Levels of Story Construction' conceived by Associate Professor Leo Bowman, head of the journalism discipline at the Creative Industries Faculty of the Queensland University of Technology; and
- 4) adopting the powerful 'Whale' storytelling model developed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and adapted by Bruce Woolley for this project and for teaching at UQ.

The detailed outlines of the various phases of training (below) will elaborate on the specific opportunities provided to the participants to obtain first hand

information from industry and government sources.

As for the subject of 'Knowledge-based Journalism', course participants were introduced to Patterson's influential text 'Informing the News' (Patterson, 2013).

As I see it, citizens need journalists more than ever, precisely because there is so much information available, of such varying quality and relevance. ... Public life is increasingly complex, and we need an ongoing source of timely and relevant information on the issues of the day. (p. 6)

But Patterson is not simply calling for more journalists. He wants more journalists who have a very deep understanding of the subjects they report on.

In any reporting situation, the journalist who knows more about the subject at hand has an advantage over the journalist who knows less. When reporters must file quickly, without the opportunity to observe or conduct interviews, they have no place to turn except to what they already know. Knowledge is the best remedy for hastily concocted, wrongheaded story lines.(p. 106)

He further argues that "Knowledge is the starting point as well as the end product of systematic inquiry, guiding the practitioner in what to look for as well as what to make of what is found" (p.75)

Professor Leo Bowman's concept of 'Three Levels of Story Construction' helps journalists to identify when they are

achieving 'knowledge-based journalism', and when they need to delve deeper.

As he points out: "Journalists give the best explanation of events available at the time" (Bowman 2005, p36), so they are most limited when simply reacting to an immediate story. The problem is usually one of deadlines, so often the true story emerges over time rather than all at once.

It is not always possible for a journalist to tell the whole story in one report. Journalists can tell the story up to and including the deadline using the information they have been able to discover (Bowman and McIlwaine 2001, p104)

Bowman argues the journalist's goal should be to aim for at least an analytical story and, at best, a thorough exploration or deep societal events.

These three levels are:

Level 1 – Reactive stage where we report on the facts of what has occurred and the immediate effects

Level 2 – Inquiry and analytic stage where journalists try to understand more about what happened

Level 3 – Consider the deeper societal issues, patterns or trends and begin to uncover some reasons or explanations that led to the news event

The next stage of the reporting process is to find the best possible way to TELL the story.

The simple and old-fashioned 'inverted pyramid', where most of the important information (who, what, when, where, why, how) is included at the beginning of the story with the less important details towards the end, does not usually work

well for expansive and important news features, investigations and analysis.

A better approach is the 'Whale Storytelling Model', which was developed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and has been adapted by this researcher for use at UQ and for this project.

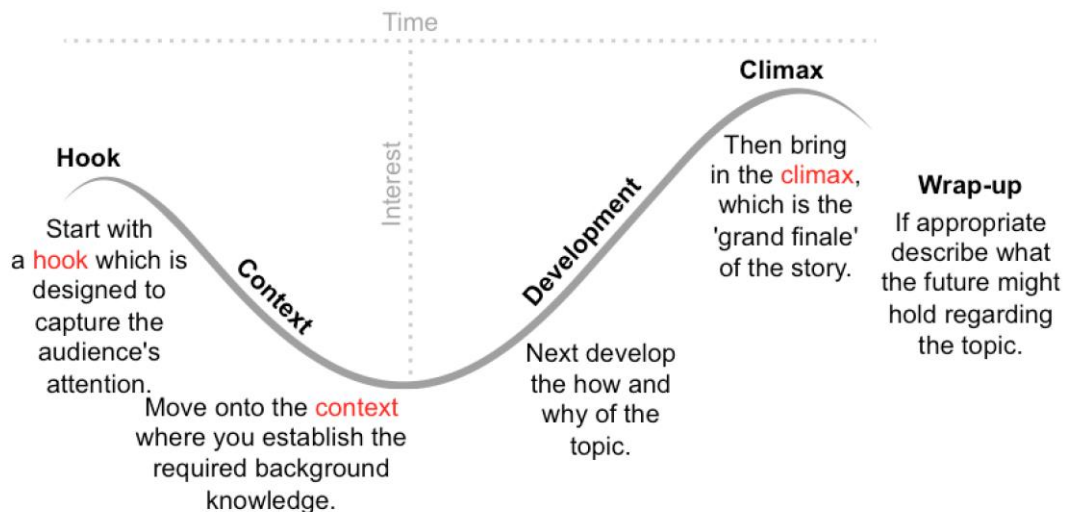
It envisages a story that begins with a dramatic 'hook' to draw the audience in, followed by a concise 'context' section (short and sweet, because context that includes the who, what, when and where is not very exciting), then the 'development' whereby the main characters in the

story interact and where the plot is played out (the how and why), with all this leading to a 'climax' or 'punchline'(the pay-off for staying with the story to the end) followed by a brief 'wrap up' or 'denouement' which looks to the future.

If a reporter uses this architecture for their story, it helps define the structure from the start, even before the news gathering begins in some cases.

It also offers a method of diagnosing when something is not working and ways of resolving the problems.

Here is a graphic version:



Phase 1 Training

The first phase of the program, delivered in Ulaanbaatar, provided strong contextualisation and the establishment of themes and challenges in reporting economic and business issues (specifically in relation to mining) in Mongolia. It was comprised predominately of theoretical sessions delivered by Course Leaders Robin Evans and Bruce Woolley as well as a panel discussion with local experts and the first practical story writing session of the program. This

weeklong workshop aimed to provide participants with:

- A full program introduction and orientation;
- An introduction to the context of journalism and the global resources sector;
- An introduction to the foundation principles of modern journalism including balance, fairness and avoiding false equivalencies;
- A review of the state of journalism and the various news business models in the 21st century;
- An introduction to a powerful new

storytelling model called “The Whale”;

- A discussion of the need for “Knowledge-based Journalism” as defined by the Harvard University’s Professor Thomas E. Patterson;
- A discussion of Interviewing Techniques and questions that work;
- An introduction to the five key mining themes: Local Value Chains and Business Diversification, Environmental Management, Gender Issues, Revenue Management and Mining Economics;
- A review of current journalism practices in Mongolia compared to Australia as it relates to mining;
- An introduction to various media forms and preparation for story assignments.

Phase 2 Training

A key focus for this phase was to shift from classroom training to developing and publishing stories, as envisaged in the proposal with the incorporation of a “pop-up newsroom”. The aim was that all interactions for this phase would be “on the record” so stories will be able to be uploaded and used by the journalists in their normal roles. The focus was firmly on the *application* of elements covered in Phase 1 to produce articles on key theme areas. Due to the Course Leader Robin Evans becoming unavailable due to an injury suffered in the lead up to this training, he was unable to travel to Mongolia for this Phase. UQ International Development, with the permission of GIZ replaced Robin with Dr Munkhzul (Zulaa) Dorjsuren for this week of training. This phase of the training provided participants with a range of opportunities to engage with knowledgeable Mongolian experts to generate material for stories. These included a ‘carousel’ of small group interviews,

where the journalists interviewed experts in the key thematic areas in groups of three or four for 20 minutes at a time, before passing to the next expert; a half day seminar on Mining and the Sustainable Development Goals; and a field trip to a coal mining area outside Ulaanbaatar.

Phase 3 Training

The focus of the third phase of the program was reflection and consolidation of learning in both the mining and journalism contexts to date. Preparation for Phase 4 in Australia was also a key component of this phase with a large component of the training in Terelj focused around ensuring the journalists understood the Australian mining and journalism contexts.

The first day of a four day7 workshop was held in Ulaanbaatar, and provided an opportunity to reengage with the group on their stories. It also included presentations from senior Rio Tinto managers and other stakeholders. The next three days of training were delivered in Terelj, and focussed on the development of story ideas for the upcoming trip to Australia, including familiarisation with the Australian context for mining. In preparation for their time in Australia, at the end of the third phase participants were asked to develop and submit to the Course Leaders story pitches that they hoped to cover in the next iteration of training in Australia. The purpose of this was to start the participants thinking about how they might use their time in Australia to their best advantage. Their preparation and incorporation of the Course Leaders feedback from this activity was evident during Phase 4.

Phase 4 Training

The focus of the final phase of training, held in Brisbane, Australia, was comparative analysis of the issues surrounding mining in Australia and Mongolia and exposure to international best practices in journalism and mining. The program included a range of opportunities to hear from media organizations, State government, local government, industry and community stakeholders across South East Queensland.

In addition to their time spent in Brisbane, the group travelled to The Western Downs and Darling Downs region to spend two days of local information gathering and interviews for story writing. The intersection of mining and gas industry operations along with the corresponding environmental and economic impacts is a key focus in this region, providing much material for the participants to produce stories about. The group also had the opportunity to visit and learn about North Stradbroke Island where sand-mining operations are an ongoing source of significant public and political debate relating to Indigenous rights, economic benefits to communities, and environmental impacts.

During this phase, the participants visited a number of Australian media organizations that included: Australia's national broadcaster the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Queensland headquarters; Brisbane-based online newspaper The Brisbane Times; and local media organization in the Darling Downs region the Toowoomba Chronicle and ABC Southern Queensland. Participants were not only provided with insight into television, newspaper, radio and online reporting in Australia but also the latest

applications and technology for monitoring the engagement of media consumers. The journalists had the opportunity to interview reporters and Editors in Chief at the media organizations with a focus on mining issues.

Mining stakeholders that the participants had the opportunity to meet and interview in Australia included representatives from: Rio Tinto, New Hope's New Acland coal mine, QGC (coal seam gas) and Arrow Energy (coal seam gas). The journalists also met with the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines, and Queensland Resource Council. From a community perspective, the participants had a productive meeting with the Deputy Mayor of the Western Downs Regional Council where they discussed community conflict between mining companies and landowners.

Outcomes: Increasing the coverage of critical mining related topics for sustainable development

Participants have produced and shared a number of articles on mining topics and sustainable development throughout the training program for Mongolian news outlets based on their experiences and learning on the course.

A review of the 'UQ in Mongolia' closed Facebook Group shows topics covered in participant stories have included (but are not limited to): mining-based development and its implications on macroeconomic factors (based on attendance at the Mining and SDGs Forum); social and community development; resource governance that enhances coherent policy implementation between state and regional governments; and, private sector engagement in

environmental stewardship.

In Phase 2, a field trip to Nalaikh coal mine town resulted in a number of feature articles being produced by participants for major daily newspapers. For example, a story on illegal mine workers and their health and safety issues entangled with unemployment, poverty and environmental pollution; and, a positive story on how one university is laying out visions to improve Nalaikh town's current social-economic issues through education were shared extensively by the group.

Furthermore, as part of the training, participants published same-day stories on the group blog. Journalists covered critical issues in mining and development such as: mitigating corruption in the mining sector, mining taxation versus local and community development, enhancing sustainable development outcomes of mining through multi-stakeholder engagement, and the impacts of mega mining projects on social development and more.

During both Phase 3 and 4 the journalists were exposed to various views on critical mining-related topics in the global and the Australian contexts. They were provided examples of detailed reporting on topics such as: the expansion of coal mining in Australia; the challenges of closure and rehabilitation processes; and the development of infrastructure, to name a few. They also had the opportunity to hear from government, industry and other stakeholders on these issues.

In Phase 4, the field trip to New Acland mine and meetings at Dalby demonstrated industry best practice and as a result, post-field trip publications emphasised: the significance of stakeholder engagement; open and transparent communication with local communities; well-established government relation-

ships at federal, state and regional levels that enhance law enforcement; and, responsible resource exploitation.

A number of articles were produced by participants during the training, and as a direct result of interactions on the program. A small selection of publications from Phase 4 of the training include:

- A two-part series of articles titled 'Scar'-less Australia and Mineral commodity distribution: Barrier-free Queensland vs miserable Mongolian Today newspaper;
- Coal: Them and Us on gogo.mn online portal;
- From New Acland to Mongolia on IKON.mn online portal;
- Time to enter the era of methane on Eagle.mn online portal;
- Study trip overview, highlights on mine visits, a broadcast on 25 Channel TV; and,
- Journalists and, a mining broadcast on Mongolian News.

These articles discuss emerging issues around the impact of mining on the Mongolian economy and more importantly articles such as "Time to enter the era of methane" by Soninbayar attempts to look at international forecasts on resource-based economies, provoking important discussions among readers. Environmental stewardship by mining companies is also one of the key issues discussed in all of these articles. Television broadcasts by Purev on Mongolian News, highlight environmental compliance by mining companies, particularly progressive mine rehabilitation and mine rehabilitation funds in Queensland. Licensing and approval processes for mineral exploration and mining lease are often discussed and participants drew on interviews with

relevant government and industry personnel to develop their stories around this topic. Feature articles on coal mines by GoGo.mn and IKON.mn were well developed with excellent use of credible data. These articles were also timely in terms of the current debates around coal projects in Mongolia at a time of increasing uncertainty in the international commodity market.

Conclusion

These articles are just a snapshot of the stories on mining issues produced during, and as a result of the training. We expect that the concepts learnt on this project will continue to inform and encourage quality coverage of critical mining related topics by the participants into the future.

Overall, the program worked very well. A number of the factors which contributed to participant satisfaction and the success of the program include:

For all four Phases of training, 100 per cent of the participants who completed the evaluations indicated that they were either “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with course leaders Bruce Woolley, Robin Evans and Phase 2 facilitator, Zulaa Dorjsuren.

Course participants also said they appreciated the opportunity to meet and interview a range of experts and officials in the mining and resource sector throughout the training. They were especially pleased that interviews conducted from Phase 2-4 were “on the record” and could be used in stories for their own publications.

During Phase 4, participants appreciated the variety of stakeholders they were able

to meet and interview in order to develop their stories from different perspectives. At each of the organizations visited, the participants were received by high-level representatives and provided with access to a wide range of information and facilities. Key personnel that the participants met at the organizations included:

- Vicki Thompson, Chief of Staff at the ABC Southern Queensland;
- Steve Etwell, Editor in Chief at The Chronicle, Toowoomba;
- Simon Holt, Editor in Chief of Brisbane Times;
- David O'Dwyer, Mine Operations and Tech Services Manager at New Acland mine;
- Cr Andrew Smith, Deputy Mayor of the Western Downs Regional Council;
- Simon Crouch, Director of Exploration Attraction, Geological Survey at Queensland Department of Natural Resources & Mines;
- Gordon Moss, Principal Environmental Officer, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection;
- Kristelle Townsend, Lead Social Performance Advisor at QGC.

There was widespread enthusiasm for the practical aspects of the training especially when participants were asked to conduct interviews and write stories for publication on the website.

In Phase 2, the carousel interview format used provided a unique opportunity to conduct interviews with experts in the mining sector in a short timeframe and was well received by the group. Similarly, panel discussions in Phases 1 and 3 were well received.

The Mining and SDGs forum in Phase 2 facilitated meetings and after-event

interview arrangements with high-level government and non-government figures and technical experts for the journalists.

As the course progressed, practical sessions were used increasingly as the participants' understanding of mining topics grew. By the time the group came to Australia in Phase 4, the focus was almost completely on providing practical opportunities for participants to meet with stakeholders and see firsthand mines or mined areas. Allowing the group to see mining in a regional context on the Darling Downs in particular reinforced information provided during earlier phases.

The course was continually adapted to meet the needs of the participants based on verbal and written feedback received throughout. For example, In Phase 1, trainees raised interest in data journalism and effective use and interpretation of data reporting in mining industry and, also in mining and community. Thus in Phase 2, there were two presentation sessions on case studies of data use in mining journalism in Mongolian and African case studies.

The 'UQ in Mongolia' Facebook closed group was an effective platform to facilitate information sharing and discussion, and continues to be so. All participants and course delivery team participated actively on this group. Information shared not only included the course materials but also related discussions and news articles on mining related topics, and the articles and documentaries created and published by the participants on Mongolian newspapers and TV channels during and after the training completion.

References

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Өгүүллийн хураангуй

Германы Олон Улсын Хамтын Ажиллагааны Нийгэмлэг (GIZ) нь “Эрдэс баялаг, Түүхий эдийн Иж бүрэн Санаачлага” хөтөлбөрийн хүрээнд Монголын сэтгүүлчдэд зориулсан “Эдийн засаг, уул уурхайн сэтгүүлчдийн онол, дадлагын сургалт”- 4 модуль бүхий сургалтыг Монгол, Австрали улсуудад зохион байгуулсан. Жил орчим хугацааны сургалт 2016 оны 6 дугаар сард эхэлж, 2017 оны тавдугаар сард дууссан бөгөөд миний бие болон Австралийн Квийнсландын Их Сургуулийн хамтран зүтгэгчид маань (Монголын 20 орчим сэтгүүлчид) уул уурхай, олборлох салбарын асуудлуудыг хэрхэн сурвалжлах тухай хичээл заасан. Энэхүү өгүүлэлд тус хөтөлбөрийн хэрэгжилт, үр дүнгийн асуудал хийгээд бас нэгэн чухал зорилго болох шинэ орчин нөхцөлд сэтгүүлчид өөрсдийгөө хэрхэн олох тухай зорилго биелэсэн эсэхийг хэлэлцэв. Бид хэрхэн чадвартай, мэдлэгт суурилан бичдэг, олон нийтэд хүндлэгдсэн сэтгүүлчид болж чадах вэ? хэмээх асуултад хөтөлбөрийн явцын үйл ажиллагааг үндэслэн хариулахыг оролдлоо.