CHAPTER 4 : PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 explained that issues of public relations (such as the lack of a body of knowledge) could be closely tied to issues of curriculation, which was strongly influenced by the education legacy of public relations education which was described in Chapter 2. Discussion thus far has rested upon a generic view of public relations education. It has been shown that in terms of public relations education there is a history that is related to problems of

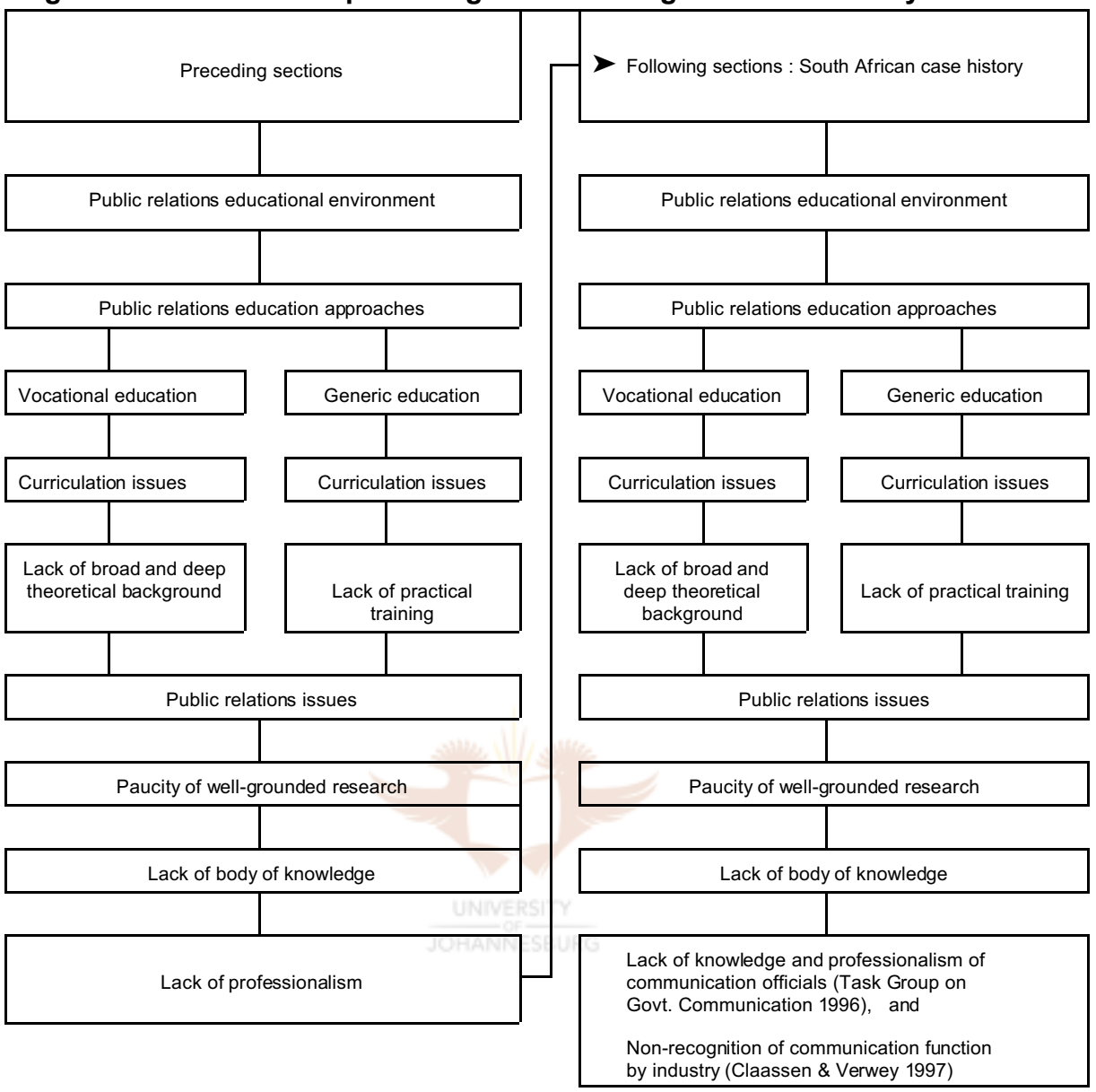
- approach (technician versus strategic)
- content (theory/research versus skills)
- curriculation (vocational versus generic)

These issues impact on professionalisation of the field because in the South African context these differences have been reflected in the distinction between technikon level versus university level education.

In order to understand the context within which the above tensions manifest, one needs to understand the broader South African educational context.

This chapter will view the issues discussed in the preceding chapters within the context of the South African educational framework for the curriculation of public relations education. The coherence of the preceding and the following sections of the study is elucidated in the following diagram:-

Figure 9: Coherence of preceding and following sections of study.



In order to gain better perspective on the distinction between technikon level and university level education, a brief background to university education and to technikon education is given. The implications of an *outcomes-based* approach to public relations education and training in South Africa and potential areas of tension between universities and technikons are then discussed, thus underlining its far-reaching effects. The position has been exacerbated by the impact of the changes with which higher education institutions have been grappling with the change to democracy since 1994 and the requirements of the White Paper on Higher Education 1997. The implications of these last challenges are described.

First, though, a short history of public relations education in South Africa is given.

4.2 THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Education for public relations began in South Africa as a module of communication application offered for a university bachelor's degree in communication. The University of South Africa offered a bachelor's degree in communication from 1970, following the closure of its journalism diploma course, which had set the holding of a degree as an admission requirement. The approval of the bachelor degree course in communication studies was granted subject to it being a purely academic and not a professional course. Furnishing students with a comprehensive background for expert performance was the guiding principle, and students were expected to specialise at a later stage in the profession of their choice, whether it be in radio, film, advertising, newspapers or public relations. The modules of communication application, such as public relations, focused on specialisation in the relevant area, with students doing assignments requiring practical projects. When other universities offered degrees in communication, they varied their offerings to a certain extent, some encouraging practical experience for the chosen specialisation being gained during the long summer vacation on a non-formal basis.

Communication studies in university degree courses can be likened to communication education at universities in Europe, as mentioned in Chapter 2, and seek to provide students who plan to follow careers in which communication holds the central place with the necessary knowledge and discipline to describe their own and others' communication critically, to interpret and evaluate it meaningfully, to understand it and, if needs be, to direct it for the sake of a better world (Fourie 1990:2-7). It can be seen from Fourie's (vide) description that the curriculation of a communication bachelor's degree differs radically from the curriculation of a course aimed at the application of communication for a career such as journalism or public relations. Being close to the university degree courses offered in Europe, marks South African university degree courses in public relations as being *generic education*.

When public relations education began as part of a university degree module in the 1970s, public relations in the market-place was focusing strongly on product promotion, and with the growth of publicity endeavours in the 1980s it focused heavily on activities

but these were largely not concerned with matters of substance. The practice of public relations was modelled on the public relations courses offered in the USA, and education was thus seen as *vocational education*, as described in Chapter 2.

During the 1990s, social change became the natural order in South Africa. Dealing with social change has magnified the need for public relations and has also made its inherent demands so complex that the career can now be seen as being akin to a step-ladder of many rungs. The higher the rung, the greater the need for strategic communication. Yet there does not seem to be recognition of this public relations situation, either by industry or by education training.

In 1981 the technikons (the new name for Advanced Technical Colleges) began tuition for the National Diploma in Public Relations. Technikon education is career-orientated education, and the name of the diploma utilises the career name. Usually the career name attached to a technikon diploma will also be the name of one of the major subjects, thus *public relations* was laid down as one of the majors. As every technikon programme must have two major subjects, the curriculum laid down *communication science* as the other major subject. *Communication science* covers theory and critical evaluation and is in line with communication studies done in university degrees but is neither as broad nor as deep, the reason being that the technikon curriculum focuses heavily on aspects of communication relating to the career of public relations and thus on skills. Thus the subject communication science gives a weight of 60% to theory and a weight of 40% to its practical application. *Communication science* is often referred to as the “academic major” of the course, public relations being seen as largely skills-based. Techniques for technician-level public relations is thus a large part of the training of the major subject public relations, with six months of its three-year diploma course being fully taken up with co-operative education in industry.

From 1995 technikons added a fourth year to their diploma course. Graduates of the fourth year are awarded a B.Tech. in Public Relations Management with the name of the diploma course also having been changed from 1995 to that of the National Diploma in Public Relations *Management*. However, there seems to be little distinction between the qualifications technikon diploma and degree in the market-place and, in addition, a low percentage of diplomates choose to carry on their education and training for a fourth

year so as to gain the B.Tech. degree in public relations. It is possible that this is because questions may be raised about the status of public relations education and it is to this that attention is now turned. However, perhaps it is pertinent to observe that the principle that there should be a sound base of background knowledge for the teaching of skills is as old as learning itself. Aristotle of ancient Greece advanced a theory of rhetorical discourse whose principles guide practitioners today on persuasion (Pfau, M. & Parrott, R. 1993:24-25). In the midst of his great philosophical writings on humankind and on communication in particular, Aristotle thought it valuable to include directives on how to succeed at persuasion. Thus he dealt with theory and scientific principles and also with technique, or skills. Likewise Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, (AD35-100) the first state-paid teacher in Rome (and thus an educator), wrote *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian* (translated by H.E. Butler 1953) in the first century. In it he discusses the human being and good communication. He speaks of the power of concentration, of memory, the principles of grammar and other philosophical issues of communication. Yet throughout he provides guidance for ensuring that the young child of two years old is started on learning how to become a skilful communicator. Once again, philosophy is transported into the everyday life of the social human being.

Attention is now turned to the question of the status of public relations education in South Africa.

4.3 THE STATUS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

Fourie's comment mentioned in section 3.7 that the fragmentation of communication studies does not lead to true specialisation under the present arrangement in South Africa because we are so much smaller when compared with the USA. and do not have the resources to provide sufficient training for our specialisation areas, is supported by the present position whereby *communication science* and *public relations* are both given the status of a *major subject* in one curriculum, yet *public relations* does not enjoy sufficient specialisation to justify such time allocation. When looking at the micro-syllabus of *public relations* as set out in Appendix 2, it can be seen that there is very little theory. Public Relations I, II and III consist, for the most part, of techniques and strategies. This is because (as already mentioned) *public relations* is an *application* of *communication science.* In order to illustrate the difficulty arising from this, reference is

made to the micro-syllabus of *communication science II*, where *mass communication* is covered in the first semester, and *persuasion* in the second semester. Here a very strong theoretical base of communication science relevant to public relations will be found, offering a platform of depth commensurate with expectations of a higher education qualification. A further point of great impact is that, because the *public relations* course is career-oriented, each major subject has, in addition to a particular number of theory lectures per week, an additional number of practical sessions (in smaller groups) each week. If the curriculum for *public relations* consists mainly of techniques and strategies, these will be covered to a large extent in practical sessions, leaving a very thin coverage for theory lectures. Moreover, should a public relations lecturer seek to involve students intellectually to a greater extent, problems will be experienced with overlap with other subjects, such as communication science and English. This difficulty arises from the orientation to the particular career as well as from lack of theory in the public relations subject. In seeking career-orientation, it is a tendency in technikons to cover what is relevant to the particular career as skills and omit, or gloss over, theory seen as belonging to an academic approach to the subject. One of the consequences of such an approach is that the same areas may be covered in a slightly different manner in several different subjects. For example, many techniques for public relations are language based, and the minor subject of English can focus on some of the same skills as are covered in public relations. The student seeking personal development and education will feel frustrated by the lack of depth in many "career-oriented" subjects, but there are also students who enrol for technikon courses in order to gain a qualification for a job as quickly as possible. Such students often state that they enrolled at a technikon because they understood they would not have to study much to gain a qualification, and that their hopes are pinned on the co-operative education scheme providing them with a strong chance of permanent employment. This approach does not serve to enhance the status of public relations. It is important to plan communication education so as to keep in mind the wide demands such as those mentioned in the Final Report of the Task Group on Communications referred to in section 3.7, the needs of students seeking ongoing personal development and work as communication managers and/or researchers, and also the needs of those students who desire a qualification attainable in a short time for gainful employment. If utilisation of resources for greatest possible efficacy and economy is sought, re-consideration of a curriculation which lays down *one* academically-recognised subject as *two* separate

majors, each requiring a large portion of learning units and each swallowing units of both theory and practical sessions, needs to take place.

After the African National Congress came into power in the New South Africa of 1994, the various educational systems were combined as an obvious first step towards equality. The need for a single qualifications framework became apparent, and in October 1995 the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established by law. SAQA carries responsibility for the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The NQF will integrate education and training by providing for nationally registered standards which will combine secondary education, tertiary education and industrial training in a single, unified system. (National Development Committee 1994:10).

Claassen (1997:191) points out that the National Qualifications Framework will:-

- Measure knowledge on expansion, rather than on syllabus content.

- Give recognition to prior learning not gained through formal study, provided the candidate shows that he/she possesses the necessary competence and skills. This moves away from the traditional granting of credits through a specific time period being spent at a formal institution for a given qualification.

- Give recognition to achievements of candidates with special learning needs, who may require a longer period in order to achieve desired outcomes.

- Promote the principle of transparency in formal evaluation through the use of standards established priorly.

- Recognise competency on all levels, where applicable. Candidates will thus be measured according to their own improvement rather than by set norms, and competition will thus be reduced.

As Claassen indicates, competency will be recognised on all levels by the NQF. It is apposite to refer to the definition of *competence* given in the Phase 2 Report of the

Education, Training & Development (ETD) Practices Project (1997:106-109). The qualifications framework given for Model 2 argues that a qualification should credential competence, but *not competence simply as operational know-how.* Because the team sought to attach a very specific meaning to *competence*, it is stated *"We wanted to bridge the old theory-practice divide and we also wanted to capture a capacity to learn about and from our own learning. We call this kind of competence applied competence."* (1997:106). The Report goes on to explain that *applied competence* is the overarching term for three kinds of competence, shown below as given in the Report:-

- Practical competence: Our demonstrated ability to perform a set of tasks.
- Foundational competence: Our demonstrated understanding of what we or others are doing and why.
- Reflexive competence: Our demonstrated ability to integrate or connect our performances with our understanding of these performances so that we ***learn*** from our actions and are able to adapt to changes and unforeseen circumstances.

The Report continues by giving specific meaning to the term *Reflexive competence*:

> *Reflexive competence is more than the sum total of practical and foundational competence. It is a competence in its own right. It draws on and integrates the other two competences but in itself it represents a capacity that is vital in our ever-changing world.*

The foregoing application of Model 2 basic definitions of principles of the proposed *outcomes-based education*, clearly shows the error of "reductionist education" stamping on the proposed new framework which characterises the view of many education practitioners who are insufficiently aware of the deep involvement of those seeking to find a new basis for South Africa education. This involvement is demonstrated by the observations in the Report (1997:49-57) of the difficulties experienced in the United Kingdom (where there has already been more than ten years' experience of the implementation of *outcomes-based education*) and in New Zealand and Australia. The "slowing down" process of the implementation of *outcomes-based education* in New

Zealand is referred to, where also the following quote characterises the current position in the UK: *"These problems were deemed to be serious enough to place a moratorium on the ongoing processes of standard-setting, pending the outcomes of further reviews and consultation."* (Vide 1997:54). This awareness of shortcomings expressed in the Report and Mr Sam Isaacs, Chairperson of SAQA's (ETD Project Report 1997:76) claim that we will make the path while walking it, provides re-assurance that the work of establishing a new framework will be implemented with sensitivity to issues significant to education. It is also noteworthy that, as quoted above, one of the underlying intentions of *applied competence* is to bridge the old theory-practice divide, which was mentioned earlier as a problem which arose with the establishment of *vocational education and training* and has been a cause of divide between university and *vocational education* ever since.

Fragmented education and training may be the cause of Claassen and Verwey's (1997:59) finding that the strategic role of public relations is viewed with scepticism by organisational management, who view public relations as a technical function. Holtzhausen (1995:117-118) cites Lauzen's (1992:62-80) argument that encroachment (the occupation of the senior public relations position in an organisation by an individual with expertise in another field such as marketing) took place more readily with public relations personnel trained on a technician basis, and far less readily with the public relations manager educated for strategic communication management as strategic communication competence increases the power of the individual through the environmental scanning function by enabling them to help reduce uncertainty for the organisation. The position needs to be clarified by clear labelling of credit levels so that industry can readily and easily recognise the competences attached to each credit level of communication education. Although the position is unclear with regard to the defining of competences for public relations, the situation has been improved with the research undertaken by Claassen and Verwey (1997). These researchers have compiled a generic framework of the outputs of communication managers according to levels of work. In compiling their generic framework, Claassen and Verwey (1997:49-50) explain the terms competence, skills and knowledge as follows:

Competence - According to Spencer and Spencer (1993:15) there are two categories: These are:-

- "Threshhold competences: These are essential knowledge or skills that everyone in a job needs to be minimally effective but that do not distinguish superior from average performers.

- Differentiating competences: Superior performers are distinguished from average performers."

Competence is seen as the superior level, constituting differentiating competences.

Skills - In public relations, skills refer to the ability to do technical implementation, such as the writing of press releases, production of internal and external communication material, and the organising of functions.

Skills are seen as threshhold competences.

Knowledge - Knowledge refers to the scope of information possessed and is usually associated with experience, although it can also be obtained through active studying.

Knowledge is seen as a theshhold competency.

In establishing levels of work, Claassen and Verwey (1997:50-51) utilised the stratified systems theory according to which qualifications in the workplace are represented, developed by Elliot Jacques (1982:77-82). This theory classified seven levels of work, and this classification was confirmed by Gillian Stamp (1993:2). Jacques and Stamp (1982 & 1993) agree that the first four levels of work describe the functions generally being performed in the organisation. These levels are shown by Claassen and Verwey (1997) as Table 17, below:-

LEVEL OF WORK	DEFINITION
1	Quality. Executing according to predetermined procedure.
2	Service. Determine the what, where, when and how for quality level.
3	Good Practice. Optimise use of all resources.

4	Strategic. Bring into being new systems, coordinate and resource systems, terminate systems.

Table 17: Levels of work (Stamp & Isaac, (1990:2-3); Jacques, (1982:79))

The need for ready comprehension of the competences attached to each credit level of communication, is emphasised by the finding that, on the table rising from Level 1 to Level 4, the highest overall rating of importance was awarded to level 2 outputs, whereas the majority of outputs are delivered at Levels 3 and 4, indicating *"a total lack of understanding of the role of the communication management function in the broader organisational context"* (Claassen & Verwey (1997:59). Claassen and Verwey state (1997:50-51) that neither the existing literature nor the empirical research they undertook showed communication managers in South Africa being appointed at higher levels than level 4. It should, however, be noted that the technician levels require technical skills to a large extent, which are largely provided by public relations training. Once, however, upper levels of communication management are dealt with, strategic communication is involved, covering areas dealt with in communication studies. It is, therefore, difficult to define competences for public relations education, for this is where we cross into communication studies. Claassen and Verwey (1997:59-60) offer a possible explanation of why public relations is seen as being tied to the technical level - communication managers are not always equipped to deliver the required outputs. A lack of understanding of changes in the business environment may be responsible for this, and *"results in the lack of ability to deliver the required outputs, because the necessary knowledge, skills and competences have never been acquired or developed"*. Claassen and Verwey (1997) ask if the solution can be found in the state of training and the criteria for accreditation.

The generic framework developed by Claassen and Verwey (1997:60) according to levels of outputs made by communication managers in South African industry is given below as Table 18:-

Table 18: Interpreted framework according to levels of work.			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
* Drafting of press releases 85.0% * Application of visual and technical aids 70.8% * Graphic design 57.0% * Copy writing 53.2%	* Collection and dissemination of information 92.3% * Interpersonal Communication 90.7% * Ability to function in a group 85.7% * Research and planning 83.2% * Oral presentations 81.5% * Planning and co-ordinating of special events 81.0% * Computer literacy 77.2%	* Knowledge regarding internal environment 91.7% * Media relations 89.5% * Social marketing 84.8% * Integrated communication 84.8% * Social investment communication 83.3% * Cultural change communication 82.2% * Intercultural communication 81.7% * Knowledge regarding other communication disciplines 81.6% * Cross-cultural communication 80.3% * General knowledge regarding various subjects and related fields 73.5%	* Problem solving competences 90.2% * Knowledge regarding the external environment 89.7% * Managerial competences 86.8% * Monitoring of environmental issues 82.3% * Globalisation of communication 81.7% * Counselling 81.5% * Development communication 79.3% * Knowledge regarding government institutions 74.5% * Knowledge regarding international PR 72.0%

In trying to answer the question raised by Claassen and Verwey (1997) of whether the solution to the problem of public relations being seen as being tied to the technical level lies in the state of training and the criteria for accreditation, it is helpful to look at some of the concerns raised by the Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996:107). The items are numbered for easy reference:-

(1) the lack of communication and information policy and the lack of an understanding of the need for such policy, and of how to write, analyse and evaluate it;

(2) the lack of knowledge about the ownership and control of the media and the impact thereof on public communication and information in society;

(3) the lack of professionalism in the South African media and the impoverished standard of journalism;

(4) the lack of an understanding of what the relationship between the media and government should and could be;

(5) the lack of knowledge about communications infrastructure;

(6) the lack of knowledge about communication management and budgeting;

(7) the lack of knowledge of how to develop a culture in which the importance of communication is acknowledged;

(8) the lack of resources for and an understanding of the importance of community media;

(9) the lack of knowledge about development communication; and

(10) the lack of knowledge about telecommunications and globalisation.

(Fourie 1997:107)

The question of whether or not the problem of public relations being seen as being tied to the technical level lies in the state of training and the criteria for accreditation, can be illuminated by combining the Generic Framework of Outputs according to Levels of Work with the list of concerns of the Task Group on (Government) Communications. The following Table 19, which links these concerns of the Task Group with Claassen and Verwey's (1997) Generic Framework of Outputs according to Levels of Work clearly shows which of the three kinds of *applied competence* should be given greater attention in communication education than has been the case up to the present time:-

Table 19: TABLE LINKING CONCERNS OF TASK GROUP ON (GOVERNMENT) COMMUNICATIONS WITH OUTPUT LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION MANAGERS ACCORDING TO GENERIC FRAMEWORK

TASK GROUP CONCERN	OUTPUT	LEVEL OF OUTPUT
1. The lack of communication and information policy and the lack of an understanding of the need for such policy, and of how to write, analyse and evaluate it.	Knowledge regarding Government institutions.	4
2. the lack of knowledge about the ownership and control of the media and the impact thereof on public communication and information in society.	Knowledge regarding Government institutions and Social investment communication.	4 + 3
3. the lack of professionalism in the South African media and the impoverished standard of journalism.	Collection and dissemination of information.	2
4. the lack of an understanding of what the relationship between the media and government could and should be.	Media relations.	4
5. the lack of knowledge about communications infrastructure.	Knowledge regarding internal environment.	3
6. the lack of knowledge about communication management and budgeting.	Managerial competences.	4
7. the lack of knowledge of how to develop a culture in which the importance of communication is acknowledged.	Cultural change communication.	3
8. the lack of resources for and an understanding of the importance of community media.	Social investment communication.	3
9. the lack of knowledge about development communication.	Development communication.	4
10. the lack of knowledge about telecommunications and globalisation.	Globalisation of communication.	4

As can be seen, 9 of the 10 concerns are on level 3 or on level 4, with level 3 involved in 4 concerns, and level 4 involved in 6 concerns. What does this say? It says that the abilities of communication professionals are in reality tied to levels 1 and 2 - the technician level. This should be seen as an indictment of both communication education and communication accreditation, for one of the concerns listed - being that of the lack of professionalism in the South African media and the impoverished standard of

journalism - addresses threshhold competences, according to Spencer and Spencer (1993:15), as cited by Claassen and Verwey (1997:49). It is the fact that even threshhold competences are inadequate which lends emphasis to the statement by Claassen and Verwey (1997:57) that it is essential that knowledge requirements are specified within the NQF, as this will ensure that candidates for accreditation are measured against these standards. Furthermore, there is a need to consider addressing those concerns which are not threshhold competences: managerial competences, the ability to monitor trends, social investment communication, globalisation of communication, development communication, cultural change, knowledge regarding government institutions and political influences, philosophy of communication, which can all be seen as differentiating competences, that is, acquiring these competences requires further education than do threshhold competences, and these differentiating competences distinguish superior performers from average performers.

The focus should now return to Medsger's (1996) report with the comments that there is a lack of understanding of the intellectual nature of the skills of journalism and that the term *occupational training* is intended to disgrace journalism in the university. It can now be said that both journalism and public relations, being applied communication, provide to a large extent for threshhold competences and to a lesser extent for differentiating competences. These threshhold competences provide the Practical Competence and a part of Foundational Competence in communication education. The balance of Foundational Competence and most of Reflexive Competence is acquired through differentiating competences which are dealt with in communication studies. An integrated communication curriculum can provide for *applied competence* comprising the three kinds of competence mentioned, and can also provide for specialisation areas so that there can be a strong focus on the Practical Competence for a particular occupation. However, it is important to remember that the Phase 2 Report of the Education, Training and Development Practical Project (1997:107) stresses that Reflexive Competence goes hand-in-hand with Practical Competence and Foundational Competence, thus it is also advocating an integrated curriculum. It is Reflexive Competence which deals with differentiating competences that will give the opportunity of addressing the concerns of the Task Group on Communications, and it can also provide the competences which will convince organisational management that communication education can provide strategic management capabilities in addition to technical function capabilities.

The Generic Framework according to levels of outputs compiled by Claassen and Verwey (1997) also clarifies another point which has already been briefly referred to. If public relations work is mostly on level 1 and level 2, it can be seen how difficult it is to stipulate *competences/competencies* for public relations *education* on levels 3 and 4 and above. Public relations as a subject relates to techniques and skills to a large extent, and thus provides for the ready measurement of relevant skills. Education in the public relations field is found in communication studies/science, for example, intercultural communication, organisational communication, mass communication and persuasive communication. There is thus an inherent problem in setting out competencies for public relations *education*, for this is really communication science/studies. Measuring public relations skills can readily form the Practical Competence and some of Foundational Competence, but fulfilling the Reflexive Competence component inevitably melds it with communication science. An integrated communication curriculum can be planned so that both can be adequately provided for and also promote efficacy and economy. Perhaps this is the objective in communication education in the USA integrated communication curriculum.

Communication education in South Africa must be able to respond to the concerns expressed by the Task Group on Government Communications. James Ogilvy (1996) sees Scenario Planning as providing an appropriate balance between theory and practice. He sees strategic planning used in collaboration with visioned scenarios as offering the corporate world a new opportunity *"to create a better future for humanity"* (1996:19-20). This recent approach of systems theory can be utilised so that communication education can be held in a dynamic interrelationship with its environment and pro-actively plan a system with subsystems which will provide for all the concerns expressed by the Task Group on Communications, provide organisational management with trained communication professionals capable of delivering outputs on all necessary levels, and also provide an appropriate competency measuring instrument so that accreditation holds national and international recognition.

It can be seen from this section and from what has been said previously that vocational (technikon) education lacks foundation to a meaningful extent and that university or *generic education* lacks practical training. This situation can be put into better perspective by a brief description of the background of these two kinds of institution in

South Africa, and this will also help to describe aspects of the broader environment which impacts on public relations education.

4.4 THE BACKGROUND OF THE UNIVERSITY AND OF THE TECHNIKON IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.4.1 Background of university education

Almost all of the residential universities were once constituent university colleges of the University of South Africa, which had been the University of the Cape of Good Hope from 1873 – 1916. At present there are twenty-one universities, each established by a private act of Parliament, with a council to administer control. The policy of the university is thus prescribed by law and regulated by the Minister of Education.

The goal of the university is high-level scientific education for the provision of higher-level personpower. In addition, the fullest possible development of students both intellectually and culturally is striven for. (Education Realities in South Africa June 1990:21. Pretoria. Dept. of National Education).

The extensive high-level education which has been carried out by universities is reflected in the following degrees offered in 1990:-

- 144 Bachelor's degrees
- 71 Honours degrees
- 202 Master's degrees
- 127 Doctoral degrees (Education Realities in South Africa 1990:20-21).

The National Plan for Higher Education (2001:44-45) shows that universities will offer the following degrees:-

Career-oriented up to 3 years
Formative up to 3 years
Career-oriented up to 4 years and above
Honours

Masters
Doctorate

in all 7 fields of study in which the 22 classifications of educational subject matter are grouped in the higher education management information system.

The manner in which norms and standards of university syllabi and /examinations may be prescribed and also the certification of qualifications, is provided for by statutory law, recently embodied in Article 126(1) and Annexure 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, No.200 of 1993.

The university, in meeting the first portion of its dual role, provides education which gives the student the background for high level personpower for professions. However, the student must thereafter obtain the necessary licence from the professional body concerned in order to gain full recognition in the job market. It should be emphasised that the fundamental and extensive background in the field provided by the university degree also provides the opportunity for the student to develop strategic thinking and adaptation abilities so essential to the development of leadership potential. This degree background also provides the foundation for the second part of the university role – the yielding of high level fundamental research to extend and to expand knowledge. University research deals with matters profound to the human being, such as medical research of enormous consequence. It also provides research on questions of diverse interest and importance to the country as a whole, such as the fynbos research in the Western Cape done by the University of Cape Town, agricultural research by the University of Stellenbosch, mining research carried out at Wits University, and on many other questions of social and economic significance. The significance of university research arises from its depth on fundamental issues. Such research is done by students for the Honours Degree, the Masters Degree or Ph./Doctorate in the relevant field.

It can be seen from this background that South African universities offer communication education that is generic and which provides a wide knowledge for fields of communication application. Public relations, therefore, as other applications, is offered as a module of choice for a part of the degree course, requiring projects and

assignments. As already mentioned, industrial experience is voluntary - though often encouraged - and must usually be gained during study vacations.

4.4.2 Background of Technical/Technikon education

According to Pittendrigh (1988), in order to gain perspective on the beginnings of technikon education in South Africa and also on its possible further development, we should look briefly at the history of the polytechnics in the United Kingdom:-.

* The development of polytechnics in the UK

  Following the industrial revolution, workers demanded training in their work roundabout the middle of the 18th century. It began as literary and philosophical training, given with some hesitation on the part of the middle classes. In 1820 a mechanical institute was started in Glasgow, followed by one in London in 1823, and thereafter technical training spread. The Great Exhibition of 1851 focused attention on the contribution of technical education to industry. In 1882 the philanthropist Quinton Hogg established the Regent Street polytechnic. Shortly thereafter the London Artisan's Club, the Trades Guild of Learning and the Artisan's Institute were founded and, by 1871, forty-five institutions were giving technical and scientific training. Financial support was given to such colleges by country and borough councils by the end of the century. The idea of external validation came about in the 1920's, when institutes of engineering and chemistry were approached for joint certification of college examinations.

  The great demand for tertiary education which arose after the Second World War in 1945, resulted in grants for university study and also for study at technical colleges which had become, by then, colleges of Advanced Technology. These colleges expanded their courses in response to students seeking courses of degree standard. This followed the recommendation that a limited number of colleges develop degree courses, made by the Percy Committee report on Higher Technological Education, in 1945. By 1955 it became clear that universities could not provide manpower at intermediate level, as required by industry. The four-year technological course was established at degree level, producing the technologist, as against the technician of the ordinary college course. In 1963 the Robbins Report recommended that Colleges of Advanced Technology become technological universities awarding their own degrees. In 1966 a White Paper "A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges" designated polytechnics as teaching institutions which would also make provision for linked research, whereby links with industry would be developed and maintained for the solution of problems.

Although the history of technical education in South Africa differs from that of the United Kingdom, there are striking similarities, too.

* The development of technical education in South Africa

Mining in South Africa played the trigger-role in technical education as the industrial revolution had long before in the UK. The railways established for mining required apprentices. Classes were started at Salt River Works, near Cape Town, as early as 1890, though these were not the first. In 1896, The School for Mines was established in Kimberley, and De Beers Company made it compulsory for apprentices to attend.

Students were transferred to The School of Mines in Johannesburg in 1904, following the appointment of a Transvaal Technical Education Commission in 1903, and the Apprenticeship Act (Act No.26) was passed in 1922. The Transvaal Institute underwent name changes and eventually became the University of the Witwatersrand. The National Technical Examination system became an established part of technical education from 1919 and this continued until 1943. From 1922 technical institutes were classified as "higher education" and central government contributed financially. The Higher Education Act of 1923 provided for organisation on a national basis of

- Technological faculties of universities
- Technical colleges
- Technical institutions and courses aided by Section 20 of the Higher Education Act
- Departmental trades and industrial schools including Children's Act schools
- Aided trade and industrial schools

This led to the establishment of technical institutes in all the provinces, with the Witwatersrand Technical Institute being established in 1925 for technical work, which was not seen as being part of the normal function of the university, Witwatersrand University. The Association of Technical Colleges was established in 1926. At this time, a commission was appointed to investigate the duties of universities and of technical colleges. The Secretary for Education stated (Pittendrigh 1988:122) *"the number of university institutions is already too large... This would certainly imply that technical colleges must be debarred from doing university work."* Protest by the Association of Technical Colleges led to the delay in the implementation of certain restrictive recommendations. Finance and financial control seemed to be the engine of development (or lack of it) for some years, especially due, of course, to the Great Depression of the 1930s. Colleges were called upon to train manpower for the war which began in 1939, and also to train and re-train manpower when it ended in 1945. A subsidy formula operated until 1964.

Act No.70 of 1955 provided for the taking over of technical colleges by the State. By 1963 the following colleges had not been taken over: M L Sultan, Natal, Witwatersrand, Pretoria and the Cape.

A great step forward was taken in 1964 with the Mönnig Report. Professor Mönnig was Chairman

of the South African Scientific Advisory Council and Scientific Adviser to the Prime Minister. Eight European countries were visited and the Robbins Report of the United Kingdom studied. One particular recommendation is of great interest: That the status of the four most advanced technical colleges in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town should be enhanced to that of technological colleges, in order to meet the needs of students at a level between technical colleges and universities. The name of College for Advanced Technical Education was accepted for these at a meeting of The Association of Technical Colleges in 1965. Soon the Vaal Triangle College at Vanderbijlpark and a new college at Port Elizabeth were also designated Colleges for Advanced Technical Education (C.A.T.E.s).

The following comment by Pittendrigh (1988:168) is quoted for interest:

> *It is of interest to note that in 1969 there were only 6 colleges for advanced technical education compared with 11 universities. In an industrialised society one would expect this order to have been at least reversed so that a much greater number of students would have been catered for by a non-university type of education.*

The next step was also one of great import – the Van Wyk de Vries Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Universities (1974) rejected the placing of secondary, technical and university education in a step-ladder positioning. The Commission expressed the opinion *"that the difference between the university and the C.A.T.E. lies in their respective function"* (Pittendrigh 1988:183-4).

The report (RP 25/1974) goes on to say that both universities and C.A.T.E.s are active in the whole field of tertiary education, and thus the C.A.T.E. is explained by the following quote from Pittendrigh (1988:184):

> *By "practical" is meant far greater concentration on the application of knowledge than on the knowledge itself. The approach is less academic and formal although a sound knowledge of science and technology must be built up. This knowledge is, however, acquired with its possible application constantly in mind. The training methods are also such as to foster this approach. (RP 25-1974:185).*

On the other hand, the Report states, a decision that a subject is appropriate for university study should be made on the

> *possibility of approaching that subject through the consideration of fundamental principles rather than through the imparting of factual information or of techniques. (RP 25-1974:186).*

It should also be mentioned that the Van Wyk de Vries Report (vide) did not support the idea of any body other than universities awarding degrees. Thus the 1970s saw little progress in the autonomy position of the C.A.T.E.s, but towards the end of the decade, new campuses were planned, and research by staff was accepted, but not the principle of research by students leading to higher qualifications. Further development of C.A.T.E.s took place after the Goode Report was submitted in 1978. It complemented the Van Wyk de Vries Report's (1974) positioning of C.A.T.E.s as being in the tertiary area with universities, although with practical-oriented teaching. This meant that there were no longer any limits on these colleges with regard to the reach of their courses.

The Goode Committee (1978) also considered the question of a new name for Colleges of Advanced Technical Education. Language experts of the Department of Education suggested technikon. Pittendrigh (1988:194) states that the public has fully accepted this name. Other suggestions introduced following recommendation by the Goode Committee (1978) were the separation of apprentice and technician courses, and the introduction of five and six year technical courses requiring a thesis, project or design. From 1975, applications for the National Higher Diploma (fourth year) were accepted in some courses.

One should emphasise the significance of the recognition that a technikon qualification could be granted through research. In 1979, a Department of Education document (Bylae C) stated that technikons would be involved in applied, developmental and technikon-didactic research (Pittendrigh 1988:196). By 1981, these higher qualifications of *National Higher Diploma, Dip. Tech* and *Laureatus* were receiving financial support from the Department, and the Minister stated that in his opinion, the technikons were taking up a position of equal value alongside the universities on the tertiary level.

It can be seen that the technikons have come into being through a long process of the development of technical education in South Africa. The completion of each stage has followed Reports of official committees proposing significant upgrading in answer to manifest needs. This upgrading has been embodied in Acts of Parliament. Technikons fall under the control of central government and, like universities, receive subsidies and each also has a council which administers control. Act No.200 of 1993 makes provision for the establishment, control, management and the regulation of technikons, inter alia. As in the case of the university, the policy of the technikon is prescribed by law and regulated by the Minister of Education. The abovementioned Act, therefore, refers to the manner in which norms and standards of syllabi and examinations may be prescribed. The certification of qualifications takes place in terms of the provisions of the Certification Council of Technikon Education Act, 1986. (No.88 of 1986 – the Higher Education Act of 1977 repeals certain tertiary education laws).

The Department of National Education sets out the objectives of technikon education in its Report 150 of January 1995 *Requirements for National Instructional Programmes at Technikons* (in Afrikaans). These objectives, in turn, impose certain requirements for every technikon instructional programme. The objectives and their requirements are:

(i) To support and guide students at tertiary level towards greater maturity.

This objective requires, firstly, that the level of every instructional programme and of every offering must be higher than that of corresponding instructional offerings offered at pre-tertiary level, and that an offering on level II implies a further increase in knowledge and skills, and this increase is also the case for each subsequent level of offering. Moreover, as composition and offering of instructional programmes and offerings must take place in an educationally accountable manner, technikons, and not the particular industries, must control the structuring and didactic presentation thereof.

(ii) To prepare people for a particular occupation or industry and to orient them towards the practice, promotion and transfer of technology.

This objective targets each instructional programme at the practice of a particular vocation. This, in turn, requires that technikons, industry and vocational bodies interact on a regular basis with regard to the demands of the vocation and also of personal development. Skills, knowledge, values and attitudes of the workplace must be imparted to students.

With regard to the transfer of technology, the Report (1995) suggests that "technology" be seen as the application of scientific rules and principles through the use of the properties of materials, within the limits of the community and the economy, in order to satisfy human needs.

The Report (vide) also sees this second objective as requiring the greater part of a technikon instructional programme to involve the putting into practice existing knowledge, technology, results and formulas. This means that a problem-oriented approach is fostered. *Technikon education is career-oriented.*

The foregoing re-inforces the statement that South African technikon education is modelled on public relations education in the USA and adopts a *vocational education* approach.

The technikon diploma not only provides education and training which is career-oriented, it also provides co-operative education, so that students undergo a short period of training in the relevant industry. The student may enter the job market with such diploma on technician level. This fulfils the first part of the dual role of the technikon. The knowledge and technology taught during the diploma course provides the basis for the fulfilment of the second part of the dual role of the technikon – research which is applied, developmental or technikon-didactic. Such research is done by students for the National Higher Diploma, Dip.Tech. and the Laureatus.

As previously mentioned, a fourth year was added on to the Diploma Course in 1995, and students who successfully complete this fourth year are awarded a degree in the place of their National Diploma, but it remains unclear what the position is in industry for technikon degree students. The National Higher Diploma, Dip.Tech. and the Laureatus have been replaced by the B.Tech., M.Tech. and the D.Tech. Research output has been limited, both in quantity and in profundity in public relations, although applied research in other technical fields has yielded breakthroughs of practical benefit and economic importance.

It can be seen that the university and the technikon have been seen as institutions which supplement and complement one another. However, this is no longer altogether true, for with the fourth year introduced in technikons as from 1995 so that diplomas of three year duration become the B.Tech. degree of four year duration for those students who choose to add another year to their studies, there is no longer a clear position of the technikon graduate fulfilling the technician role and the university graduate fulfilling a role of a higher position after having gained some practical experience.

As mentioned in the previous section, the stance of industry towards public relations (or communication qualification) is not clear while the Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996) has expressed many concerns about the education and training of communication officials, and the relationship of the technikon degree with the

technikon diploma in the eyes of industry also remains unclear.

The situation has been exacerbated by the many challenges to higher education institutions which have arisen both on an international scale and in South Africa itself since its change to democracy in 1994, but before these are described it is important to consider the implications of an *outcomes-based* approach for public relations education in South Africa.

4.5 THE IMPLICATIONS OF AN OUTCOMES-BASED APPROACH FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.5.1 Relevant background

Skilbeck (1994:16) in the report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development dealing with the re-definement of the curriculum for the 21st century, provides a thought which is most pertinent to this particular point in this study:-

> *The tension between vocational, utilitarian and instrumental functions, on the one hand, and liberal, humanistic and general education values on the other, can be a healthy situation. From such a tension, purposes and priorities can be clarified and effective impetus given to the change process.*

Outcomes-based education ushers in an approach to curriculation which at the outset visualises the consequences of learning. Yet *outcomes-based education* can be said to be more sophisticated than holding a distant viewpoint in that it characterises the outcome as evolving within the learner more than as something passed on to the learner. Such an involvement emanates from the learner's experience gained through activity, in order that knowledge and technique may be brought together and give rise to understanding. Strong foundational knowledge which is applied to different contexts provides the basis for reflective competence, thus learning results in problem-solving ability. Lifelong Learning is an important focus of *outcomes-based education* : Lifelong Learning does not mean a readiness to attend courses so as to continue one's student relationship indefinitely. Lifelong Learning is the capability of an individual to adapt to

changing circumstances throughout life by being able to apply knowledge in new situations and to adjust one's thinking as society changes, to be able to grow and adapt with new innovations - such as are involved in the change to that of an information society, for example. Thus an *outcomes-based* approach to education seeks to help the learner to foster within themselves a disposition fertile for learning, particularly in the chosen field. In this way, it can be said that *outcomes-based education* is significant to globalisation and all the rapid developments on an international scale which accompany it. It can also be said that *outcomes-based education* with its emphasis on competence at all levels is itself a force of change.

South Africa's change to a democratic state in 1994 ushered in transformation of the higher education landscape. The Draft White Paper on Higher Education 1997 - *A Programme for Higher Education Transformation* impacts upon both universities and technikons, as can be seen from the following points which it sets out as the basis of higher education:-

(1) The higher education system must be planned, governed and funded as a single national coordinated system.

(2) This system will be programme-based, with the range of programmes being diversified in order to provide the skills critical to social and economical development. Flexibility of programme approach must be fostered so as to offset pressures for homogenisation. Institutional co-operation and regional co-operation will be encouraged, with a view to greater articulation between tiers of higher education.

(3) Institutions must achieve desired outcomes through efficiency and the optimal use of resources.

(4) The structure of all degree, certificate and diploma programmes must be reviewed to ensure a better fit between school and higher education systems.

(5) The composition of student bodies must reflect the demographic realities of the broader society.

(6) Enrolments must be expanded to accommodate increased demand in promoting equity of access and redress.

(7) Equity of access must also involve a concern for equity of outcomes, so that the participation and the success rate of Black students at all levels and in all disciplines must be increased.

(8) Equity of outcomes requires change with respect to learning, teaching, curricula and the structure of degree and diploma programmes. Student support services, career guidance, financial aid and academic development in mainstream programmes must also be enhanced/ provided.

(9) While priority must be given according to labour market signals to career-oriented certificate and diploma courses in science, engineering and technology programmes, the social sciences and humanities field must be supported for knowledge production and analytic, intellectual, cultural and ethnical competencies.

(10) Enrolments on masters and doctoral level should be expanded to provide for the needs of the academic labour market.

(11) Distance Education and resource-based learning and new learning and teaching strategies should be encouraged.

The Draft White Paper on Higher Education did not, of course, materialise in a vacuum. Rather was it a significant step in what was, and probably will still prove to be, an ongoing long process. While the White paper on Education will have very many far-reaching effects, the focus now falls upon the tensions between universities and technikons created by an *outcomes-based* approach to education.

4.5.2 Tensions between universities and technikons arising from an *outcomes-based* approach to education

The implications of the White Paper on Higher Education (1997) clearly create tension

between universities and technikons. These are, in the main, issues of transformation. The following areas will require close attention:-

(1) The lack of provision for new knowledge generation and threat of course closure with the unification of curriculum objectives

The proposed single Higher Education system, with the NQF as a register of nationally accepted standards, does not make provision for the generation of new knowledge, which, according to the Human Sciences Research Council (1995:29-33) is an important contribution of university education. In curriculating to meet the requirements of the NQF, with the same credits being given for similar learning based on the outcome of such learning, universities and technikons will both be steered toward curriculation aimed at yielding the same desired objectives in each field/career. Yet the Draft White Paper on Higher Education (1997:17) emphasises that diversity must be ensured and pressures for homogenisation be offset. Diversity must be encouraged with institutions developing distinctive missions and being innovative in teaching and research (vide:13). However, diversification can require that the optimal number and type of institutions serving a particular field will be assessed, possibly resulting in consolidation or retooling (vide:18). It seems probable that this may result in a limit of the number of institutional courses serving a particular field/career in a given regional area, and the threat of course closure may create added tension between university/technikon.

(2) Skills as practical competence and the need for flexibility

As universities deal with fundamental knowledge and scientific principles of each field more than with the know-how of utilising such knowledge in the work-place, the demands of the NQF will be challenging for universities. There would seem to be less of a challenge by the NQF to technikons, for technikons have geared their education and training towards relevant careers, focusing more on *applications of communication*. Occupational expertise requires proficiency in technique, or *skills*. Skills can be seen as the overt or tangible evidence of underlying proficiency. Because they are tangible, skills are a readily-measureable part of quality. This sometimes leads to the assumption that skills are the totality of quality, whereas

skills in reality are like the tip of the iceberg seen above ocean waters. The principle of the acceptance of outcomes which establish what the learner can do with the expansion of knowledge of a higher credit, which outcomes must also have been recognised in consultation with business and industry, appears to be much closer to career-oriented education as carried out by technikons, than to the person-developmental, and exploratory-creative, and human problem-solving on a broad front, approach of the universities. One of the important issues is that it is vital to educate for the development of the human potential of a nation, not just to serve the needs of industry. Dunne's argument about the relationship of knowledge and good practice, and which was discussed in Chapter 2, has particular relevance here. Yet the universities are also serving the needs of industry. They supply the high-level personpower, the strategic thinkers and planners and the element that is most likely to yield the needed fundamental social change in South African society. Therefore, it is vital that the NQF provides room for both university and technikon education and training in the relevant fields, in order that the single system for Higher Education enables us to maximize efficiency in carrying out education and training, establish equity of opportunity for all, and also meet the nation's needs for the development of the individual, the production of a trained workforce for business, and also the expansion and harnessing of human talent for exploration and creative endeavour in research, which has become essential in the face of globalisation. Rust (1998) points out that globalisation forces demand a work-force of constantly-updated training and education. He states that the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which some saw as the biggest and most powerful supporter of the new – mainly African National Congress – Government of 1994, has become its biggest non-supporter. The underlying reason for this, Rust (1998) says, is that, in the face of globalisation, South African products cannot compete in the world market because its workers do not have sufficient education and training, resulting in the commodity quality-price ratio being unacceptable. Loss of markets is being handled by business leaders as a need for rationalisation. Cosatu responds by calling for mass action against threats of large-scale retrenchments. This impasse of political technique, Rust (1998) suggests, can only be broken by workers whose education and training renders their continuously-updated skills competitive in a changing world market. Leaders of business will need to be highly-developed individuals of

great insight and sharp judgement in economic areas, but also mindful of South Africa's needs for social upliftment and change. In this article, Rust (1998) encapsulates the need for the single system of Higher Education with its thrust for higher efficiency and greater effectiveness, but he also signals the vital requirement that the new single system of Higher Education provide personpower on all levels right up to creative exploration and calculated risk-taking and sensitive social awareness for leadership effective in manifold directions. This links strongly with Fourie's (1997) argument mentioned in section 3.7 that the rapidly changing communication industry intertwined with the effects of technology and subsequent convergences, requires students to have a sound knowledge in many areas so that they can be flexible. It also links up with Medsger's finding, referred to in Chapter 3, that *vocational education* resulted in a lack of flexibility.

It is clear that the foregoing yields an invocation for the single system in Higher Education to

- ensure that all study areas relevant to a field are registered
- consider carefully the discrimination offered by the number of credit levels settled upon
- ensure that the NQF offer credits pertaining to the full scope of education and training of both university and technikon.

One can see that there will be areas of study in which tension will arise between university and technikon in the need to gain registration and yet retain identity. Curriculation differences between university and technikon in a given study field may prove to be a great strength or a weakness for either one or the other. The need to plan adequately in fulfilling the purposes of Higher Education as set out in the Draft White Paper (1997:9):-

- to develop the intellectual abilities and attitudes of individuals,
- to provide the labour market with high-level competencies and expertise necessary

for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy,

- to produce socialised, enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens,

- to engage in the creation, transmission and evaluation of knowledge so as to ensure the continued pursuit of academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry in all fields of human understanding, through research and teaching,

rests heavily on *curriculation*. This burden will be heavier in some areas than in others but is of paramount importance in the area known as *communication studies* in universities and as *public relations* at technikons.

(3) The integration of education and training

As already mentioned, the White Paper states that secondary education, tertiary education and industrial training will be combined in a single, unified system through the standards set by the NQF. The following table taken from the document "Education Realities in South Africa 1990" shows relationships within the formal education system:-

TABLE 20: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORMAL EDUCATION SECTORS AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA IN 1990

SECTOR	LEVEL OF EDUCATION				
	Pre-primary Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Post-secondary Education	Tertiary Education
Public Ordinary School Education					
Private Ordinary School Education					
Special School Education					
Technical College Education					
Teacher Training					
Technikons					
Universities					

The table shows the university at the top of the education sector. However, with the conferral of degrees by technikons from 1995, technikons are moving closer to

the top position, for many claim that education that is career-orientated is more useful to society than the more liberal university education. Moreover, the co-operative education structure which technikons have built with industry provides the close liaison which a unified education system envisages. As has already been said, although some university communication degrees require students to gain practical experience in industry, this is not organised and monitored to the same extent as in the case of technikon Public Relations courses. For this reason, technikons are seemingly in a better position to integrate their education courses with industrial training.

However, true integration will require more fundamental changes. In addition to the integration of programmes of formal education with the training of industry, there is also the effect of integration of programmes of various levels in order to have a single national coordinated system. According to the publication "Getting to Grips with Unit Standards in the NQF," the NQF provides for eight Framework levels according to their *incremental complexity of process, learning, responsibility and application*, as set out in the table below:-

Table 21 : Levels of the NQF

8	Research	Tertiary
7	Higher Degree	Tertiary
6	Higher Diploma / First Degree	Tertiary
5	Diploma	Tertiary
4	Further Certificate of Education (FCE): Equivalent to Matriculation	Secondary
3	Equivalent to Standard 9	Secondary
2	Equivalent to Standard 8	Secondary
1	General Certificate of Education (GCE): Equivalent to Standard 7, or 9 years of formal education and training	Secondary

Each level provides for an exit point and is, at the same time, a stepping-stone for the level above. As can be seen, provision is made for qualifications on tertiary level of

Diploma	5
Higher diploma / First degree	6
Higher Degree	7
Research	8

Thus qualifications are assigned to a particular level and qualifications are obtained by the building up of a specified number of credits. Credits are allocated to a Unit on the basis of one credit equals ten hours of notional learning, that is, the nominal time it would take an "average" learner to acquire the skills and knowledge specified in each Unit Standard. The number of credits which are allocated to various Unit Standards will thus vary according to the demands of each Unit Standard. Unit Standards can thus be seen as the building blocks of qualifications. These building blocks may be credited towards a qualification provided each has been registered with the NQF.

The Government Gazette (1997:36-53) states that SAQA appoints a National Standards Body (NSB) for each field and the NSB defines and recommends to SAQA the boundaries of the field for which it is constituted, by the value added by the field, for example, process, product or service, related to other fields. Each NSB may recognise or establish Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) in its own defined fields as are required by the framework of sub-fields recommended to and accepted by SAQA. Each SGB must be composed of representatives who enjoy credibility in the sub-field in question, are able to exercise critical judgement at a high level, are able to advocate and mediate the needs and interests of all levels within the relevant sub-field and will be able to consider issues of productivity, fairness, public interest and international comparability as related to education and training in the sub-field.

SGBs will perform the following functions:-

1. Generate unit standards and qualifications in accordance with SAQA requirements in identified sub-fields and levels.
2. Update and review standards.
3. Recommend unit standards and qualifications to NSBs.

4. Such other functions as may from time-to-time be delegated by SAQA.

SAQA recognises the following twelve fields as the organising fields of the NQF:-

01 Agriculture and Nature Conservation
02 Culture and Arts
03 Business, Commerce and Management Studies
04 Communication Studies and Language
05 Education, Training and Development
06 Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology
07 Human and Social Studies
08 Law, Military Science and Security
09 Health Sciences and Social Services
10 Physical, mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences
11 Services
12 Physical Planning and Construction

Within a particular field, it should be possible for a student who holds a qualification from one institution to enrol at another higher education institution offering the same programme and continue with the next rung on the ladder. This is why it is mentioned that the new education environment may result in consolidation of programmes and a reduction in the number of programmes being offered in a defined area in any one study field. Particularly relevant here is the White Paper's encouragement of institutional and regional co-operation with a view to greater articulation between tiers of higher education. Such articulation had been advocated by Shippey, T. (1990). An important point which might influence smooth articulation is the integrity with which higher education institutions conform to an approved curriculum. SAQA will carry great responsibility on this point. Particular attention should be paid to the point which is of great integral influence - *qualifications on the lower rungs of the ladder must provide the foundation upon which the top-level qualifications are based. Top-level qualifications must thus be a development of previous qualifications in respect of both Foundational competence and Reflexive competence, and must also make provision for Practical competence which accompanies this developed Foundational and Reflexive*

competence. Thus higher education institutions offering communication education programmes must give due consideration to the implications of all three kinds of competence on each level. Here, it will not necessarily be universities who will have to make the greater adaptation of programmes, it could well be the technikons who currently put a strong emphasis upon "skills" in their curricula, who will need to incorporate greater focus on critical knowledge in order to lay a sound basis for Reflexive competence.

The challenge of the integration of education and training is a vital one which can be gainfully met by *curriculation*. Curriculation can facilitate the integration of secondary education, tertiary education and industrial training into a single, unified system as laid down in the White Paper. The NSB for communication education and training assisted by its relevant SGBs will carry responsibility for this aspect.

This point emphasises the vital need for a broad and deep knowledge background to be provided for in curriculation, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3.

(4) The significance of theoretical competence in competence-based curriculation

The applied competence described in Phase 2 of the ETD Practices Project (1997), as already mentioned, covers three kinds of competence -

Practical competence
Foundational competence and
Reflexive competence.

As stated earlier, Reflexive competence *"integrates our performance with our understanding of these performances so that we learn from our actions and are able to adapt to changes and unforeseen circumstances."* The Report also states that this capacity is vital in our ever-changing world. It can be seen that Reflexive competence not only integrates the other two kinds of competence, but *must also feed on theoretical competence*. The higher rungs of the ladder of a study field will include by virtue of the lower rungs, both Practical competence and Foundational competence, and a growing measure of Reflexive competence in the ascent. One

striking fact emerges - if the top levels of our study field are to provide for needs as set out in the White paper (1997) - such as those of the academic labour market - these higher levels must be a development of the lower levels. The integral demand flowing from this is that *theoretical competence must be built up from the first level* for a sound basis and must be developed further with each subsequent level, and a set measure of Reflexive competence must be established for each exit point. As this must provide Reflexive competence for each level right from the lowest and for each subsequent level, it is clear that curriculation will be extremely demanding. The position is exacerbated by the fact that technikons are preparing students for specific work - such as public relations - and, as stated earlier, their diploma is aimed at technician level, with six months of the final study year of about nine months having to be set aside for co-operative education. Moreover, Claassen and Verwey (1997:45-63) found that a lack of recognition of the communication function on its various levels by business is an underlying factor contributing greatly to the imbroglio that is communication education at present.

SAQA decision 0204/96 (Govt. Gazette 1997:47-48) lays down the following *Critical Outcomes* which would be applied in a specified context and can be successfully embedded with unit standards:-

CRITICAL OUTCOMES:

Learners will:

1. Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
2. Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation and community.
3. Organise and manage one's self and one's activities responsibly and effectively.
4. Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
5. Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic, and/or language skills in various modes.
6. Use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environments and health of others.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The translation of critical outcomes into unit standards encompassing achievement in communication education and training will be a very demanding task, which will evoke close attention and guidance from the relevant NSB and its SGBs.

(5) Responsibility for curricula

Technikons have used a standard curriculum. The procedure followed is that the Education Department sends the standard curriculum to those technikons to which approval has been granted for offering the programme in question. The programme will have been approved by the Minister of Education. However, such programme will have been through a long process of consideration and approval before being submitted to the Department of Education for submission to the Minister. The Convening Technikon (which for the National Diploma in Public Relations has been the Port Elizabeth Technikon for many years), would consult with other technikons which offer the programme, 9 in all, and request their consideration of each subject and of the subjects offered, and their submissions and proposals flowing therefrom. These submissions would be collated and again sent to the technikons concerned for comment. Consultation was seen as an important part of the process, which could take up to two years before the curriculum format termed "Form A" was submitted to the Education Department. The Committee of Technikon Principals (CUP) and the University and Technikons Advisory Council (UAT) examined the proposed syllabus and submitted their recommendations, after which the approval of the Minister of Education was obtained. This approved curriculum was then circulated by the convening technikon as "Form B". Technikons were permitted to deviate to a degree of up to 30% from the approved curriculum in order to allow for the inclusion of local content. It should also be mentioned that each technikon, before submitting its proposals to the Convening Technikon, consulted with representative employers involved in its Co-operative Education scheme, through the channel of its Advisory Committee.

It was previously mentioned that a revised programme for *public relations* had been introduced with a view to making it degree-worthy and the name changed from *National Diploma in Public Relations*, to the *National Diploma in Public*

Relations Management. The fourth degree year was added from January 1995, with the 1992 intake of students being the first students who were able to choose a fourth study year immediately after the third study year and obtain the degree *B.Tech. Public Relations Management*.

Universities do not have a standard curriculum. Departments of communication plan their own curricula and once it has been approved within the relevant university structure, it is submitted to the Department of Education for the Minister's approval. It should be mentioned that there is friendly consultation between academics of the different universities within a field, thus curriculum planning is open to peer influence from other universities on an informal basis.

The position is, of course, in the process of undergoing change with SAQA having appointed NSBs for the sub-fields. As explained, the SGBs will generate and recommend unit standards and qualifications to the NSB. Recommendations of credit-worthiness will thus be the responsibility of the SGB, and it will be in the SGB forum that any tensions which may arise with regard to curriculation will be discussed and accommodation sought initially. The NSB will accept/reject the recommendations of its SGBs, and its accepted recommendations submitted to SAQA for consideration in terms of the NQF. It can be seen, therefore, that there will be ample opportunity for discussion of any curriculation points which require fine co-ordination.

The tensions between the institutions of the university and the technikon which are likely to arise from an outcomes-based approach to education and training will have to be resolved as expeditiously as possible in the interests of learners. In addition, institutions of higher education have to wrestle with several challenges which have arisen as a result of efforts to transform the higher education landscape since 1994, and these are described in the following section.

4.6 CHALLENGES IN THE NEW EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

Even if South Africa had not changed to a democracy in 1994, its institutions of higher

education would have been greatly affected by forces driving transformation of higher education throughout the world. Smit (2000:8) summarises these as:-

- The digital revolution makes it possible to deliver flexible learning to any learner at any time anywhere in the world.

- Mass-education is increasingly pressurizing higher education institutions

- State funding of higher education institutions is being curtailed and there is an increase in the privatisation of these institutions.

- Universities have lost their monopoly with regard to research and training. Many other organisations have taken on these roles in society.

It should be stated though that these changes affecting higher education world-wide are magnified in South African education because of the turbulent change being brought about in tertiary institutions following the 1994 political change. Many of the present issues are the results of apartheid policies, practices and mindset, and dealing with these issues adds to the formidable list of forces driving international transformation summarised by Smit above.

Three major challenges have been identified for South African education and training. These are:-

- creating an equitable system of education and training which serves all South Africans well

- an improvement in the present quality level of education and training and

- an integrated approach to education and training that will take into account and give value to the kind of learning that people have already achieved in their lives.

The Department of Education has set size and shape of educational institutions,

efficiency, equity and inter-institutional operation as priorities for transformation (Smit 2000:12), while Grobbelaar and Jacobs (2000:15) state that there has been a clearly discernable shift for the university sector in South Africa from traditional identity to contemporary relevance, universality to particularity, autonomy to restriction and elitism to egalitarianism.

There is great uncertainty about how the many issues can be addressed. The complexity and scope of transformation seems to have been underestimated, and there is no clarity about how legal requirements are to be met.

Issues of transformation, such as the integration of education and training and competence-based curriculation having been discussed in the previous section, the forces of change impacting on communication education and training (including public relations) which will have to be addressed within each higher education institution can be described as follows:-

4.6.1 Expanding enrolment

Higher student numbers are a consequence of the effort to accommodate increased demand to promote equity of access and redress, with a view to achieving within the near future student body composition reflecting the demographic realities of the broader society, as laid down in the White Paper on Higher Education.

The following graph shows the percentage of total enrolments for the groupings : African, Coloured, Indian (taken together) as against White, for universities and technikons for the years 1993 and 1997 and the numbers planned by the year 2001:-

African, Coloured & Indian Students

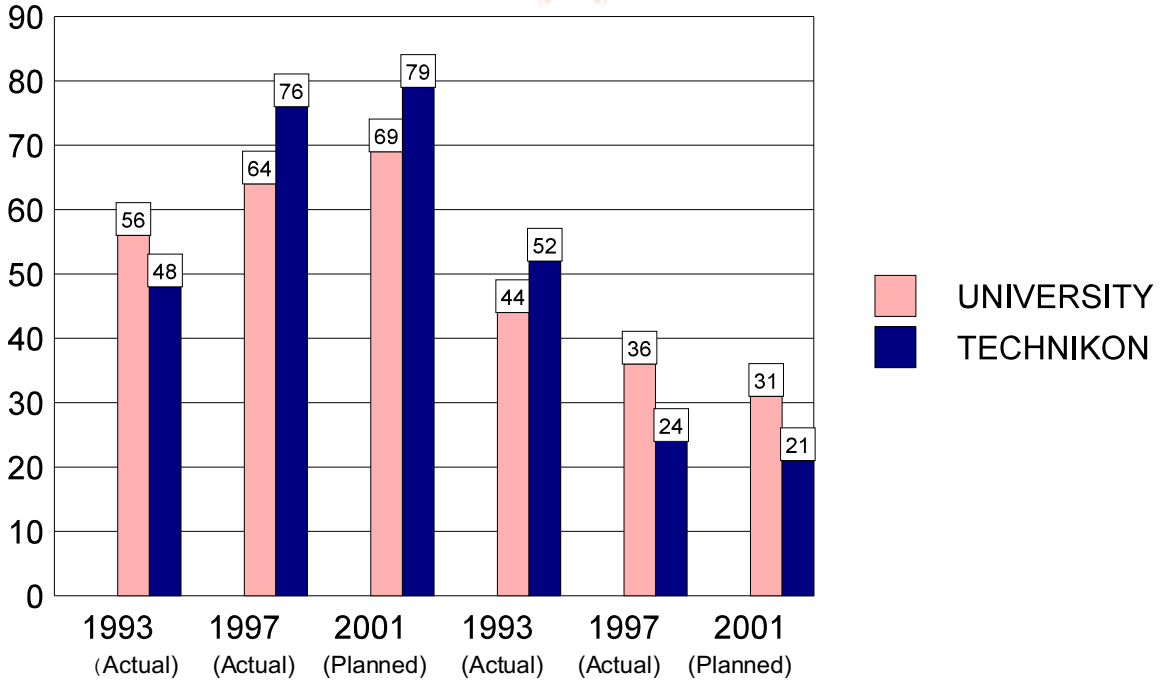
As can be seen from Figure 10, taken from the Cape Argus (12 May 1999), the grouping for African, Coloured and Indian students will rise from a total of 56% to 69% for university, and from 48% to 79% for technikons. The percentage reduction for White students is from 44% to 31% for universities, and from 52% to 21% for technikons.

White students

While it had been expected that the expansion of enrolments would continue each year, this has not been the case for 1998/99. In an article *"Where have all the students gone?"* in the *Cape Argus* on 12 May 1999, it is reported that South Africa's tertiary education system is growing more slowly than predicted and will reach just 650 000 students by 2001 instead of a previously projected figure of 1,1 million. A report released by the Department of Education on 11 May 1999 (Edusource 1999), suggests that the fall in white student numbers is due to perceptions of increasing instability and falling standards, resulting in white students moving into private higher education institutions. Emigration is thought to be another contributing factor.

An overview report on the first planning phase of higher educational institutional plans attributed declining enrolments at universities to a lower number *"of matriculants with university exemption, inability to afford fees, clampdowns on non-paying students and increased competition from private universities"* (EduSource Data News 1999:10). It is also stated (vide) that it had been found that institutions are making unrealistic enrolment projections and that they have poor planning, analytical and modelling capabilities.

Figure 10: Student Enrolment Figures



Whatever the reasons, the decline in student numbers at tertiary institutions is real.

From 1998 to 1999 student numbers decreased by 25 000 at universities and by 16 000 at technikons (Smit, 2000:11). This decline, which is largely due to decreasing pass rates for the Senior Certificate, had not been anticipated and has led to inaccurate projections of student numbers by tertiary institutions.

4.6.2 The income base

Another turbulent change which has to be met within the environment of each higher education institution is that of the income base. In real terms Cloete and Bunting (Smit, 2000:9) report that the number of white students at universities and technikons have shown a reduction from 230 000 students in 1991 to 180 000 in 1998. At the same time student debt levels increased to 660,6 million at universities by the end of 1999. The sharpest increase in debt levels have been at institutions such as the University of Transkei where student debt increased from 12,8 million in 1997 to 37 million in 1999, and Vista where student debt levels rose during the same time period from 33,3 million to 87 million. In fact, non-payment of fees by the general student population is an issue giving rise to great difficulty and unrest in some institutions.

The growing situation of non-payment of fees can be exacerbated by declining pass rates, for the government has linked subsidy to pass rates. Thus, although the average government subsidy expressed as % of total income has fallen only slightly from 65,13% in 1995 to 65,1% in 1997 in respect of technikons, some technikons have been far more severely affected than this average suggests, as can be seen by the fact that the subsidy reduction in real terms of a technikon such as Border Technikon has been from 90,2% in 1995 to 78,2% in 1997 (Technikon Fact Book, 1997/98). Furthermore, these subsidy reductions should be seen in the light of rising per capita expenditure. According to Smit (2000:11) universities and technikons absorb more than 10% of the total Education Budget for the training and education of 564 000 students - the rest of the budget has to provide for 12 million learners at school. Tertiary education is thus a very expensive system of education that is characterised by extensive duplication of facilities and qualifications. Another point with regard to income base is that in the interests of higher subsidies, tertiary institutions are inevitably faced with the question of lower standards = higher pass rates = higher subsidy.

According to a document issued in May 1998 by the Department of Education, a new funding formula based on the funding grid of subsidised student places will be introduced in the year 2000, when a wider range of earmarked funds will also be introduced. However, care will be taken to ensure that funding for the year 2000 does not deviate substantially from receipts according to the current formula. From the year 2001, Government funding will be based solely on allocations of formula funds generated by each institution's grid of student places linked to their institutional plans, and of earmarked funding. Enrolment expansions are thus an essential element for higher education institutions, and managing the accompanying challenges a *sine quo none*. It is against this background that the *Cape Argus* of 7 January 2000 has as its front page lead story *"UWC lowers entry standard"*, reporting that in order *"to steady student figures - and in that way secure a Government subsidy"* the University of the Western Cape *"has opened its doors so wide that even those without matric exemptions will be allowed to enrol"*. This is because the university is faced with declining enrolment figures and the threat of a smaller Government subsidy. The report also states that sufficiently high enrolment figures is one of the main criteria for the university continuing to receive its R150 million subsidy. In the same vein *The Sunday Independent* of 23 January 2000 ran as a front-page story the significant drop in numbers of matriculation passes and also in the number of pupils obtaining matriculation exemption, resulting in far fewer students obtaining university entrance. The income base is thus an area which is subject to - and which creates - many pressures due to change

The decrease in student numbers, coupled with factors such as a decrease in government funding, increased per capita expenditure, declining pass rates and changes in the income base, as well as financial mismanagement in some instances, has resulted in the situation in which some higher education institutions are, in fact, bankrupt.

4.6.3 Declining pass rates

Many tertiary institutions are finding that, in addition to the foregoing changes, they are facing declining pass rates. Expanded enrolments have ushered in larger student bodies per lecture, greater student diversity, increased lecturer workload as well as increased pressure with regard to language and communication skills. Declining pass rates are a feature of higher education of the nineties. According to Smit (2000:10) only 40% of

university and technikon students complete their studies in the minimum time period. Approximately 25% of students fail their first year of study and a further 30% never complete their studies. Added to this, only 13% of students pursue post-graduate studies.

The government policy of linking subsidy to pass rates, spells dwindling resources for some higher education institutions, which should be seen against the backdrop of having to provide facilities and education for higher numbers.

After a visit to all 36 tertiary institutions in South Africa by Peter Buchanan of the US Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Buchanan (Edusource 1999:18) commented as follows:

> *Tertiary institutions all of a sudden had to operate in a free and competitive market with sharply reduced government funding, while many students were being admitted without preparation and/or money.*

Buchanan (Edusource 1999:18) suggests that the education system needs to be properly supported, thus state support has to be stabilised in order to put other necessary non-monetary policies in place; in addition, a feeder system which would qualify students for higher learning should be established, and institutions should specialise - some at basic vocational education and training and some at higher levels.

4.6.4 Rapid change and uncertainty

Within each higher education institution, there is also turbulence created by rapid change and uncertainty. The rate of change and the repercussions of uncertainty upon the teaching environment is exacerbating the impact of change. Change in the educational environment is a normal, indeed an essential, phenomenon in this fast-changing, modern world. Adaptation with change enables education to encompass various developments and technological breakthroughs for the benefit of learners and so of society. Yet the rate of such change can itself have additional impact and magnify difficulty. Consciousness of risk of rapid change is expressed by the Department of Education in a document entitled *National and Institutional Planning Framework for the*

Higher Education System (May 1998). It reads (page 1), inter alia, *"This planning agenda will need to be implemented gradually and over time, with the pace of implementation being determined by the capacity of higher education institutions and of the Department of Education to manage the changes required."* Thus achieving the single, co-ordinated system of higher education which the White Paper envisages will flow from the development of a national higher education plan and institutional three-year "rolling" plans. These institutional plans will be developed within the framework of the national plan and approval thereof will trigger institutional funding. The Department suggests that the planning framework be phased in over a period of at least 5 years. This period can be divided into phases or sets of 3 three-year rolling plans:-

Phase 1	1999	2000	2001
Phase 2	2000	2001	2002
Phase3	2001	2002	2003

Phase 1 of the planning framework required institutions to submit during 1998 their three-year plans for the period 1999 to 2001, Phase 2 - beginning in 1999 - required new or amended plans for the period 2000 to 2002, and the final phase - beginning in 1999 - required new or amended plans for the period 2001 to 2003. The three-year rolling plans are the first requirement in a list of nine which the abovementioned document identifies as components of the Comprehensive Institutional Strategic Plan to be constructed by each higher education institution:-

- three-year rolling plans (containing student enrolment projections and responses to national policy priorities and targets)
- quality and performance improvement plans
- student access and development plans
- academic development plans
- staff recruitment, equity and development plans
- research development plans
- infrastructural development plans
- capital management plans

- business plans

While institutions were required to submit their first three-year rolling plans by August 1998, no specific targets were set by the Department of Education for 1999. Institutions were, however, required to take account of the broad policy trends and directions outlined in the White Paper (1997). The following data was required for the first three-year rolling plan:-

- student enrolments
- student outputs
- student equity targets
- academic programmes (discontinued and new)
- staff employed
- staff equity targets
- finances
- inter-institutional co-operation

While the Department of Education itself has taken cognisance of the possible effects of rapid change, implementation of changes can be strongly influenced by factors outside of education planning. For example, the Employment Equity Act, which became effective from October 1999, seeks to redress the inequalities seen as the legacy of apartheid. The rich diversity of human resources must be tapped into and discrimination eliminated, whether this be on ethnic, gender or disability grounds. Groups designated for special consideration include African / Indian / Coloured / Women / Disabled.

Not only should the staff and student bodies complement population representation, but planning for management levels must, for example, show a 30% representation of females. While statistics indicating gender representation on management level are not readily available, as many opportunities as possible need to be created to increase the

numbers of female academics at all levels in order to be representative of the population demographics, for women constitute more than 50% of the population. With regard to management level, the minister of Education, Professor Kadir Asmal, said in September 1999 that *"unless universities move on their own to have more women in top positions, he might set a target date for the achievement of this"* (EduSource Data News 1999:14).

The rapid change which is required with regard to appointments based on gender will also occur because of appointments needed to raise percentage composition of staff on ethnic bases. In 1998 Whites still represented 80% of academic university staff and 72% of academic staff at technikons (Council for Higher Education (CHE) Annual Report, 1998/1999:16).

With regard to student equity targets, in 1999 372 000 students were registered at the 21 universities and 192 000 at the 15 technikons. Smit (1999:45) states that in 1960 White students represented 90% of the total student population at universities. This percentage is currently 31% and 52% at technikons. The grouping for African, Coloured and Indian students has risen to 69% for university, and 79% for technikons. Black student representation in the areas of medicine and engineering still remains low at approximately 9%.

These figures show that there has been rapid change in student profiles, but also that this will have to continue unabated in order to meet the targets set. The balancing of places in tertiary education according to population demographics must have a strong influence within higher education institutions, but will also surely hasten the profound change which is taking place throughout the South African society.

It is clear that the appointment of white males to lecturing positions will be an exception to the rule, and that female staff members hold higher chances of promotion than do males, until the targets have been reached. These factors contribute to feelings of uncertainty among what has been the largest section of the staff of many higher education institutions - White males. These feelings of uncertainty are increased by the fact that, while the Department of Education has expressed awareness of the need to implement change gradually over time, the linking of the approval of the three-year institutional rolling plans (albeit in a spirit of partnership and dialogue) with block or

formula funding and of performance improvement plans with ear-marked funding (White Paper (1997) 4.50-4.59), added to the Department's proposal of a specified time period span of five years (1999-2003) (or more) for the phasing in of the Planning Framework, spectres any normal retirement date that is more than five years or so away as being not too close, but rather too distant, for feelings of comfort about such changes among this the largest section of lecturing staff of many higher education institutions. Surviving the drastic changes in staff profiles for terms much longer than five years must be a source of feelings of great insecurity.

According to EduSource Data News (1999:18), privatisation at universities has already resulted in 7,000 employees being retrenched, while the University of Cape Town and University of Transkei plan further retrenchments. At least 7 universities have undertaken programmes of rationalisation, in some cases reducing the number of faculties and in most reducing personnel. Mergers may also result in further reduction of lecturing posts.

4.6.5 Numeracy and technological skills

Many programmes in higher education require numeracy skills. The National Diploma in Public Relations, for example, requires computer literacy, for establishing computer data bases is fundamental to public relations record-keeping. This is essential for the technician level contribution to business research, and as such skills are also inalienable from research on a higher level in this age of information technology, numeracy skills constitute a vital area. Such skills are also important in subjects such as business economics, where the fundamental concept of profit and loss requires the ability to do figure work with ease.

The following is a representative example which illustrates the gap which South African higher education institutions must seek to close: Ms J Penfold, Faculty Officer dealing with student enrolments at the Cape Technikon, said in a telephone interview on 15 December 1999 that it is more the exception than the rule that students applying for registration have had any experience of computer work at school. The exceptions are mostly applicants from advantaged schools. In addition, these exceptions are also more likely to have mathematics as a school subject. Ms Penfold stated further that the

Department of Teacher Education at the Cape Technikon had enrolled many teachers from disadvantaged schools for the B.Tech. Programme in teaching over the last two years, who particularly state that they have not been exposed to computer training. Should the necessary funding be available at schools, these teachers will, once qualified, be able to teach computer skills at previously disadvantaged schools within the near future, thus improving the position. The mathematics training included in this programme is also likely to result in greater numbers of students obtaining their school-leaving certificate with mathematics as a subject at such schools.

While efforts such as the foregoing are likely to bring about an improvement in the numeracy skills of students entering higher education, numeracy skills are likely to remain a challenge for a few years yet.

It is reported by EduSource Data News (1999:22) that in 1997 the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (Thrip) channelled more than R112m into the development of people and technological skills, whereby universities received R105m and technikons R5m. In 1998 more than R158m was invested, benefiting 18 universities and 11 technikons.

It can be seen, therefore, that there are efforts being made both on the individual, as well as on the more general, level in higher education institutions to confront the problem of inadequate numeracy and technological skills.

4.6.6 Language and writing skills

A further challenge which has to be met within the environment of each higher education institution, is that of language and writing. The Education White Paper 3 of July 1997, states in section 2.8.1:-

> *Higher education institutions will be empowered...to determine their institutional language policies, subject to the Constitution. In their institutional plans, they will have the opportunity to demonstrate how their institutional language policies will contribute to the achievement of the national higher education language policy framework.*

Many higher education institutions increased their intake of students from disadvantaged

groups from the early years of the nineties, perhaps anticipating the political changes. For several years, therefore, higher education institutions have run programmes to help disadvantaged students with regard to language and writing skills. Although most lecturers try to make a contribution to help students in the areas of language and writing skills, this is extremely challenging when working on tertiary level. It also causes frustration to those students who do not need such help. It would seem that language is an issue which requires far more resources than is currently being allocated to its demands. The deleterious effect on the pass rate cannot be calculated. It also increases the workload immeasurably, as lecturers devote far more time than efficacy would justify in attempting to find the reasoning in unclear written communication, especially with complex problem-solving. There is, however, much encouragement to be taken from the fact that, while only 8-9% of the population speaks English as a first language, a very high percentage of higher education students speak English as a second language - this was found to be 99.1% in the Cape Technikon (Haydam 1998). In the absence of a prescriptive language policy (other than being subject to the Constitution) the White Paper (1997) provides room - and time - for tertiary institutions to develop a language policy which can cater for their particular mix of students and also take cognisance of the stated particular aim of tertiary education to equip students for a modern economic society able to meet the challenges of *globalisation*. *Globalisation* demands the recognition of *English* as the first international business language. This, together with the wide prevalence of English as a second language in South Africa, points tertiary education toward the utilisation of English as a teaching medium, particularly because of its wealth of written record in all subjects of knowledge.

Curriculation that is competence-based and which serves the integration of tertiary education and *vocational training*, must take note of the fact that a great portion of South African business uses English as the main language medium. Moreover, English is the international business language, and a curriculum on tertiary level must develop students so that they can serve to their highest potential. Language is, of itself, an area of extreme difficulty in the new educational environment.

Thus it can be seen that South African higher education institutions are grappling with many challenges. The front page of the Cape Times of 31 January 2000 headed an article *"Bleak start for technikons, universities"*. It spoke of some of the challenges

mentioned above and mentioned that an impending cut of 0,5% in government subsidies heralded another troubled year for tertiary institutions. Sipho Seepo, Vice-Chancellor of Vista University, is reported as saying that the cutbacks *"fly in the face of redress"* (EduSource Data News 1999). A spokesperson for the Education minister was reported as saying that the government was extremely concerned about the situation in tertiary education.

4.7 IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

It can be seen that South African higher education institutions are grappling with many challenges. Cognisance needs to be taken of the implications of the challenges for Communication Education and Training. Some of the more specific issues that will need to be addressed or are being addressed against the backdrop of the changes in the educational landscape are:-

- Re-curriculating communication courses to foster both foundational and practical competence, but in particular meeting the demand for problem-solving skills through the fostering of reflexive competence in communication education and training programmes.

- Improving inter-institutional co-operation, not only between departments of communication, but also between universities and technikons.

- Taking cognisance of the changes in student demographics and the training and educational needs of industry, as well as the changes with regard to the mode of knowledge production. This may necessitate changes in communication teaching and learning styles, as well as in the evaluation of the required communication competence. In particular this may mean adapting communication curricula through the *Africanisation* of content to address the academic needs of our society.

- Re-establishing the trust of students, parents and employers through maintaining and

ensuring the relevance and quality of communication education and training. It is only through quality assurance that South African communication educational institutions will be in a position to compete successfully with overseas institutions for graduate and post-graduate students.

- Developing and appointing competent communication educators at all levels that are representative of South Africa's demographic profile.
- Pro-actively planning at all levels to ensure timely adaptation to the forces of change that impact on communication education and training.

It can be seen that the educational environment for public relations is most dynamic. In such an environment, issues which require urgent attention peculiar to a particular field can easily be clouded. While all fields are likely to undergo basic change in education and training in order to comply with the requirements of the White Paper on Higher Education, public relations needs urgent and even more profound change than most. This claim can be strengthened or moderated by an analysis of a case history.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 has shown how the issues which were discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 manifest in South Africa. It has revealed that, not only is there a lack of recognition of the communication function on its various levels by South African industry, who view public relations as a technician level function, but the Task Group on (Govt.) Communications (1996) has a long list of concerns about general shortcomings of communication professionals. Closer examination of this list identifies 90% of these shortcomings as being on the levels of strategic communication and the good practice of communication, in other words, on levels of communication management, with the remaining 10% of concerns being on technician level. This position is seen as a serious indictment of communication education and training in South Africa. It is pointed out that university (generic) education lacks practical training, while technikon (vocational) education lacks foundation to a large extent.

It follows that the communication climate is likely to become even more unsettled with the implications of an *outcomes-based* approach to education in South Africa and the

tensions arising therefrom between universities and technikons. The greatest challenge might be, not the practical competence to which universities will have to give special attention, but rather the integration of education and training requiring that theoretical competence be built from the first to the highest level, to which technikons will have to give particular attention.

The foregoing requirements are not only very demanding but are exacerbated by the challenges every higher education institution is struggling with since the changes to a democracy in 1994 and the other profound changes contained in the White Paper on Higher Education 1997.

The issues which have been described need to be considered within a broader educational environment. The issues pertaining to curriculation of public relations education need to be placed within a broader framework such as a systems model. It has been shown how the approach to education and thus its curriculation is closely linked to its context, including its culture.

The next chapter seeks to provide a systems framework in order that the many variables influencing public relations education may be integrated, and this framework can then be utilised for the purposes of analysis of the South African public relations situation at technikon level.