

CHAPTER 6 : CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE RE-CURRICULATION OF TECHNIKON LEVEL PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION : A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, it was shown that the different cultures of USA and of Europe contributed to different environments which resulted in different approaches to the curriculum of public relations education being adopted. Chapter 3 examined the issues flowing from these different approaches, and Chapter 4 showed how these issues manifest in the South African environment. This has also provided the background to the case study to be dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter 5 developed a systems framework for analysis of the case study. First, though, the methodology of the case study and the appropriateness of a case study approach is discussed, and the rationale for selecting the Cape Technikon is explained. The methodology utilised in the case study is then described before the systems framework which was developed in Chapter 5 is used for analysis of the case study. The curriculum approach to public relations education at the Cape Technikon is described, after which the analysis of the student appraisal is given. The relevance of this analysis to the curriculum of public relations education at other South African technikons is considered and the significance of student appraisal indicators for the re-curriculum of the South African technikon public relations programmes focused on.

Before the study turns to the methodology of the case study and the appropriateness of a case study approach, the issues facing public relations education, which were discussed in Chapter 3, are again set out for ready reference with the case study:-

- The lack of a body of knowledge whose theories have been scientifically tested by the scientific community and the lack of ongoing theory development, which is closely allied to its lack of research on substantive issues.
- The failure of public relations to define its fundamental purpose, its dominant metaphor, its scope or its underlying dimensions.

- The need for two majors.
- Applied communication as specialisation.
- Ethics in public relations.

6.2 METHODOLOGY OF THE CASE STUDY AND THE APPROPRIATENESS OF A CASE STUDY APPROACH

At first sight, research design posed a problem because of the obvious small sample size. For example, Jensen and Rodgers (2001:235) state that weighting the findings of case studies on the basis of sample size and correcting for statistical artifacts increases the generalisability and validity of the findings. It is clear that this research cannot rely on statistical analysis and generalisability, given the fact that the total population is 13. In this case study, while it might be argued that a larger total population could have been obtained by utilising all of the learners involved in the public relations programme at the institution focused upon in the case history, this would have had the great drawback of gaining comment from learners who were at various stages of knowledge accumulation.

The small number of fourth year learners throughout technikons in South Africa, also bears testimony to the dedication, enthusiasm and interest of the group who formed the appraisal group, and it can also be argued that their ability to evaluate is likely to be better than that of the average learner of the public relations programme as a whole. Chetty (1996:73) states that the case study avoids problems resulting from small sample size. Had the comments offered by this small appraisal group shown no connection with the points focused on in this study, it would have raised some concern about the validity of those points, in spite of their being a small group. It could have been argued that this select group (select compared with the group of the programme from the first year upwards) should have noted some effect on learners of the issues this study has raised. The reinforcement of the points raised in this study by the appraisal group should, therefore, be seen as an acceptable strengthening factor.

Jensen and Rodgers (2001:235) state that case study research is criticised because knowledge is not being cumulated. These authors (vide) believe that the claim that

findings of research studies are not generalisable is met by meta-analysis of findings from many case studies, organised around a specific unit of analysis, which is a powerful test of generalisability. They (vide) also state that a single case study yields “intellectual gold” for the network of research on an “entity”, which they describe as the research setting. Yin (1989:21) points out that case studies are generalisable to theoretical positions and not to populations or universes.

Jensen and Rodgers (2001:235) also mention the criticism that case study research is of low quality. In addition to the already-mentioned question of external validity, or generalisation, Jensen and Rodgers (vide) state that it is important that the researcher be aware of internal validity, or the fact that extraneous factors may have affected results. Given such awareness, these authors (vide) hold that each case study contains a rich body of information that can be used to evaluate the conditions for which a theory is held to be true. They (2001:252-275) also observe that there is no clear agreement on which criteria should be used to study quality and that the use of identical criteria has yielded inconsistent findings by different research evaluators for the same research, that the criteria themselves are not internally consistent, and that even classics in a field, such as Herbert Simon's research on Administrative Behavior (1945), which ultimately led to a Nobel prize in economics, do not satisfy the criteria for study quality. Jensen and Rodgers (2001:252-275) conclude, therefore, that quality is not open to objective assessment, but that clear definition of the research setting is vital, and that the multiple-source basis of case studies can satisfy the need for conditional findings and in-depth understanding of cause and effect relationships that other methodologies find difficult to achieve.

Haney (1973) provides a wealth of case studies on organisational behaviour. Haney (1973) contends that case studies help to move beyond explaining how-not-to-communicate in organisational context to countering underlying faulty thinking strategies. Wimmer and Dominick (1987:155) state that the case study is used for a better understanding of, or for explanation of, a phenomenon. A case study methodology can lead to a better understanding of the thesis that public relations education in South Africa faces urgent challenges. It may also offer explanation which can help to pinpoint particular needs - the fulfilment of which may help to build scientific status for public relations in the long term. Wimmer and Dominick (1987:156) are specific, stating that

case studies often illuminate the causes of a phenomenon. Wimmer and Dominick (1987:156) also state (vide) that for greater understanding, the data yielded by the case study should be used in combination with theory. They (1987:155) also state that the case study is a qualitative research method.

A facet of the case study as a research method which renders it of particular value to this study is identified by Yin (1984): the case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. This applies to public relations.

Wimmer and Dominick (1987:157) warn that case studies are time-consuming and may produce great quantities of data which are difficult to summarise, and also that the case study can offer difficulty in generalisation (already discussed). These authors (vide) also mention that the researcher should be on guard against utilising biased views or doubtful evidence.

Keen and Packwood (1995:449) state that it is vital that the selection for case study research is typical of the phenomenon being investigated. Conditions are taken into account, but case study research is rigorous and facilitates informed judgements. Keen and Packwood (1995:450) also suggest that the development of an analytical framework facilitates the application of a case history. This study utilises the systems framework which was developed in Chapter 5.

One of the methods described by Keen and Packwood (1995:449) which is used to ensure validity is triangulation. Triangulation is the utilisation of data from at least one other source and by a different method of data collection in order to corroborate findings. For example, they (vide)(1995:449) state, interviews are conducted and findings combined with other different sources of quantitative data. Thus an overall picture can be established in which a construct emerges strongly and so strengthens belief in the validity of observations. The literature review which formed the basis of discussion in Chapters 2 and 3 pointed to the dual approach to the curriculum of public relations education as being an obstacle in the practice of public relations and also in its quest for scientific recognition. Medsger's (1996) investigation of journalism education in the US, which was discussed in Chapter 3, also identified weaknesses in a career-focused

programme for an application of communication. Furthermore, the situation of public relations in South Africa where there is a dual approach in its tertiary education has been shown in Chapter 4 to be one of confusion in industry by Claassen and Verwey's (1997) research. This confusion these authors (vide) state, leads to a lack of due recognition for communication practitioners in South Africa. The Report on (Govt.) Communications (1996), which was also discussed in Chapter 4, expressed concern about the abilities of communication practitioners. Their concerns were shown to be almost altogether related to management level education, and Claassen and Verwey (1997) raised the question of this low level of preparedness being attributable to the poor state of education and training for communication professionals. All of these provide information from a variety of sources and which has been collected by a variety of methods and also by different researchers, as referred to above by Keen and Packwood (1995). The student appraisal of this study, therefore, is typical of the phenomenon being investigated, seen as a vital criterion by these authors (vide), and it is also being utilised in the method of triangulation which they (vide) describe. The student appraisal provides corroboration of the situation supported by the sources mentioned above.

Chetty (1996:79) states that case studies deal with events over a period of time rather than with the frequency of events, and that while this can result in a huge volume of data, explanation building for establishing causality allows analysis to focus on specific aspects, thus overcoming the problem of great quantities of data which was referred to above by Wimmer and Dominick (1987:157).

Chetty (1996:83) also states that because the case study allows multiple-data collection, a more thorough examination is provided than would be the case with a narrowly-defined quantitative study.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1987:157-161), the method of carrying out a case study is not as well documented as is other research methods, but there are usually five stages: design, pilot study, data collection, data analysis and reporting.

In this study, a pilot study was not conducted, due to the fact that the sample numbers were almost 100% of the group, thus the investigation itself would establish the contribution that could be made to the study, the small size of the group not

accommodating more than one investigation. The protocol of the design, the central question, the specific topic area of data collection, the explanation-building approach of data analysis and the discussion method of reporting, are made manifest in the following explanations and sections:-

A single case study is appropriate rather than a multiple case study. A multiple case study would have had to include another case study (or studies) with groups from other technikons, and any such group would not have been relevant to the background. Under the sub-head of *Responsibility for curricula*, it is explained in section 4.5 that the Department of Education sends the approved curriculum for a particular programme to all technikons which have received approval to offer such programme. Thus a case study of one can be seen as relevant to the seven South African technikons which offer the National Diploma in Public Relations Management and the smaller number (five) which also offer the degree programme B.Tech. in Public Relations Management, in view of the fact that they all share a common curriculum.

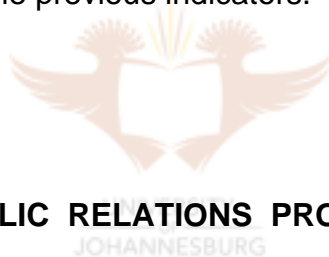
Dyer and Wilkins (1991:613) state that the single case study is a better way to form theories. They argue (vide) that the multiple-case approach focuses so much on the constructs developed and their measurability that the context, which is the rich background of each case, is missed. Thus the story against which rich theoretical insights are developed, is not created. Eisenhardt (1991:620), however, claims that the appropriate number of cases depends on the topic and also on existing knowledge.

Chetty (1996:72) states that the case study method should not be seen as merely anecdotal and only suitable for initial exploration, for it studies a topic as a dynamic process and not as something static, and so offers another research method for the valuable process of knowledge formation.

6.3 RATIONALE FOR SELECTING THE CAPE TECHNIKON

Rhodie (1998:25) states that for the year 1997 (the year of the student appraisal) there were seven technikons involved in public relations programmes, with a total of 1152 students for levels one to four, the Cape Technikon having 209 students on all four

levels. The Cape Technikon total number of students is thus higher than the average, which is 164. It should also be noted that not all technikons offer public relations programmes on the degree level. In a face-to-face interview on 12 September 1997, the late Annemarie Honiball, Director of Education for the Public Relations Institute of South Africa, said that despite the strong efforts to increase student numbers so as to make higher education available to greater numbers of the community, the Cape Technikon was at that time the only one which found it feasible to run a programme in the evening as well as during the day for the National Diploma in Public Relations Management. Honiball also said that a group of nine students for the B.Tech. Programme for that year was a strong representation of technikons on that level. Rhodie (1998:25) states that a total of thirteen B.Tech. : Public Relations Management degrees were issued throughout South Africa in respect of the 1996 academic year. The student appraisal of the B.Tech. group of the Cape Technikon also links with the case history, so it is meaningful to do the student appraisal within the Cape Technikon Public Relations Management Programme, for these students identify in an illuminating way the weaknesses of the programme, thus strengthening the previous indicators.



6.4 CASE STUDY: THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMME OF THE CAPE TECHNIKON

6.4.1 Methodology

6.4.1.1 Purpose of research

The purpose of the research was to establish whether a student appraisal would indicate confirmation/rejection of the exigencies of public relations education, as established in Chapter 3. Such indication can also help to establish whether or not the curricula of public relations education should provide for graduates to be qualified to serve both academic research and teaching as well as on levels of technician and management in industry.

6.4.1.2 Sources utilised to gather data

Anecdotal data are first-hand experiences taken from personal records of the researcher.

A “thick file” of relevant documentation, such as policy documents, reports, office memoranda and newspaper cuttings, was compiled over a period of more than ten years by the writer.

The sources utilised for the student appraisal were the students of the 1997 fourth year study group.

6.4.1.3 Sampling

The 1997 fourth year student group was chosen as the appraisal group, for it was felt that the new programme, which had started with the first fourth year for the degree programme as from 1995, had had a couple of years to settle into smooth operation by 1997. Due to the fact which has been mentioned earlier that technikons use a standard curriculum, the fourth and degree year of the Public Relations Programme at the Cape Technikon is representative of the technikons running this programme. The group consisted of a total of nine students, all female. Three of these had begun the fourth year study in 1996, and attained their degree at the end of 1997; another three commenced the fourth year study in 1997 and attained their degree also at the end of 1997, and three of the nine students commenced their studies for the fourth degree year in 1997 but deferred subjects so as to complete the fourth year study by the end of 1998. The average intake of students for the first year programme was sixty students for 1994/1995, and the number of students reckoned as completing the fourth year of study per year according to the 1997 body explained above, would be six, or 10% of the first year intake.

Random sampling was utilised for every student was given an equal opportunity of participating. Concerted efforts were made to contact each of the nine students involved in the 1997 fourth year, and those who could be contacted and expressed willingness to participate, formed the sample. Two students had left the country, and one of these was the only student who could not be contacted. The sample was thus eight out of nine

students, being 88.8% of the total number of the group. The sample of eight students also represent 61.5% of the total number of students in South African technikons who gained the B.Tech. Public Relations Management degree in 1996, which number was thirteen, according to Rhodie (1998:25), as mentioned above. The researcher had not had any contact with any of the group during 1997 and 1998.

6.4.1.4 Gathering of data and compilation of case study information

A “thick file” was compiled of copies of documents relating to the establishment of the public relations programme at the Cape Technikon, and of subsequent documents relating to changes to the programme. (The Cape Technikon was the convening technikon for the public relations programme for the first five years, after which Port Elizabeth became the convening technikon.) The file also included copies of relevant Green Papers and White Papers submitted to Parliament, and of directives from the Department of Education. In addition, information relevant to the Cape Technikon itself, its policies, environment and particularly information relating to the public relations programme, was placed on file, together with office memoranda, minutes and pertinent reports. Context analysis was utilised on policy documents.

Anecdotal information was gathered by direct observation of the researcher.

The context relevant to the interpretation of data was obtained by direct personal experience of the researcher in the capacity of Senior lecturer in Communication Science on the public relations programme.

Each student was interviewed separately either in a face-to-face situation, telephonically or, in one case, through electronic mail, during the period April to June 1999. Thus data was gathered on an individual basis, for the interviews and contacts were made according to opportunity at times and venues which differed from one another.

A single open-ended question was posed to each student, as follows:-

What comments do you feel it is important to make with regard to the contribution of each of the five subjects of the fourth year programme as

part of the degree year of the B.Tech. Public Relations Management Programme?

The comments of the students were recorded at each interview. Upon completion of the interviews, content analysis was done. Comments were grouped according to the five subject areas. These comments can provide *direct validity*, or logical validity, according to Budd, Thorp and Donohew (1967:69), for the inherent and logical meaning of the comments assign clear positive/negative values to each subject, and can thus be seen as support for/rejection of the exigencies of public relations education as set out at the end of Chapter 3 and shown again in the introduction to this chapter. This support/rejection can also be seen to be moderated by the frequency of the particular comment showing support/rejection.

Reliability was supported in the following ways:-

- The open-ended question enabled each student to express their own evaluation of each subject, unencumbered by any directive or persuasive element
- Assurances of anonymity were given to each student
- The academic records of each of these students show that they were all conscientious and hardworking and it is reasonable to assume that they themselves were interested in reliable research aimed to benefit the field of public relations, for each expressed great willingness to participate at the time of arranging the interview.

6.4.2 System model as a framework of analysis

The system model of the environment of an institution of higher education which is given in section 5.6 can be used as a framework of analysis of the Cape Technikon. Such analysis will reveal the extent to which the opening of the Cape Technical College in 1923, has /developed into an institution of higher education as depicted by the model:-

6.4.2.1 Environment

The model shows that each higher education institution operates within three particular

environments. These are, from the more distant to the more adjacent, the International environment, the National Macro environment and the Task environment. Stakeholders exist in all three environments, with the potential of their influence on any specific area being impossible to predict, due to changing circumstances of, for example, politics or economics, whether this be on an international, national or local scale. The environment of the Cape Technikon is as follows:-

- **International environment**

The International environment frequently initiates developments, such as that mentioned earlier whereby journalists wrote articles promoting products for newspapers and thereby established an early form of public relations practice. As stated earlier, this practice became firmly established in the USA during the 20th century and spread to other industrial countries. One of the influences on South Africa was the recognition of the need to provide training for public relations, and technikon programmes (also already mentioned) were approved for this purpose in 1980. According to Penfold (1996:1-8) the Cape Technical College was officially opened in 1923 and in 1967 the Technikon Act empowered it to offer tertiary education in selected fields of study as the Cape College for Advanced Technical Education, and this was followed by the establishment of the Cape Technikon according to the Technikon Act in 1979. As the international environment impacts on the Cape Technikon, a programme of public relations education was introduced from 1981. When a feature of the international environment impacts widely so that many nations are subject to such effect to varying degrees, we refer to this phenomenon as globalisation. Another example of globalisation can readily be found in developments in technology. For example, the subject which until 1990, had been Word Processing embracing typewriter skills, became Word Processing embracing computer skills from 1991. As the national programme had made provision for such an adjustment as computer facilities became available, it can be seen how globalisation with regard to technology has a far-reaching influence on institutions of higher education, including the Cape Technikon.

The international environment is also impacting upon the Cape Technikon at the present time. In Chapter 2 the educational background to public relations in Africa is given. This shows a need for more education programmes for public relations

education, particularly because political events of the last decade have plunged several African countries into turmoil, so that it is unclear whether or not the educational facilities have waned or strengthened. Moreover, as has been stated earlier, the international climate has increased the demand for public relations practice and so for its education programmes. Even African countries such as Botswana, which is very stable, is seeking more facilities for tertiary education because of the effects of globalisation and its own development. Thus, as previously mentioned, the situation has arisen whereby South African tertiary institutions such as the Cape Technikon are accommodating foreign students from the rest of Africa to a much greater extent than ever before.

A corollary of the foregoing situation is the compelling need for South African tertiary institutions to use English as a teaching medium, for thereby South African students of all groups (almost all of whom use English as either a first or a second language) and also foreign students from Anglophone Africa can be accommodated. This is a clear and current example of the broader environment impacting upon the curriculum of public relations education, as discussed in Chapter 5.

- **National macro environment**

When the Cape Technikon - including the Public Relations Programme - introduced degrees in technology in 1995, being Baccalaureus, Master's Degree and Doctorate in Technology, it was doing so in terms of the Act of 1993 which applied to technikons on a national scale (though the Education Department granted approval only to selected programmes which were deemed to fulfil laid-down requirements). The Cape Technikon was thus affected by the national environment. In the same way, with the new educational environment which followed the profound political changes of 1994, and the subsequent establishment of SAQA, the Cape Technikon is subject to all the exigencies of the requirements of bodies falling under SAQA such as the NQF, SGBs. Another example might be the profound changes affecting gold mining in the northern areas of South Africa. This could impact negatively on the number of technologists needed in the field, and this would, in turn, have a negative effect on the engineering faculty of the Cape Technikon. Goldfields of South Africa is an example of a mining company whose economic welfare could affect the Cape Technikon greatly for it is a stakeholder on the National macro level in two directions - it is a

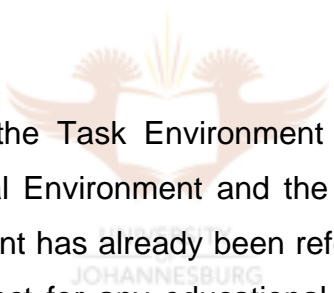
potential employer and provides co-operative education, and it has also contributed finance for the establishment of computer laboratories in the Zonnebloem Campus. Its industrial welfare will thus affect the Cape Technikon in these particular ways.

- **Task environment**

The Task Environment is of critical importance to any institution of higher education. Through the Higher Education Branch such institution is linked to the Department of National Education which is headed by the Minister of Education. The Department of Education is the suprasystem, with the Higher Education Branch a subsystem thereof, of which each higher education institution, such as the Cape Technikon, is itself a subsystem. Complexity increases as we move up from each subsystem and the Higher Education Branch will be looking at its subordinate levels of each higher education institution and also at its own suprasystem, the Department of National Education with the Association of University and Technikon Principles (AUT), the Committee of University Principles (CUP) and the Committee of Technikon Principles (CTP), and the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and the Minister of Education. Through this hierarchical arrangement, smooth co-ordination of all parts of the whole system is instituted and maintained. This supports the claim already referred to, of Parsons (Laszlo 1972) in General Systems Theory, that the environment is itself systemic in nature, thus possessing properties of inter-relatedness, structure and function and evolution, self-regulation and control which ensures balance, interaction, change and adaptability (as evidenced by the establishment of SAQA and the NQF) and thus openness and complexity. The two remaining properties of a system not yet mentioned here are, nevertheless, present: equifinality, which means that the Cape Technikon can achieve its main goal of the education and training of students for industry in differing circumstances and so by paths which differ to some extent from that of other higher education institutions; and the Cape Technikon makes a contribution to the Department of Education's holism in that its measured results are not the total of its achievement in serving society. There are many ways in which it makes contributions not measured as goals achieved, such as providing work for a private contractor for the maintenance of its garden areas, and the aesthetic value to

members of society of the gardens and of attractive buildings, or of making accommodation available for conferences or social endeavours, an example of which is the Cape Argus winter school for matriculants run at the Cape Technikon during June/July 2000.

As the Cape Technikon follows an approach of *vocational education*, the Task Environment also includes the Economic Environment, which, when the climate is good, will provide more sponsorships for students, more co-operative education participation and will be in a position to offer more permanent jobs than it can when the climate is adverse. The Legal Environment will affect the Cape Technikon particularly with regard to labour law, evidenced by large numbers of cases of appeal by staff to the Labour Commissioner about unfair labour practice, which seems to be a common situation in the new South Africa. The legal environment also impacts upon matters such as attempts to recover unpaid fees or the management of student conflict, but the Cape Technikon has been particularly fortunate in that it has had very little disruption of studies or student protests, unlike some other higher education institutions.



The model shows that the Task Environment also includes the Technological Environment, the Political Environment and the Sociocultural Environment. The Technological Environment has already been referred to, but this is, of course, an extremely important aspect for any educational institution purporting to focus its education and training on this sphere. It is essential that developments in technology in each career for which a technikon offers tuition be timeously introduced in the relevant programme. For this reason the Cape Technikon grants special leave for lecturers enabling them at the end of each year after lectures and examinations have been completed to spend a few weeks working in the relevant industry, in order that they may be exposed to the latest techniques and practices. With regard to the Political Environment, while it can be said that the ruling basis is reflected in the legal Environment, this does not portray the full impact, for the Political Environment is the area of active struggle of conflicting ideas. This is illustrated in the following situation which took place at the Cape Technikon:

In the early 1980s, the Director on evening duty came into one of the lectures of a part-time course and called the lecturer out of the lecture-room. He asked her in the passage whether or not she had any objection to a Coloured gentleman joining the class as a student. When she answered that she had no

objection, he asked her to wait in the passage. He re-entered the lecture-room and (she was later told by students) asked if anyone in the room (all white) objected to having a Coloured man as a fellow student. When only readiness for acceptance was expressed, the Director thanked the students and left, allowing the lecturer to resume the class. A few minutes later, the Director returned and introduced the new student who accompanied him. Thereafter, students of groups other than white enrolled in that particular short course, without any queries being raised, even when a then Cabinet Minister attended that particular short course as a student.

This event shows that the political environment is one of tussle, and that many individuals would rather follow harmonious everyday relationships than a law contrary to this. Perhaps it is the tussle that provides the challenge, for with having many groups of stakeholders it can be difficult for any institution to maintain balance in the political environment over particular or sensitive issues. A particularly sensitive political and also sociocultural position peculiar to the Cape Technikon fits this description : the position whereby the Cape Technikon is partly built upon, and also held, land for expansion which was previously part of District Six, the area from which its population of mainly Coloured and Malay people were forcibly removed under the Group Areas policy of the apartheid Government. The Cape Technikon has endeavoured to deal with this difficult issue with great sensitivity, setting aside plans to erect more much-needed buildings on a site they already held ownership of, and also setting aside the planned development of sportsfields on land the Cape Technikon owned but which is still the subject of discussion with the Committee fighting for reinstatement of previous occupiers. This is an ongoing situation, and demonstrates the sensitivity called for in dealing with issues which are political/socio-cultural in the Task Environment, but it also illustrates the high profile of Stakeholders in all three of the institutional environments today, for the previous occupiers of district Six who were displaced in a dismissive manner many years ago can, through the Committee submitting claims for the land previously known as District Six, be seen as Stakeholders of the present Task Environment of the Cape Technikon at Zonnebloem Campus. It is important to bear in mind the question previously referred to of Peter Jarvis asking whether educational agencies should see their task as one helping individuals to develop and mature and to become critically aware of society so that they can both help *create* and *recreate* the social system.

The Cape Technikon serves an area of a widely-varying Socio-cultural Environment. It is not unusual in South Africa today to have groups of Whites, Coloureds, Indians

and Blacks served by one technikon. What seems surprising is that Afrikaans is the language spoken by most Coloured people - who form the largest single group in the Western Cape - and this means that the Western Cape percentage of Afrikaans first language speakers in 1997 was 67%, according to Mr Brian Gilbert, Deputy Director of the Department of Education, Western Cape. As urbanisation continues to bring more and more Blacks to Cape Town, ensuing years will, no doubt, show increases in the percentage of first language Xhosa speakers. As the language research undertaken in the Cape Technikon was previously mentioned, suffice it to say here that English is being used as the main teaching medium because almost all students are conversant with English as a second language. In addition to the language question the Cape Technikon has also adjusted certain practices due to recognition of religions other than Christian. Tests and examinations are planned so as to take holy days of various religions into account. It is apposite to comment at this point that there is a growing amount of friendly interaction between students of different cultures, and one can reasonably expect that in time this will increase further.

It is interesting to see from Figure 15 that the Cape Technikon has made a concerted effort to increase the intake of Black students from as far back as 1987 on a regular basis:-



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Figure 15



(Cape Technikon Fact Book 1997/98).

However, Figure 16 shows that before South Africa became a democracy during 1994, the ruling culture was one of white male dominance, despite population figures showing more females than males in the surrounding social system.



Figure 16



A white male lecturer responsible for selecting applicants for one particular

Programme argued *“Industry wants men - and technikons educate according to the needs of industry”*. The amount of change in numbers of female students accepted which took place in the years following 1994 is illustrated in Figure 17 in the graph for 1997.



Figure 17



During 1998 the new Rector stated in a staff information letter that the low number of females accepted for certain programmes would receive particular attention. It is ironic that this study states that the socio-cultural system is part of the critically important Task Environment of a higher education system, and yet describes how the Cape Technikon ignored the larger part of its surrounding socio-cultural system for many years. In terms of the model, the policy of the Cape Technikon for years was one in which recognition was not given to certain groups of Stakeholders, and even in the recognition of whites as the only ethnic group Stakeholder, much greater recognition was given to males than to females.

It can be seen from the foregoing that the Task Environment of the Cape Technikon, as with other technikons, is very dynamic.

6.4.2.2 Input, Transformation and Output

This section of the model portrays an institution of higher education as an organisation which processes its input from the surrounding environment and transforms it to the finished product for exchange with its environment, with which it has a relationship of interdependence (Robbins 1990:4-17). In considering this section with regard to the Cape Technikon the focus will fall on the programme for public relations when a programme is referred to particularly.

- **Input**

Input, according to the model, includes students, higher educational policy, certification requirements, materials such as books and technology, state subsidy, human resources and feedback information.

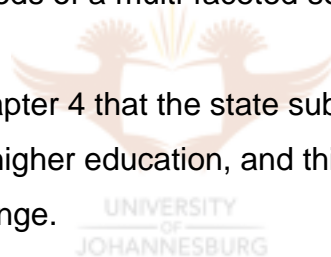
The Report (Nated 01-300) of the Department of National Education, June 1991, identifies students entering the education system as *“the raw materials to be refined in the education process in order to produce useful manpower”*. During the 1980s the Public Relations Programme accepted 30-35 students each year. All were white until 1988, when the first Coloured student was accepted. In the next few years, more Coloured and Indian and Asian students were accepted, with Black students registering from 1994/5. One of these, reticent and shy and showing that charming

humility characteristic of many female students from black cultures, shocked her fellow students profoundly when in the second year of study in a practical presentation of real life experiences, she related with great dynamism her political experiences as a member of the African National Congress who had gone into exile for four years of her teenage life. Upon commencing studies at the Cape Technikon, she had found that 50% of the study content of some lectures was delivered in Afrikaans. Although she spoke six languages, Afrikaans was not one of them. She set out to overcome this stumbling-block and by the end of her first year's study had mastered Afrikaans sufficiently to cope. She also made it clear in her presentation that some of the forces she was resisting in her life were seated in her own culture, not only in the overall political situation. Her interest in public relations, she said, was to be able to influence her own people effectively. She made a deeper insight into the challenges facing the people of South Africa in their wonderful mix of cultures seem urgently significant to the group. The story has a disappointing sequence - although she gained her credit in Communication Science III, she did not obtain the required year mark to write the examination in Public Relations III. She had done wonderful work on an international Public Relations programme for five months - among other things - but left for home without her diploma. If one sees our students as *"the raw materials to be refined in the education process"* as identified above by the Department of Education, it is clear that this story points directly to the dire need for Programme Leaders to monitor with great discrimination and timeousness the particular needs of such students in order that, if at all possible, such promising material can be even more sharply honed as technikon output. Africanisation of content - particularly with regard to methods of evaluation - can render great service to equity targets in higher education in South Africa.

The Cape Technikon is subject to the Higher Educational Policy of the Department of Education as directed by the Minister of Education, and also to the Certification Requirements for student registration. It should be mentioned that the Cape Technikon previously demanded a six-subject Senior Certificate rather than a five-subject Senior Certificate which other technikons demanded. However, this position was questioned and has been changed in the last few years so that entrance requirements agree with those of other technikons.

Materials, such as books, is a matter which needs attention with regard to the programme for Public Relations. At the Nineteenth National Annual Congress of Sacomm held at Bloemfontein 11-12 September 1997 Venter and Bezuidenhout presented a paper in which they focused on the dearth of text books for the technikon Public Relations programme. Large parts of books on communication science are not relevant to a programme focusing on a career in which communication is angled for a specific objective, and, as books are expensive, the Communication Science lecturer is called upon to extract theories from many different books and must also have experience to apply such theory to the needs of public relations. Thus, on the one hand, there is a great need for books on Communication Science to be produced for the technikon Public Relations programme, and on the other hand, it can be argued that a programme of generic communication studies with each of several institutions specialising in particular career applications will be both more efficacious and economically viable. In addition, generic communication studies will yield students with the necessary background to undertake meaningful research likely to contribute to the communication needs of a multi-faceted society such as South Africa.

It has been shown in Chapter 4 that the state subsidies of technikons has fallen, as with other institutions of higher education, and this situation is very likely to yield an ongoing economic challenge.



Human resources from the Socio-cultural Environment provide adequately for the many kinds of work which must be performed in an organisation such as the Cape Technikon, from security services to administrative function and from cleaning services to lecturing and teaching. Lecturing staff number about 180, so one can see that the Cape Technikon as a whole offers employment to many from its surrounding environment and in this way alone it makes a useful contribution to the economic environment.

The last item which forms part of the input of the Cape Technikon is Feedback. This feedback comes from industry through employers of qualified students, also from employers engaged in the Co-operative Education scheme, from past students themselves and also from present students - whose feedback is actively sought through the completion of questionnaires - from newspaper reports and also from the

parents of students. Feedback Information is fed into the system so as to improve performance.

- **Transformation**

The Transformation area is the very heart of any organisation. The core processes by which the Cape Technikon transforms the raw material it absorbs as registered students from its socio-cultural environment into trained workers useful for business takes place in this area, and the co-ordination of this cycle of input, transformation and output (it was earlier mentioned) is effected through the organisational structure.

At the Top of the organisational structure of the Cape Technikon is the Cape Technikon Council consisting of seventeen elected members representing commerce, industry and the community, and this body governs the Cape Technikon.

Below the Council is the Management, consisting of the Rector, two Vice Rectors and the Registrar. Deans work closely with the management in terms of strategic planning, and also oversee the functional and operational activities of the various Schools(Faculties), so it is at the level of Deans that the core processes are engaged.

It is in the area of Management that great change has taken place since 1995, as can be seen from Figure 18:-



Figure 18



(Profiles of the Cape Technikon: 1994)

All incumbents down to Deans are white and male, with their first language being Afrikaans, with one exception, whose first language is English. However, the Rector retired in the middle of 1997, having initiated steps for transformation of the organisational structure by calling in an outside consultant, whose report and recommendations have been considered under the guidance of the new Rector appointed in August 1997. The outcome has been the following Proposed Organisational Structure which was implemented in January 2000, shown in Figure 19:-







The new Rector is Black and is male, as is one of the Vice Rectors, while the other two Vice Rectors are White males. Schools have become Faculties, and Deans newly appointed include one White male, one Indian Male, and one White female, with further appointments pending. It is not yet clear whether or not the previous School of Teacher Education is to become a Faculty, as the incorporation of the Mowbray Teacher's Training College and the Wellington teacher's Training College into the Cape Technikon has only just been approved by the Minister of Education.

A far-reaching change which is not shown in this Proposed Organisational Structure diagram is the early-retirement/re-deployment of former Directors of Schools, who could have availed themselves of the opportunity to apply for the position of Dean of the Faculty, if they so wished. With this new structure, Assistant Deans are voted for by the staff of each Faculty every two years, from among the Principal Lecturers in the faculty. Principal Lecturer is the grade level name referring to the designation known previously as Associate Director but which term the consultant had pointed out in his report did not conform to the term laid down in the relevant technikon documentation, which is that of Principal Lecturer.

The core processes are surrounded by other elements in addition to that of Management : Adaptation Mechanisms may be implemented to influence the Input before the process of Transformation becomes effective, an example being special courses in language and writing skills now offered to disadvantaged students, whose studies are arranged over an extended period in order to accommodate this adjustment; Maintenance services and Support Services such as the provision of specialised equipment; and the large area dealing with Administration, which are all close to, yet outside of, the core processes. The same applies to Advisory Committees. In the case of the Public Relations Programme, right from its inception the Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from industry and core lecturing staff, has solved problems such as finding enough positions for co-operative education and dealing with difficulties arising between students and employer/trainers.

The core processes of Transformation take place in the various Programmes in Faculties, and are influenced by the Internal Operating Efficiency of the Cape Technikon, which affects the Service Quality realised in the student transformation.

Yet the integral reach of efficacy of transformation is constantly being melded with, and so created and re-generated by, the potential of each curriculum and also the ethics and values adopted by the institution. Thus the curriculum for each programme and the ethics and values adopted are central to the Service Quality rendered to society through the core processes. As far as the Cape Technikon Public Relations Programme is concerned, the curriculum has, from the beginning, been the basis of the Programme's popularity. The choice of subjects has always attracted more applicants than can be accepted. Despite many applicants stating that they are unsure of what *Public Relations* is and that they feel daunted by the label of *science* in *Communication Science*, the coupling of these two majors with subjects such as *Photography*, *Journalism* and *Psychology* renders great appeal, while *Business Economics* is seen by applicants as offering a background essential for business. From the beginning of 1989, however, change was ushered in so as to upgrade the programme for its claim to degree status. As with other technikon programmes, official tests held under examination conditions became a regular requirement. In addition, the time allocated to the two major subjects *Public Relations* and *Communication Science* was doubled through the allocation of sessions for practicals. While this did not present difficulty in *Communication Science* because of its solid content base and clear need for additional time for practical application, the position was not so straightforward in *Public Relations*. The lecturer who was at that time responsible for *Public Relations I, II and III* commented on several occasions that the allocation of extra sessions for practicals was likely to give rise to dissatisfaction among students because *Public Relations* was a subject of practical application and most of lecture time was already taken up by practicals, and it was difficult to see how the same number of sessions could be constructively utilised for theory only once practical application was covered separately. It is significant to observe here that this lecturer holds an Honours Degree in Communication - the academic subject in which basic qualification is recommended in the documentation from the Department of Education for both Communication Science and Public Relations lecturers in the Programme but which recommendation is not always followed in technikons because it would appear that the influence in making appointments does not always lie with persons who realise that *Communication* is not the same academic subject as *English* or *Journalism*. The same documentation also recommends relevant experience as a

requirement, and so it should be mentioned that the lecturer concerned had both experience as a newspaper journalist and also as a Public Relations Officer for a Provincial Performing Arts Board. At the time the allocation of additional sessions was mooted she was planning to resume her studies in psychology, and so would not have been affected personally by the changes.

It was not long before student dissatisfaction arose. The cause was not easy to pinpoint, for dissatisfaction tends to breed dissatisfaction, and when this Public Relations lecturer resigned, the students were losing someone in whom they had great confidence and who had also proved to be popular. As consideration had been given some time earlier to moving the Public Relations Programme to the School of Management, this was done at the mid-year point of 1989, with only the lecturer in Communication Science moving with the programme. It was hoped that such a change would quell the dissatisfaction, and, although the move proved beneficial in many respects, one thing did not change - there was dissatisfaction among students with regard to the subject *Public Relations*. This was always handled from above with great diplomacy and empathy, and a constant effort was made to improve student experience of the programme. The National Macro Environment impacted positively upon the situation with the introduction of the degree programme in 1992, with additions such as the offering of *Videology* as an alternative to a third language and a third course in the degree year to *Media Studies* (previously Journalism), and - very significantly - the transferring of one or two areas of the *Communication Science* micro-curriculum to the Public Relations micro-curriculum, which was also itself expanded somewhat in scope. The Cape Technikon also introduced a change of its own roundabout this time - the subject *Public Relations* was split so that one lecturer gave theory sessions and another lecturer practical sessions for the first and second years (third year students were doing co-operative education and attended one day a week for three lectures only in each of the two majors). While this split in tuition must have helped provide more variety and interest in subject approach, the explanation of Pratt (1980:4) referred to earlier that the curriculum is a system for it indicates the relationship between objectives, content and evaluation has particular relevance. It needs to be borne in mind that tests and examinations are set for the purpose of evaluating the level of competence, and that this requires not only testing knowledge and its practical application but also the integration of these with understanding, so

that the student's ability to adapt to circumstances can be gauged. Does this highly discriminative competence assessment not point to the desirability of subject splitting rather being done on a content basis, so that a lecturer covers both theory and practical for particular sections, and thus also evaluates the knowledge, practical application as well as the integration of these, for such sections? Would this not nurture to a high degree in-depth coverage of content and elicit practical application of such content to problem-solving with a multi-faceted approach? Could this be an example of Fourie's claim mentioned in section 3.7 that communication education needs to provide students with a sound knowledge so that they can be flexible?

In the same way as curricula can be said always to hold great potential for the efficacy of the transformation of students, so also can this be said of the ethics and values adopted by an institution of higher education. It has been stated in Chapter 3 that ethics and values emanate from the curriculum approach. Ethics and values, the curricula and the internal operating efficiency, the support services, maintenance and administration, the Advisory Committees and the Management all contribute towards the Organisational Climate, which has a great influence on how students and staff experience the operation of the Cape Technikon on a day-to-day basis.

- **Output**

Transformed students, competent with certificates, diplomas and degrees are ready to enter the economic environment of commerce, business and industry. They represent the Productivity shown on the model. Such students reflect the efficacy of the Cape Technikon, helping to build its reputation and carrying its image. The output of the whole Cape Technikon with regard to diplomas and degrees awarded for the years 1985-1997 is shown by Figure 20:-

Figure 20



(Cape Technikon Fact Book 1997/98).
Students are also partly responsible for research output, which is also yielded by

some members of Cape Technikon staff. This research output by students and staff and also the productivity of students and the resulting reputation and image yield Feedback, which, as already mentioned, Richmond and McCroskey (1992:23) see as critical because it performs a regulative function and, also already mentioned, which Stanton and Futrell (1987:421) see as the basis for planning ahead, and thus is fed back into the Cape Technikon as Input in order to improve performance.

Thus the output is fed into the economic environment, from whence Feedback is fed back into the Input area of the systems model.

The curriculum approach to Public Relations Education at Cape Technikon is next described.

6.4.3 Curriculum approach to Public Relations education at Cape Technikon

The curriculum for the programme of public relations consists of the subjects shown in Table 22 :-

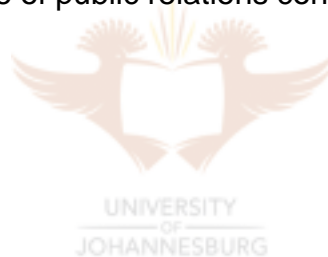


Table 22: Subjects of Public Relations Programme : Cape Technikon

Year 1 :	Major subject	-	Communication Science I
	Major subject	-	Public Relations I
	Minor subjects	-	Language X, Language Y
			Introduction to Word Processing
			Videology
			Media Studies I
Year 2 :	Major subject	-	Communication Science II
	Major subject	-	Public Relations II
	Minor subjects	-	Media Studies II (includes Photography)
			Marketing and Advertising for PR
			Social Psychology
			Business Studies : Public Relations
			Law for Public Relations
Year 3 :	Major subject	-	Communication Science III
	Major Subject	-	Public Relations III
			Experiential Training
Year 4 :	Major subject	-	Communication Science IV
	Major subject	-	Public Relations IV
	Minor subjects	-	Management Practice I
			Research methods and Techniques I
			Media Studies III

The Cape Technikon, having opened as a technical college in 1923, falls under the 20th century Technical/Technological classification in the tables given in section 3.6. Thus it can be said to have begun as an institution which provided on a group scale training for apprentices, became an institution for advanced technological education with the Mönning Report of 1964 and a technikon after the Goode Report of 1978, as described in Chapter 4. Section 3.6 shows the curriculum approach as consisting of Rationalism, Empiricism and Pragmatism. Rationalism is utilised to a limited extent in the Cape Technikon, applying to the body of theory which provides the basis of knowledge for a particular programme, and this will mostly lie in the major subjects of programmes but also, to a lesser extent, in some minor subjects. Empiricism is present in varying degrees in different programmes, being tied to the extent to which observable experience is utilised. However, Pragmatism holds greater sway overall in the Cape Technikon, which can be seen from the following Draft Mission Statement which was circulated to staff for comment before its planned adoption from 1999:-

To provide and facilitate quality career and technology education in partnership with relevant

stakeholders with the aim of encouraging and developing individual creativity, skills acquisition and knowledge production on a lifelong basis for community empowerment, national and regional development.

(Cape Technikon Staff Memorandum 10 November 1998).

This Mission fosters the following concepts which have been identified in section 3.4 as being those fostered by Pragmatism:-

Action-orientation - thus practical

Social-referencing

Knowledge integration

Lifelong Learning.

Implied in the wording of the Mission is also holistic learning, among other things.

Section 3.5 also refers to the claim of Peter Jarvis (1987) that Malcom Knowles's theory of *andragogy* focuses too heavily on the needs of the individual learner and insufficiently on those of the wider society. Jarvis's Table 5 given in section 3.5 shows that with the approach of *pedagogy* "People learn what society expects them to, so that the curriculum is standardised," and also that "Curriculum is organised by subjects." These three points made by Jarvis suggest that the approach of the Cape Technikon leans towards the *pedagogical*, and this is reinforced by the wording in the Mission "for community empowerment, national and regional development," for the Public Relations programme is standardised with local adjustment being permitted provided the national character is maintained; the curricula of programmes are arranged around subjects; and students learn what industry expects them to. Although technikon learning is generally acknowledged to be of a problem-centred orientation, this Draft Mission does not state this. However, it is a strong orientation in the Cape Technikon Programmes.

The Pragmatism concepts of "Education as growth" and "Growth as measure of evaluation" are also present in Cape Technikon education, and are, of course, fundamental traits of the *outcomes-based* approach to education now adopted by the Department of Education. These concepts can also be said to be suggested by the meaning of the word *lifelong* in the Mission being connected to educational application. It should also be emphasised that in adopting the concept of career education in

partnership with stakeholders, the Cape Technikon - as it is with other technikons - undertakes to provide its students with co-operative education.

Rationalism and Empiricism are perspectives adopted in the major subjects of *communication science* and of *public relations* in the public relations programme, for they offer both theory and its practical application. Moreover, in the six months' period of co-operative education there is opportunity for experiential learning which encompasses communication in its application to public relations, thus it can be seen that the approach of Pragmatism is also strongly utilised.

6.5 ANALYSIS OF STUDENT APPRAISAL

The following sections deal with the analysis of the student appraisal. In Chapter 3 it was stated that learner-centred means that subject matter must be selected according to the learner's capacity to derive meaning from it, which, in turn, means that learners must be able to incorporate their experience through its usefulness in pragmatic projects. *Outcomes-based education* focuses on learner-centredness, but it was pointed out in Table 14 that this can only be achieved in the process between tutor and learners. Thus it can be seen that it is learners who can identify the degree to which meaning has been derived from a curriculum, rather than other parties involved, such as tutors or employers. Furthermore, had it been decided to consult employers due to the vocational orientation, the very diverse nature of the work involvement of public relations practitioners would have presented comment from exceedingly varying viewpoints and commitments, which would have rendered the synthesis of comments so difficult that credibility would have been affected.

In the following sections, the student appraisal has been utilised to identify the challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas which will have to be faced in curriculums for communication education for the twenty-first century. These challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas are then discussed, the discussions being centred around subject areas. As can be seen on page iii of Appendix 2, the fourth study year covers five subjects: Public Relations IV (Major), Communication Science IV (Major), Management Practice I, Research Methods and Techniques I, Media Studies III. The two major subjects are dealt with together for, as can be seen from student comment, they are intertwined in

their intrinsic nature.

6.5.1 The two major subjects: Public Relations IV and Communication Science IV

6.5.1.1 Student comment on Public Relations IV:-

- Too much time is spent on too little. (n = 2:25%).
- PR IV seemed to lack a theoretical base. (n = 8:100%).
- PR IV seemed to consist mostly of the relating of anecdotes as business experience, which lacked adequate connection to fundamental theory. Thus the anecdotes mostly did not confirm/reject theories and so did not give the feeling of contributing to the building of professional knowledge. (n = 3:37.5%).
- Time spent on Public Relations as a subject should be tailored to the needs of the actual knowledge content and accompanying skills. (n = 6:75%).
- PR IV did not make students feel any better about PR I, II and III, which also seemed to lack a theoretical base. The hope that PR IV would lend greater credibility to the previous three years' study in this subject was not fulfilled. (n = 5:62.5%).
- PR IV was very frustrating, for much of the time spent on it could far more usefully have been spent on Management Practice, for the hope had been nurtured that the degree year would prepare students for management in Public Relations. (n = 5:62.5%).
- Could the time allocated to Public Relations Theory in Years I, II and III (and IV as well) not be considerably reduced for more meaningful utilisation, and the focus for Public Relations be primarily on skills? (n = 4:50%).
- Students yearned for true specialisation within their studies, for this could have made them feel that they would enter the job market specially equipped. (n = 4:50%).

All respondents commented that public relations seemed to lack a theoretical base, while three-quarters of respondents stated that time spent on public relations should be tailored to the actual knowledge content and accompanying skills. It is noteworthy that no positive comments were made about public relations as a major subject. Rather, the comments by 62.5% of respondents that PR IV was very frustrating and that it did not fulfil the hope of lending greater credibility to PR I, II and III, and the suggestions by 50% of respondents of how time spent on public relations should be reduced and spent on other subjects so as to add greater meaning and true specialisation to the programme, is compelling. It can be seen that respondents feel that less time should be allocated for the theory of Public Relations.

6.5.1.2 Student comment on Communication Science IV

- Why was this theory not covered in the earlier years of the programme? (n = 2:25%).
- Should year IV not draw together the contents of this major academic subject in an all-encompassing way? (n = 2:25%).
- Theory sessions for Communication Science I, II and III had been very full, yet it seemed from year IV that more theory should have been covered in those first three years. (n = 4:50%).
- In order for year IV to play its part in giving the student an overall grasp of communication theory as is required for preparation for management positions, far more time needs to be allocated to Communication Science theory. Could the practical sessions for Communication Science I and II (which students enjoyed) not be considerably reduced, so as to provide for even more theory coverage? (n = 2:25%).
- Communication Science Practical Sessions in years I and II could be removed, for this is strongly allied to the skills of Public Relations, and could readily be incorporated into the practical sessions of Public Relations. (n = 3:37.5%).

- It is surprising that Communication Science IV does not focus on communication management abilities, such as the writing and analysis of communication policy. (n = 4:50%).
- As our third year had been extremely full with doing co-operative education and Public Relations III and Communication Science III (which consisted of theory sessions and application in our co-operative education jobs) we had expected Communication Science IV to deal with communication issues on management level, such as the setting up of a public communication system as part of a developmental project. (n 5:62.5%).

Very strong support, 62.5%, was registered for the comment that expectations of Communication Science IV dealing with management level communication issues had not been fulfilled. A slightly lower percentage of respondents, 50%, expressed surprise at this situation. Half of the respondents stated that there was a need for more theory to be covered in the first, second and third years of Communication Science despite these sessions having been very full, while 37.5% pointed out that the practical sessions could have been dropped and these closely-allied skills incorporated into practical sessions for Public Relations. Thus it can be seen that respondents are expressing the need for more time to be allocated to the theory of Communication Science and less time to its practical application. One quarter of respondents asked clearly that the practical sessions for Communication Science I and II be reduced to provide more time for theory, and one quarter of respondents queried why the theory of Communication Science IV had not been covered earlier and whether Communication Science IV should not have been devoted to synthesising the theory for management.

6.5.1.3 Challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas

The following challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas can now be identified with regard to Public Relations IV and Communication Science IV:-

- A deep pitfall looms when the task is set of providing a theoretical base for public relations as a major subject.

This is exacerbated by communication science being the other major, for most of the relevant theory is covered in communication science. In order to illustrate this point, it can be assumed that the recently proposed Mixed Model of Public Relations (Holtzhausen 1995:141-160) which is an adaptation of J. Grunig's (1990) Excellence Model and his Persuasion Model as explained in Chapter 2 herein and which, this study stated, should be a useful contribution to public relations theory, is to be dealt with. Taking the three sections of the Mixed Model attention might first be given to the Excellence Model and its two-way symmetrical approach to communication management in the organisation. Grunig (1990) said that this was the most ethical and the best way of practising public relations. However, in discussing this aspect of the model, it is found that its basic signification - two-way dialogic communication - has been dealt with in communication science. Mersham (1993:110) says that "*The emphasis in Grunig's symmetrical model is upon the reflexive and dialogic nature of communication.*" As this is regarded as a profound aspect of the nature of communication, it is strongly focused on in communication science and given much attention. The next section which may be covered in public relations lectures (and one might easily have begun with this one) could be the Persuasion Model. J Grunig (1990) described public relations as a subdomain of communication and as mentioned herein earlier, in South Africa it has been confused with marketing because of the focus on persuasion. It has also been mentioned herein earlier that *persuasive communication* is dwelt on for six months of year II of Communication Science. Thus it could be found that the technikon public relations student would feel that this section of the General Theory of Public Relations would need only limited time for coverage. When the last part of the General Theory of Public Relations is considered, because it is a blend of the previous two approaches, it is clear that lectures on the Mixed Model section need focus on little more than application and case studies. Thus, even in an instance where it is rightly argued that a valuable contribution has been made to the body of public relations theory, we find ourselves referring largely to communication science coverage. Ferreira (1991:100) identified (translation) "*theoretical infrastructure for public relations*" as being one of the shortcomings of the technikon public relations programme. Although the revised programme introduced from 1992 transferred some limited areas from the communication science syllabus to that of public relations, the underlying difficulty of the

lack of a sufficient theoretical base for public relations remains. Mersham says (1993:114) "...the set of activities we call public relations are in their very essence, nothing less than that fundamental process called communication." De Beer (1995:21) says of journalism "What seems to be needed as one looks five years ahead to the new century, is an approach that would ingrain basic journalism skills training with relevant journalism and communication theory and a sound academic education in the social and other sciences." Minnaar says (1995:224) of the broadcasting media (translation) that tertiary education can play a vital role provided it includes practical work, and that, next to a nose for journalism, the broadcast media requires a well-grounded theoretical knowledge of the area of communication studies, a proven production ability and specialisation in the work field, such as politics, et cetera. De Jager (1995:196-199), senior consultant: Corporate Identity at Absa Bank, states in his abstract of an article that "a good theoretical framework" is an essential attribute for becoming a specialist in a specific discipline of communication, and that the communication consultant must expose him/herself as widely as possible to the areas of communication studies - one cannot be a subject specialist without a good theoretical infrastructure and also wide exposure to the communication industry. Too early specialisation can result in one seeing the subject of the study area - the human being - in part only because you yourself are a partial communication expert. These researchers of different communication areas all stress the necessity of a sound theoretical base and the inalienable link to communication studies in its wide application.

Curriculation that is competence-based requires communication theory in order to fulfil the knowledge requirement of foundational and reflexive competence for communication education in order that practical competence may be provided by communication's fields of application with efficacy and economy.

- The dilemma of recognising *public relations* as an independent subject and dealing with the concomitant disproportionate time allocation, or of not recognising public relations as an independent subject and having appropriate time allocation and appropriate career designation.

When *public relations* is named as a major subject, it is seen as independent. Were it linked as a specialisation area of communication studies, it could rightfully draw on basic

communication theories and the time allocated to such specialisation would, in all likelihood, fit the import of the specialisation dwelt upon. It would fittingly seem to be an extension of communication theories, drawing in particular areas of application. The particular relevance of public relations as communication applied with specific intentions to specific areas would thus focus on career orientation. The question arises, then, of why *public relations* is a major subject in the technikon degree programme with communication science as a separate major. The answer can be seen to lie in the fact that, when the programme was first approved for commencement in 1980, there was a great need to focus on career-orientation on technician level, and the career of *public relations officer* helped to provide this. The programme was named *Public Relations*, thus it seemed appropriate to label this specialisation of communication as a major subject. As it lacked academic status and was closely linked to *communication*, which does have academic status, the other major was named as communication science. As stated earlier, it was only with the upgrading of the programme from about 1989 that extra time - specifically for the introduction of practical sessions separately run from theory - was allocated in the time-table for each major subject. The difficulty of an insufficient theoretical base for public relations increased with added sessions, yet the problem of too much work and too little time was not solved for communication science, because of the greater need of a sound theoretical base rather than added practical work for the degree programme and the higher qualifications. It might, of course, be possible to regard public relations and communication science work as interchangeable, but this would only be possible where all lecturers involved had basic degrees in communication studies and also the necessary experience for the specialisation. Accountability might also prove to be a major problem in such an arrangement.

The upgrading of the programme to B.Tech. level has also meant that the original career known as Public Relations Officer - which was technician level - no longer has relevance on this higher level. However, the term Public Relations Officer is now more commonly Public Relations Practitioner. The question of whether this term is appropriate for higher levels is not yet clear. As stated in Chapter 4, Claassen and Verwey (1997:51) found that neither the existing literature nor their empirical survey showed that organisations in South Africa make appointments on work levels higher than 4, so levels 5, 6 and 7 are excluded. However, they say, communication managers may, in a few cases, be appointed at these higher levels, functioning as *group specialists* or *strategic analysts*.

They feel that this circumstance may point to the evolving nature of public relations. Notable is the fact that Claassen and Verwey (1997), and indeed many researchers, use the term *communication manager* when referring to positions higher than technician level. The research findings of Claassen and Verwey (1997) are supported by the 1998 study of trends in public relations roles 1990-1995 by Toth, Serini, Wright and Emig, as discussed in Chapter 2, for they confirm the emergence of an agency role in addition to those of manager and technician in public relations. The focus of activities of this role seemed to be on

- counselling
- research
- programming decisions (includes evaluating programme results)
- communicating with clients, peers and subordinates
- handling correspondence and telephone calls
- making media contacts.

The Agency Profile, Toth *et al.* (1998:146 & 158) state, seemed to be tied to the *expert prescriber* profile originally conceptualised by Broom and Smith as one who “operates as the authority on both public relations problems and their solutions. The client, or management, is often content to leave public relations in the hands of the ‘expert’ and to assume a relatively passive role”. These researchers (1998:160) suggest that the economic downturn of the early 1990s might have caused organisations to reduce demands for counselling and research, resulting in senior public relations personnel leaving organisations to work independently as counsellors. This move has resulted in more outsourcing and a sharper distinguishing of public relations roles within organisations, with the possibilities for the practice of excellent public relations being reduced (vide).

In Chapter 2 it is shown that the Agency Profile is very close to that of the public relations strategist identified by Steyn (2000:30). It is clear that the emerging role of *public relations strategist* will have to be taken into account by education and training. Particular attention should be focused on this recently-emerging trend for the three roles of technician, manager and strategist in public relations and clear provision needs to be made for all three in the accreditation framework. The dilemma, therefore, needs to be settled of how to apply appropriate career designations to appropriate credit levels. The

dilemma of unsuitable time allocation in the timetable due to an unsuitable subject-status allocation, also needs to be settled both from the economy and the student satisfaction point of view.

- The challenge of fulfilling the demand of the integration of education and training and of dealing with the implications of curricula that is competence-based for public relations and communication science.

The student comment with regard to the need for integration of the micro-curricula for the various study years for both *public relations* and *communication science* for the technikon diploma and degree qualifications is a strong indictment. While the lack of a theoretical base on which one can reasonably build successive advancement towards a qualification certainly provides room for excuse in the case of *public relations*, such a claim is certainly not valid for *communication science*. Part of the difficulty in *communication science* stems from the tailoring of the coverage to the narrow application of *public relations*.



The student comment is echoed by:-

- (i) The policy laid down by the White Paper on Education for the integration of education and training.
- (ii) The recognition of the National Standards Body for Communication Studies and Languages of four main communication subfields providing room for the theory, research and praxis in 24 study areas, including, journalism, film, television, radio, public relations, advertising and marketing, to name some. The cohesion supported by this recognition is sought by students.
- (iii) One of the White paper's stated purposes of transforming higher education - to ensure that it is committed to the socialisation of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens (Draft White Paper on Higher Education 1997).
- (iv) The argument at the beginning of the Report of the Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996) that one of the main reasons for the lack of effective

communication between government and its departments, within departments, and with the public, is *the widely varying background of communication officials and the poor understanding of the role of communication and its function in government*. This is reflected *"in the nature of appointments made and...in the status and training of communication professionals"* (Final Report of the Task Group on (Govt.) Communications 1996:12).

- (v) The question posed by the researchers Claassen and Verwey (1997:59-61) and referred to in Chapter 5 of whether the solution for the apparent problem of communication managers not always being equipped to deliver the required outputs in organisations can be found in the state of training and the criteria for accreditation.

The student comment questions the lack of cohesion between the different levels of the study years of each of the two major subjects, as well as the lack of a meaningful theoretical base for public relations and so the allocation of too much time and also a lack of time allocation for communication science so as to give fuller coverage to theory.

The challenge to be met here is the true integration of the education aspect of communication studies with its application areas. This must include time allocation commensurate with the integral demands of each specialisation. Speaking of journalism - the most prominent of communication areas and one holding academic status over a long period - De Beer(1995:31-32) says that it is not a question of journalism theory versus journalism practice, neither is it between journalism as a discipline or communication or vice versa. He also says that it would not be helpful to rename journalism to communication or vice versa. He says that what is rather needed is the realisation that all students entering the mass communication professions, whether they be journalists or public relations practitioners, need communication education. They should all, *"including advertising and media management, have a thorough understanding of human communication as well as its subfields, such as interpersonal, small group, intercultural, persuasive and organisational communication."* Instead of the old arguments about theory versus practice, De Beer (vide) continues, the focus should shift to ways in which an integrated approach would enable faculty and students and eventually practitioners *"to address and offer realistic solutions to important communication and media problems that face society as it rapidly moves into an era of*

the electronic delivering of news and information". De Beer (vide) goes on to say that if the role of education is to prepare students for the future, which is going to be determined by the demands of the information age, "*it is obvious that communication studies as such needs to be the central function or ingredient for teaching and research purposes in journalism*". This is in line with the integrated approach for communication education in the USA as investigated by Medsger and discussed in Chapter 3. What De Beer says about journalism, can usefully be taken as the guiding line for the other public communication specialisation areas. De Beer (1995:33-34) also says that there will still be a strong need to educate students in knowledge needs peculiar to journalism. An example is the heightened need for ethics which pilots the best journalism. What De Beer (1995) suggests will promote integration in another way. It will be essential to identify the knowledge needs peculiar to each specialisation, and also the skills needs of each specialisation. These knowledge and skills needs will have to be married to one another and this will circumvent student frustration over anecdotal significance for the building of professional knowledge. It should also be possible to coordinate the specialisation involved with the theory of communication studies. This, of itself, will be a huge task, but it should be effected as far as is practicable, and, in the execution thereof, we must also seek to make each successive credit a step toward the higher rungs of the communication education ladder, which is a fundamental implication of curriculum that is competence-based.

The integration of training with education does not only include the aspects of communication education which can be called *skills*. Training also includes - and this is seen as a primary meaning of the word as used in the White Paper - the training offered by industry. This is a question which needs close attention in curriculum, and which will have to be settled in consultation with all parties concerned. It may mean the formalisation of training arrangements which were previously instituted on a voluntary basis, such as that done by university students during holiday periods. It also means that the skills to be acquired should be specified. It is on this point that the solution to the problem confronting us of defining competencies for public relations can be found. The solution is not to seek for competencies in public relations of the reflexive kind, but rather to specify practical competencies of public relations skills and some foundational competence of knowledge peculiar to public relations as a specialisation, and to let the reflexive competence and a large part of foundational competence be found in

communication science.

The foregoing solution may also facilitate our planning for communication education greatly. The White Paper (1997) advocates institutional and regional co-operation, for the range of programmes must be diversified in terms of the provision of skilled but critical manpower, thus rationalisation or re-tooling of institutions may be necessary. However, the White Paper (as already mentioned) also makes it clear that there should be distinct missions for various institutions. Particularly relevant here is Fourie's statement (1997:102) that while there may be ten or fifteen departments of communication, each should have its own mission and own field of specialisation and expertise. Taking all of these factors into account, we can approach the challenge of the integration of education and training and of dealing with the implications of curriculum that is competence-based through the following points:-

- Curriculating for communication studies so that a well-grounded theoretical knowledge can serve as a basis for communication specialisations.
- Specialisation areas in communication to provide the "distinct mission" referred to in the White Paper for each institution concerned.
- The utilisation by each institution of practitioners from industry, who are qualified on the appropriate level and in an officially and appropriately accredited way to teach students skills in accordance with the laid-down requirements of each credit level for the communication specialisation(s) which provide the "distinct mission" of each institution.
- The integration of a three-month training period in industry at the end of the technician qualification. Such a period can readily be fitted in by utilising holiday periods plus time gained when the specialisation other than the student's chosen one is being concentrated on in the particular department. Dovetailing within the time-table will facilitate this as will the offering of at least two specialisation areas by a department of communication.

The above points, if followed, will mean that we can establish theoretical competence for

all communication specialisations. Knowledge will be built from the first credits and so the foundation for reflexive competence will be built steadily as students progress up the communication ladder. This will also provide some of the essential foundational competence, the rest of which will be furnished within specialisation, together with the relevant skills for practical competence. These skills will become more complex on each successive rung of the ladder, so that communication management may meet all the needs of the wide field of a democratising society and a growing economy.

However, before the subject of Management Practice is examined, the properties of systems theory dealt with in Chapter 5 must be considered: *equifinality* means that organisations which start with the same initial conditions may reach different end states, and, also, that the final goal of an adaptable system can be achieved in many different conditions. Thus it should be seen that the task of preparing students for a career in *public relations* can be met in different ways, for it is not essential that the current programme make-up remain unchanged. With regard to the student comment on the two major subjects, students are also asking for a systems theory property when they express the need for greater *interrelatedness* between the various years of study of one subject and also between subjects. Interrelatedness can give rise to new qualities and properties which characterise wholeness, and this seems to be something which students of the B.Tech. programme see as lacking at present. If interrelatedness and wholeness should be achieved, we shall have another systems theory property, that of *organised complexity*. If the points suggested above are implemented, it will be a complex system, and thus one of organised complexity. There would have to be adaptations of Input as shown on our model. Human resources would be adapted at least by the fact that we would use members of industry for the teaching of skills. Materials might well be adapted, and there would even be a selection process of students according to communication specialisation for chosen careers. The curriculum is going to be re-organised for competence basis, and the Output will also be modified due to the changing process of accreditation. All of the foregoing will have a great influence on Image and Productivity of each higher education institution, and no doubt will be reflected in Feedback.

The other subjects of the fourth year study for the B.Tech. Public Relations Management degree can now be considered.

6.5.2 The minor subject: Management Practice I

6.5.2.1 Student comment on Management Practice I:-

- This was absorbing and very well worth the time spent on it. (n = 8:100%).
- This subject holds great promise for our business career, so our appetite was whetted but never satiated. Satiation of the appetite would need nothing less than Management Practice I, II and III. (n = 4:50%).
- Could the major of *Public Relations* not be trimmed so as to utilise only necessary time, and Management Practice be combined with that subject throughout? This would lend much needed significance to public relations as a major subject. (n = 5:62.5%).
- Should our fourth study year not be taking us into a higher level of Management Practice, for we were under the impression that we were being prepared for Management in the degree year? (n = 4:50%).

All respondents made very positive comments about Management Practice I. The suggestion that Public Relations allocated time be trimmed and that it be combined with Management Practice throughout the programme, was made by 62.5% of respondents, while half the respondents expressed the need for the programme to offer Management Practice on levels I, II, III and IV, or, in other words, as a major subject.

6.5.2.2 Challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas

The following challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas can be identified with regard to Management Principles I.

- The pitfall of naming a degree *Management* and of not being in a position to offer tuition on a level appropriate to that significance.

It should be noted at the outset of consideration of this pitfall that, in fact, Management Practice IV had been included in the proposed programme. It was only in the final stage of approval that it was found that this had been replaced by Management Practice I. It was assumed that this had been brought about by the consideration that it was academically unsound to include Management Practice IV as a subject when the levels of I, II and III had not been offered. It can be accepted that the replacement of Management Practice IV with Management Practice I was a deep disappointment to all of those who had been involved in the revision of the curriculum of the previously approved National Higher Diploma for use as the fourth year of the B.Tech. degree programme. As previously mentioned, it was at the introduction of the degree programme that the name of the qualification was changed from *Public Relations* to *Public Relations Management*. Although the objective of the degree programme is not stated as such in the documentation, the documentation does say that the degree replaces the programme of the National Higher Diploma, and the objective of this is stated as "*to prepare diplomates for higher level management positions and to prepare them for further research studies*" (Form B:1994:Annexure A, page 1). It is likely that this statement is the basis of the belief that the degree programme prepares students for management. Moreover, the addition of the word *Management* to the qualification name *Public Relations* must surely establish this too. If we take the definition of *public relations* adopted by Holtzhausen (1995) (taken from J Grunig & Hunt (1984)) and referred to in Chapter 2, being

"the management of communication between an organisation and its publics"

and we add to this the word "Management", the name of the B.Tech. programme called *Public Relations Management* must signify

"The management of the management of communication between an organisation and its publics."

One can see that the expectations of students that the fourth year would prepare them

for management positions in public relations were reasonable.

The above-named pitfall holds two aspects:-

- (1) The need for the naming of a qualification so that its intended signification is integrally clear.
- (2) The inescapable necessity of planning from the first year of a study programme so as to make advancement to higher subject levels academically sound.

As *management* is closely linked to the ability to organise, and Littlejohn stated that systems theory is a science of organisation, we can see that systems theory is not only pinpointing a lack here, but is also re-inforcing the expressed need of students.

- The challenge of providing in curriculum for the management of the rapid changes demanded of organisations, which management crosses subject barriers.

The suggestion by students that the subject *Management Practice* be incorporated with *Public Relations* to form a new major subject to replace the previous too-insubstantial *Public Relations*, may not be a proposal that should be lightly dismissed. Verwey (1998:3) says that companies are having to adapt to profound social changes, in addition to the shifts being driven by technology. The new millennium, Verwey (vide) says, will force them to develop a new role with a new social contract "*which will see corporations redefining the boundaries of their responsibility for the way they use resources and contribute to the environment*". This "*new social contract*" which Verwey (vide) refers to inextricably involves the communication manager (or public relations manager). These new changes, it can be seen, are hastening the evolution of communication management in organisations, and Groenewald (1998:58-59) proposes that the term Corporate Communication Management is most appropriate to the current demand, for the frequent re-defining of the term *public relations* is an effort to keep pace with the current most conspicuous exercise of the career (translation). It is clear from these examples that curriculum should provide for flexibility in order to accommodate future change but should also accommodate the clearly perceived move of the communication manager towards being an essential component of the management

team in the organisation. At the Nineteenth National Annual Congress of the Southern African Communication Association held at the University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein, on the 11-12 September 1997, in a paper entitled "*Public relations as a strategic tool in achieving excellence in management*", the General Manager of Communication of the Post Office, Lulama Chakela, tells how she is striving to re-build the image of the Post Office in the face of the many reports of non-delivery of postal items, late delivery and stealing of cheques, money and items. Her efforts in this mammoth task, she said, are beginning to yield fruit, and she identified two essential ingredients of success:-

- Building a good image starts on the foundation of good service by the company/institution concerned.
- The Communication Manager must form part of the management team of any organisation, in order to help plan and implement strategy to promote such good service.

The last-named point was strengthened at the same Congress by Ströh and Groenewald, (1997) of the University of Pretoria. They (vide) pointed out that when public relations falls in the Human Sciences Faculty, management training is overlooked, while the communication science theory is overlooked when public relations is dealt with in business schools. However, these delegates pointed out that it is essential that, because the public relations manager participates in the strategic decision-making process of the organisation, a strong theoretical background in communication science be gained, as well as a sound understanding of management practice. As a result of these omissions, they stated, industry prefers to take a functional manager who already possesses management skills and who then has to "learn" the public relations approach. There are thus many Public Relations Managers and Communication Managers who do not have strategic communication skills. This has also resulted in communication graduates and public relations graduates not gaining appointment to management positions. Ströh and Groenewald (1997) also mentioned that one of the two main criticisms of public relations training was found to be a lack of business/management skills.

These various comments strengthen the claim by Claassen and Verwey (1997) mentioned in Chapter 4 that organisations do not understand the contribution to be made by communication managers on higher levels and that education and training should be planned following the setting of standards according to competencies so that the position with regard to communication education and levels of work is clearly established.

Chakela's (1997) identification of the Communication Manager forming part of the management team of the organisation as an essential ingredient for the planning and implementing of strategy referred to above, is supported by the tenet of Systems Theory that there should be an interrelationship of parts each of which contribute functionally to the whole that is the system. However, systems theory has also given rise to chaos theory, with unpredictable changes and diversity controlling the universe, according to Murphy (Ströh 1998:17). Yet it is during times of crisis and change that the communication manager is more-and-more in demand, and must play a managerial and strategic role in the organisation. Ströh (vide) points out that strategic planning could well become scenario management. Placing the scenario approach within chaos theory, Ströh (1998) posits the need for flexibility and for the provision for "plans" to be adjustable. Ströh (1998:36) cites Flower (1993:50) who holds that it is often during a crisis situation that management decides to control information and disclose only partial information, or not give any information at all, and that this is the time when open and a free flow of information is crucial. Ströh (1998:16-41) argues that the role of the communication manager is thus becoming more and more complex, and asks whether South African communication managers are being equipped to manage all the changes within the chaotic organisation. The ability to manage change requires confidence in one's own background knowledge with regard to its depth and its breadth, and also the conviction that one's management ability is developed to a reasonably sophisticated degree.

While the need for education and training in management to an advanced degree, and depth education and training in communication for ready adaptation to change, and also the mastery of relevant technological shifts may all be of great significance for organisational recognition of the position of Communication Manager, all of these taken together may still not be sufficient for the Communication Manager to be included as part of the dominant coalition. Hogg of the department of Marketing, Strathclyde, Glasgow,

Scotland, UK and Doolan of Firefly Communications, London, UK (1999:7), found that while 51% of respondents stated that the public relations function reported directly to the Chief Executive Officer, only 6% were members of the management team. Chief Executive officers explained (vide) in interviews:-

I think you need to draw a distinction between those who have a one dimension contribution to make, such as the public relations person, and those who are dealing with the total management of the organisation.

...once our strategy is decided...the public relations manager ought to be primarily involved in my view at the sort of second order, which is actually handling the business on a daily basis.

Hogg and Doolan (1999) sought to assess the progress towards achieving professional status by the public relations profession. They investigated how the function is perceived, what practitioners do and what influence they have within organisations. Their research was carried out among local authorities in Scotland at a time when a major re-organisation of local government was planned and there were major press and public relations campaigns, first to lobby for the point of view of members of the public, and then to inform the public of the implications of a major re-organisation. In-depth interviews and focus groups were utilised in their research which facilitated the construction of a quantitative questionnaire which was then distributed to all local authorities in Scotland. Using "roles research" developed by the sociological tradition, they (1999:2-3) suggest that most studies examine practitioner attitudes on the assumption that roles reside within the individual. They, therefore, utilised three clear groups who held expectations of how public relations practitioners will behave:-

- officers or paid members of the council administration
- councillors who have a direct interest in the functioning of the council but are not part of the formal organisational hierarchy
- public relations practitioners.

Thus Hogg and Doolan (1999) took into consideration the effect upon the public relations

practitioner's role of the expectations of those within the organisation responsible for determining public relations policy. They also took into account organisational context, for they (1999:3) state that this is a major role determinant. Hierarchical position tends to establish control and influence, and this is usually decided according to tasks and functions of a role. This fits into the organisational structure by a division of line and staff functions. Staff functions are those that advise and assist the executive, and public relations fits into this category. Functions which are directly related to the product-profit-producing functions are known as line functions, and it is line management which sets the ground rules, determines policy and makes final decisions. Thus, say Hogg and Doolan (1999:4) the public relations officer does *"not become part of the dominant coalition, defined as the group with the power to make and enforce decisions about the directions of the organisation, its tasks, its objectives, and functions"*. A further point their research found which has bearing on the status of public relations practitioners is that the practitioners who participated in this research *"did not emphasise a corporate role any more so than the other two groups, despite being acutely aware, as the interviewers were, of the problems caused by receiving notification of decisions rather than actually being involved in making them"* (1999:9). Both the question of the basis for becoming part of the *dominant coalition* and practitioners not exhibiting a strong desire to be part of the overall management team, make Grunig's (1990) excellent public relations seem problematic, according to Hogg and Doolan (1999:3,4&9).

The expressed need of students for Management Practice to be included in the curriculum as a major subject is re-inforced by the comments of the researchers referred to here. In addition, this section also supports indirectly the point made in section 3.8.4 that the curriculum offering a second major could be of great consequence, for students could choose a subject providing a background suitable for the line function of an organisation, increasing their chances of becoming members of the dominant group.

- The dilemma of where Public Relations or Corporate Communication Management should reside

Groenewald (1998), who (it has been said) prefers the term Corporate Communication Management to that of Public Relations, states that his research has shown that Communication Management Education and Training can be shown to be a synthesis of

four areas: Organisational Communication, Management Communication, Business Communication and Corporate Communication, all of which are communication sub-disciplines relative to undertakings and resident in the management sciences. Groenewald (1998:42-72) says that while Corporate Communication began with communication techniques such as publicity, it has grown far beyond that and now refers to the corporate function of communication in undertakings, and as it has now become a management function, it can rightly be asked why it is not taught in the business sciences. In investigating the changing role of the communication manager in the business environment, Claassen and Verwey (1998:73-89) point out that "*communication management is not always acknowledged for the contribution it can make to the organisation's survival in a dynamic global environment*". It was against this background they set out to position the communication management function in the organisation as a management function.

There does seem to be good grounds for dealing with Corporate Communication as part of Communication Management Education in the business sciences. However, it is vitally important that our competence-based curriculum makes provision for credit levels from first-year tertiary training and for each successive year, and so on to the higher levels. At some point, the education and training must be recognised as preparing students for management levels. It must also eventually lead to supplying the demands of the academic world, both with regard to teaching and also with regard to research. Wherever these requirements can be met, will provide a suitable home for communication education. We must, however, bear in mind that the world of business undertakings is not the full domain of communication education.

6.5.3 The minor subject: Research Methods and Techniques I

6.5.3.1 Student comment on Research Methods and Techniques I:-

- This was found to be of great interest and the thorough basic approach was very much appreciated. (n = 4:50%).
- Doing this subject in the fourth year caused us to question the credibility of the "research" we had previously done in *public relations*, where we understood

research to be mainly a way of gauging response to promotions, et cetera. (n = 4:50%).

- We became aware of the fact that research should not be narrow, but rather contextual, and that this demanded a wide knowledge in areas such as intercultural awareness and also a deep understanding of social phenomena. (n = 6:75%).
- It is puzzling that this basic approach to research was not inculcated in earlier years of study, so that skills and techniques could be seen as a small part of this deep and wide approach. (n = 5:62.5%).
- One of the difficulties we became very aware of, is the fact that public relations does not seem to offer topics which provide for "real" research. (n = 5:62.5%).

This subject increased awareness of research requirements, for three-quarters of respondents mention the need for wider knowledge in socio-cultural areas. It also lent sharper perspective with regard to skills, for 62.5% felt that a broader approach should have been inculcated at an earlier stage of the programme, and the same percentage of respondents mentioned that the major subject of public relations did not appear to offer opportunity for contextual research. Half of the respondents stated that this subject had offered great interest and a thorough approach, and half the respondents stated that this subject had questioned the validity of what had been termed research covered earlier in the programme.

6.5.3.2 Challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas

The following dilemma, pitfall and challenge emerge from the foregoing with regard to Research Methods and Techniques I:-

- The dilemma of finding a worthy research topic with a public relations focus.

Here, student comment plunges us into the heart of the "Ferment in the Field" debate raised in section 2.4.7.2. It targets the fragmentation of communication education. One can sense the underlying excitement when students were offered something seeming

deep and meaningful. Murphy's (1996:102) comment that chaos theory undermines statistically-based research and resulting theories about publics and raises questions about how (or whether) organisations can control public perceptions of issues, has reference here. Chaos theory's emphasis on uncertainty, open-endedness, plurality and change, runs counter to the way in which public relations practitioners adopt a goal-orientated and certainty-seeking approach. A point which can be added to Murphy's (vide) comment is that, at the very least, the extrapolation of quantitative data to larger units and time periods requires an approach of circumspection in research. Verwey and Bredenkamp (1999:97) state that in the discipline of organisational communication *"practitioners should begin to concern themselves more with the fundamental issues they are addressing through communication, than with issues relating to program and content strategies, communication techniques and technologies."* Mersham (1993:115) pointed out that *"public relations lacks an adequate, comprehensive theoretical foundation because it tends to obscure the essential dialogic nature of the communication process."* Mersham (1993:115) goes on to say that the situation is more complex and challenging in South Africa because we have only recently become aware of the need for authentic dialogue between communities. This remark underlines the student comment that in studying Research Methods and Techniques I students became aware of the need for a deep understanding of social phenomena.



The student comment also underlines the concern of the Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996) expressed as point 7 in the table given in section 4.3 - the lack of knowledge of how to develop a culture in which the importance of communication is acknowledged. Mersham (1993:109) also cites the Australian practitioner and theorist Jim MacNamara (1992), who argues that the key to the dilemma of the public relations profession is a lack of objective, research methodology for evaluating public relations programmes. Mersham (1993:110) points out further a most salient point - *"Much of the training conducted in preparing people to become practitioners is about how it is done, with very little about why it is done beyond achieving some or other organisational objective"*. Also Mersham (vide) says, very few manuals or books even try to show that public relations is fundamentally driven by the science and philosophy of communication, though J Grunig (1990) is one of the exceptions. (J Grunig proposed the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, ushering into public relations two-way symmetric communication.) Mersham (1993:111-112) continues with a compelling argument :

public relations can only function when linked with communication and democracy and their fundamental beliefs in freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. Does Mersham's (vide) claim not characterise much of the concern of the Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996) as set out in the table in Chapter 4? Some of the abilities which the Task Group found lacking are important to the promotion of democracy. The purposes of Higher Education as set out in the Draft White Paper referred to in Chapter 4 are, inter alia, to provide high-level competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy and to produce socialised, enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens. If, as Mersham (1993) argues, public relations can only function fully in true communication and democracy, we can understand the concern of the Task Group on (Government) Communication (1996) that communication professionals seem to lack knowledge, information and understanding for establishing communication policies and infrastructures for the development of democracy in its social aspects. Mersham (1993) has identified a huge responsibility for South African communicators, but particularly for communication education. Pertinent to this juncture in this study, is the recognition that social development rests heavily on the communication knowledge, information and infrastructures referred to in the Report of the Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996), and that actions for such social development must of necessity be based on findings of research that is currently relevant and contextual. For this, we need researchers with a solid background in specifically relevant areas. However, it is very important that those who believe in dialogic communication and are fired by the hope that setting communication education to rights will light the way in the new millennium, should pause and reflect upon the words of Verwey and Bredenkamp (1999:96) that communication cannot solve perceived problems, for, firstly, communication is not the problem and, secondly, the "symptom" being addressed through communication is not the problem either - there are much more fundamental issues occurring at the level of individuals, organisations and communities. An illustration of this is the Aids Project run in the Western Cape during 1999. The information campaign had been shown to be 93% effective, but when the Mayor of Cape Town told the crowd at the One City Many Condoms Festival - a music festival held at Langa stadium as part of the Aids Project - that they should use condoms, she was booed and heckled by a large part of the crowd. A councillor commented "*There is no seriousness among the youth...it's like a joke to them*" (Cape Argus: 27 Sep., 1999).

The following week, a medical officer of the Cape Town City Health Department, reported on the local radio station *Cape Talk* that the success of the Aids Project was to be measured by the number of condoms taken up over a short period compared with the numbers taken up over a short period prior to the project, but that unfortunately the authorities were unable to meet the supplies requested and, at that crucial time, no condoms were available! The claim that an information campaign should be seen only as development support communication and not as development communication is made in a paper by Burger (1996) as cited by Burton (1998:89). Burton (1998:93) goes on to say "*that most of the people doing development support communication, or something like it, are not in a position to reflect on their practices.*" Enabling and capacity-building should thus become keystones, and Burton (1998:93) states that this raises certain issues, one of which is:-

"Research: what are the research priorities for academics and practitioners in a context of nation-building, Gear¹ and information technology? How do academics relate to the people who are directly involved in communicating around development issues?"

At this point, it should be pointed out that student comment suggests they, the students, seem to have overlooked the fact that development communication is an area specified in the micro-curriculum of *Communication Science IV*, and that this must offer ideas for research. However, there can hardly be room for doubt that students had justifiable misgivings about research in *public relations*.

- The pitfall which causes us to forfeit the specialised background needed for research

We need to consider the points of Verwey and Bredenkamp (1999:96) , mentioned in the above dilemma, that communication cannot solve perceived problems, for there are far more fundamental issues at stake with individuals, organisations and communities. By listing *public relations* as a major subject alongside *communication science* as the other major - when both of these subjects are based fundamentally in *communication* - we forfeit the opportunity to provide our students with knowledge deepened to the III level of

¹ Gear is the acronym for the government Economic and Reconstruction policy.

a subject so that research can readily escape the label of "trivial", as in the "Ferment in the Field" debate. Consider, for example, the research opportunities that are opened to students in South Africa at the present time who have majored in both *communication studies* and *social science*. The student comment that contextual research needed knowledge of intercultural awareness and also a deep understanding of social phenomena probably arises from a subconscious awareness of the great need of a developing country such as South Africa for research promoting reconstruction and development. The subject *Media Studies III* in the fourth year curriculum cannot widen the scope for research, for it, too, is based fundamentally in *communication*. The subject *Social Psychology* which forms part of the curriculum for year II, is a combination of *Psychology* and *Social Studies*, and, as a combination and being a course for one year only, does not offer great depth in either subject, and does not proceed further in either of these. In reviewing communication scholarship, Burton (1995:95-110) remarks that the call to revive the critical tradition has not been matched by a practical commitment to it. He says that while the communication field is clearly fragmented, research output is phenomenal, even if it is not paradigmatic. He feels that scholars have failed "to harness speculative theory in a project which delivers a core of central questions to be posed to communication studies. At the same time, there is a strong sense of the reliance on social, political and increasingly, cultural theory to inform the theorising that communications scholars are engaged in" (Burton 1995:107). This points to the need for amplification in communication education by majoring in social science, cultural studies or political science. Chaos theory states (Murphy 1996:104) that it is often underlying beliefs and values and customs which provide the flashpoint for crises, thus social system knowledge and knowledge of cultures is very significant in South Africa. If students be not so equipped, they will have little to offer the thrust for development in South Africa.

Burton (1995:107) believes that despite the claims of trivial research, there are indications of consolidation of the discipline in academic terms. Burton (1995:104-106) points out that in their call for papers for "collective reconnaissance of communication scholarship and its future", the editors of *Journal of Communication* Vol.43 No. 3&4, (1993:4) said that "the question of media effects remains the perennial black box of communication research and still poses the most unanswered questions". Audience/media effects constitutes the heart of communication studies. Yet its

stumbling block is superficiality. Burton (1995:104-106) explains - and this does perhaps enlighten our "Ferment in the Field" debate discussed in Chapter 2 - that the theoretical, critical and also the methodological questions and problems of research in this area make it extremely complex. He refers to the work of Livingstone - and this is of great interest to *public relations* research - for Livingstone claims that while there is a long tradition of separation between administrative and critical research, "*there is now a significant convergence of these two schools of thought such that a new and productive era of theory building has begun*". Livingstone (1995) says that administrative research had previously neglected the text and so had presumed audience behaviour, while critical research had neglected the audience and so had presumed textual power. The central recognition with the new convergence is that simultaneous recognition must be given to text, audience and context. No longer can text and audience be seen as independent, for they are interdependent and act mutually as joint constructors of meaning. The new convergence also means the acceptance of empirical investigation of all theoretical claims.

This recent recognition of text and audience interdependence is of primary interest to the field of *public relations*. This strengthens the opinion expressed by MacNamara (1992) and referred to in the foregoing dilemma that *public relations* lacks objective research methodology for evaluating public relations programmes. However, this last part of this discussion also underlines the need for a second major subject which is not fundamentally based in communication studies. In South Africa, studying text power and audience behaviour strongly needs to be closely linked to society and culture, thus an in-depth knowledge of these areas *relative to our own nation* is vital. This points to a need for Africanisation of curriculum content.

Systems theory holds that an open system adapts dynamically to its environment. This strengthens the proposal that in South Africa communication education should ensure that students are able to choose a second major from the social sciences and the political sciences, for, while it is acknowledged that there are other useful majors, such as, for example, those which serve economic expansion, it is felt that the current environment requires, inter alia, the choice of social and political sciences for communication education so that society's needs for academic research can be met by a pool of researchers whose wide background is relevant to both the historical hour and

the geographical cultural flashpoint that is South Africa. Mersham (1993:117) pointed out that Corporate Social Investment in the South African environment desperately needs practitioners to grasp the nettle of race and class, which have become confused in the upwardly aspirant thrust on one hand, and possible privilege loss on the other, of power changes. Mersham's (vide) statement does not only offer support for the White Paper's imperative that education produce constructively critical citizens, it underlines the need for communication education in particular to give cognisance to this imperative in education and training for, Mersham (1993:111) says public relations is not only "*indispensable in modern democracies with mass societies and mass communications,*" but, also, "*can only exist in democratic societies*".

The public relations profession holds the responsibility of producing the White Paper's "*constructively critical citizens*" throughout its various publics, but communication education holds the responsibility of producing these key communicators empowered to carry this out.

- The challenge of curriculum that is competence-based in providing for research

The fact that students expressed a feeling of a loss of credibility towards the research work done in earlier years of the programme, ties in with a career-oriented approach. The three-year diploma is aimed at producing communication workers on technician level, and because the co-operative education absorbs so large a part of the third year, it is difficult to advance research study further than an auxiliary level.

Curriculum that is competence-based is also a challenge, for between career-oriented education and training and fulfilling the purpose of the White Paper of providing learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning, and also that of engaging in the creation, transmission and evaluation of knowledge so as to ensure continued pursuit of academic scholarship and intellectual inquiring in all fields of human understanding through research and teaching, communication education finds that there are two antithetical positions:-

- To provide competencies for research commensurate with credit levels from the first years to later years which will fit in with career levels from the lower levels

advancing toward academic teaching and research at the higher levels.

- To provide the foundation from the first years for scholarly research so that this can be steadily built on in each ensuing year advancing toward academic teaching and research.

The antithesis arises because the competencies of research are likely to prove difficult to link with one another in the early tertiary education and training, for the Practical competence which fits in readily with quantitative research is likely to be expected of workers with one or two years' education and training, while Reflexive competence will be essential as more responsibility is assumed.

A practicable way might be to approach preparation for scholarship as the complex issue it is. For example, some of the skills needed for research - and which are likely to be expected of workers in communication areas - are computer-based. The lower levels of education and training in public relations already include in technikons computer literacy.

An amplification of computer literacy to include levels of research application for each credit, will contribute meaningfully to preparation for research. In addition, from the second year of tertiary education in communication fields, relevant research methodology and techniques can be introduced and advanced in the third and perhaps even the fourth year of study. The modular approach for both the computer skills and the methodology will facilitate the integration of research study in all three kinds of competency with the step-ladder of credit-building.

It can be seen that the pitfalls, dilemmas and challenges which may arise in curriculum with regard to Research Methods and Techniques will demand very particular attention.

The last subject we need to look at of the fourth year of the B.Tech. Public Relations Management programme, is Media Studies III.

6.5.4 Media Studies III

Student comment on Media Studies III:-

- The writing of a feature article, which had to be researched thoroughly from all

angles, was most satisfying in that:

we were not repeating the writing of press releases from a public relations point of view - which we had done *ad infinitum* in Media Studies I and II;

the resultant search for veracity on all points and from different points of view, felt expansive;

the writing of a feature article in which the interest to the reader was that of the topic itself - and not that framed according to the interests of the employer or client - was most satisfying. (n = 5:62.5%).

- The handling of websites has proved to be very useful knowledge. Designing a website on the computer was found to be fascinating, and most beneficial in work situations. Moreover, at least one of the small group of students had found work specifically involving the design of computer websites. (n = 4:50%).
- Theory in this subject provided, inter alia, a deeper involvement in ethical questions in connection with the media, and this was found to be rewarding as it was seen as highly significant in the business situation. (n = 6:75%).

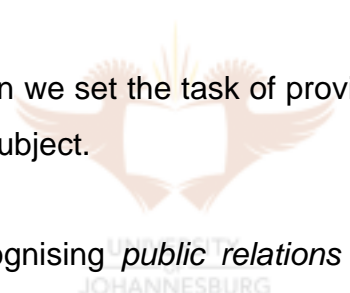
These comments are almost all positive. The strongest comment, made by 75% of respondents, is the appreciation of involvement with ethics in media, thus supporting the finding of Medsger (1996) shown in section 3.7 that questions of ethics in the media is seen as very significant by students. It is interesting that a strong representation of 62.5% of respondents mentioned great satisfaction at writing a feature article which was not framed for the interest of a client but for the reader, suggesting some measure of dissatisfaction with the agency role of public relations practice. Half of the respondents expressed appreciation of learning how to design a website and of its benefit for the work situation.

The student comment does not suggest any pitfall, challenge or dilemma with which curriculum must wrestle. Practical competence has been provided, at least in the computer design of websites, and this must also of necessity include Foundational competence, while the theory on ethics clearly provided accompanying Reflexive competence.

It seems clear that *public relations* learners benefit in all three kinds of competence from their education and training in Media Studies. This subject also makes a clear contribution to fulfilling the purposes of communication education, as set out in the White Paper.

6.5.5 Summary of challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas

The challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas with regard to the curriculum as identified through the student appraisal, are summarised below:-

- 
- (i) A deep pitfall looms when we set the task of providing a theoretical base for *public relations* as a major subject.
 - (ii) The dilemma of recognising *public relations* as an independent subject and dealing with the concomitant disproportionate time allocation or of not recognising *public relations* as an independent subject and having appropriate time allocation, and the dilemma of choosing appropriate career designations.
 - (iii) The challenge of fulfilling the demand of the integration of education and training and of dealing with the implications of curriculum that is competence-based for both *public relations* and *communication science* in one programme.
 - (iv) The pitfall of naming a degree *Management* and of not being in a position to offer tuition on a level appropriate to that significance.
 - (v) The challenge of providing in curriculum for the management of the rapid changes demanded of organisations, which management crosses subject barriers.
 - (vi) The dilemma of where *Public Relations / Corporate Communication Management*

should reside.

- (vii) The dilemma of finding a worthy research topic with a *public relations* focus or of merely adding to the trivial research of the “Ferment in the Field” debate.
- (viii) The pitfall which causes us to forfeit the specialised background needed for research meaningful to societal needs.
- (ix) The challenge of curricula that is competence-based in providing for research in order that research competence can be built from the first year of a programme, bearing in mind both the needs of industry and those for articulation purposes.

The foregoing challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas with regard to the curriculum and which have been identified through the student appraisal show strong support for the exigencies of public relations education, as stated in Chapter 3. In so doing, the student appraisal is also providing strong affirmative support for public relations education to qualify graduates to serve both academic research and teaching as well as on levels of technician and management in industry.

The relevance of the student appraisal to the curricula of public relations at other South African technikons is considered next.

6.6 THE RELEVANCE OF THE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT APPRAISAL TO THE CURRICULATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION AT OTHER SOUTH AFRICAN TECHNIKONS

As already stated, all technikons offering the degree programme B.Tech. Public Relations Management are bound by the same curriculum. While Academic Committees of each technikon are empowered to approve changes in micro-curricula, the “national flavour” must be preserved. It should be noted, however, that there is a limited choice offered in certain groups of subjects. For example, choice is offered with regard to languages. In practice, technikons offer a second and perhaps even a third language according to the particular region and according to staff competence. The area of choice which may impact to some extent on the discussion is that between

Xhosa, Videology and Industrial Relations. While the Cape Technikon offers a choice of Xhosa or Videology, other technikons offer Industrial Relations. Students doing Industrial Relations may feel that this subject strengthens the management orientation of the diploma level, and it is possible that this would increase their confidence about their management training after doing the fourth year. However, this is not seen to hold strong influence, for Industrial Relations is a one-year course done in the second year of the diploma.

The next section considers the significance of student appraisal indicators for re-curriculation of the South African Technikon Public Relations Programme.

6.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDENT APPRAISAL INDICATORS FOR RE-CURRICULATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN TECHNIKON PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMME/S

The Challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas of the B.Tech. : Public Relations Management programme as identified through the student appraisal, strongly support the shortcomings which have been identified in the USA (Medsker 1996), by the Task Group on (Government) Communications in South Africa (1996), by various other researchers both in South Africa and in other countries, and they also confirm the grave difficulties of naming the application of communication, *public relations*, as another major in the same programme in which communication science is a major subject. The concomitant omission of a major subject from another field, such as social science, or business economics, is also pinpointed as a shortcoming by the student appraisal, particularly because of the consequence of such an omission upon the prospects of meaningful research.

Section 3.7 showed that in another of the applied areas of communication - journalism - the integrated communication education course served students better than did the journalism course, offering a wider general education and better preparation for journalism and for research. However, when an *outcomes-based* approach to the curriculation of public relations education and training was considered in section 3.8, it was pointed out that the fundamental problems, such as the lack of a body of scientific knowledge, render the compilation of an acceptable curriculum extremely challenging. It

should also be observed that although the Cape Technikon uses the three curriculum approaches of Rationalism, Empiricism and Pragmatism, this does not make any contribution to dealing with the fundamental problems of public relations - a point already made in section 3.8.6. The student appraisal highlights shortcomings such as

- the lack of a theoretical base for public relations
- the vacuum that is created when public relations is regarded as a major subject
- the problems of compiling a competence-based curriculum for both public relations and communication science in one programme
- the paucity of worthy research topics in public relations
- difficulty of conforming to articulation requirements.

All of the points mentioned in section 3.7 signify that integrated communication education and training, taking form as *outcomes-based education* in which *generic* and *vocational education* are combined, holds the necessary promise of fulfilment for communication education and training in South Africa. This will mean the re-circulation of the public relations programme for technikons. However, the requirements of The White Paper on Higher Education allow a transition period until the end of June 2003. Thereafter, programme curricula will have to be registered on the NQF, this registration of programmes being operative from the 1st July 2003.

6.8 CONCLUSION

While Chapter 4 provided the background of the South African educational environment and also a picture of the present status of public relations education, this chapter gives a case history of technikon public relations education and training.

First the methodology and appropriateness of a case study approach were explained, as also the rationale for selecting the Cape Technikon. Then the case study of the public relations programme of the Cape Technikon was described, giving the general background of the Cape Technikon, followed by the utilisation of the systems model given in Chapter 5 as a framework of analysis. This analysis showed that the Cape Technikon conforms to the systems model of an institution of higher education.

Thereafter, the curriculum approach to public relations education at the Cape Technikon was the focus, showing that the three curriculum approaches of Rationalism, Empiricism and Pragmatism are utilised.

The heart of this case history is the student appraisal. The two major subjects and also the three minor subjects of the fourth and the degree year of the B.Tech. were dealt with, revealing challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas identified by the students. Each of these is reported and discussed under the relevant subject head. A summary of the challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas is compiled for ready consideration as a contribution to re-curriculum of the public relations programme at South African technikons, and its relevance to other South African technikons is shown. It is also pointed out that the student appraisal re-inforces the findings of shortcomings which have been identified in the USA (Medsger 1996), by the South African Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996) and by researchers both in South Africa and in other countries. In addition, the student appraisal also confirms the difficulties created by naming both public relations and communication science as major subjects in one particular programme with the concomitant omission of another major subject and the consequences this holds for research and for practitioner advancement to higher levels in industry.

Lastly, it is pointed out that Medsger's investigation showed that an integrated communication education course served journalism students better than did the journalism course. However, section 3.8 shows that the fundamental problems of public relations make the compilation of an acceptable *outcomes-based* curriculum extremely challenging. Moreover, the use of the three curriculum approaches of Rationalism, Empiricism and Pragmatism at the Cape Technikon has not in any way helped to solve the problems of public relations.

The conclusion is reached that *outcomes-based education* in a single system which combines *generic education* with *vocational education* can provide the answer for the re-curriculum of the public relations programme in South African technikons.

The final chapter reviews the issues the study has tried to address, offers guidelines for the curriculum of technikon Public Relations Education for South African Higher

Education, gives a critical evaluation of the study, and makes recommendations for further research.

