

# ABSTRACT

The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) in their Gold Paper No.7 (1990:6) recognises two schools of thought about education and training for public relations : one that it is preparation for a technician level post and the other that it is preparation for management. These two approaches broadly represent that of public relations education in the USA and that in Europe, respectively. These two different approaches differ markedly. South African tertiary education utilises both of these approaches, university education in public relations following the European model, and technikon education following the model of the USA. This has created confusion in industry and, as a result, graduates of both universities and technikons are often not given due recognition. It also results in public relations not realising its true potential. Added to the foregoing, there are fundamental problems in the field of public relations itself, such as its lack of definition and also of scientific status and professionalism.

South Africa is currently introducing an *outcomes-based* approach to education throughout its tertiary education system. While the introduction of a particular curriculum approach such as *outcomes-based education* would be problematic in the general sense because of the fundamental problems of public relations, it is particularly so in the South African context where public relations education is being offered in accordance with the two different approaches to education. For this reason, this study seeks to provide guidelines for the curriculum of technikon level public relations education within an *outcomes-based* approach to education. The compilation of a set of guidelines for technikon level public relations education will serve a useful purpose in several directions, as set out below:-

- (1) The confusion in South African industry with regard to the recognition of the abilities of public relations graduates can be alleviated.
- (2) The path can be opened for the accreditation of public relations graduates to be instituted.
- (3) The chances of graduates gaining managerial positions and of becoming members

of the dominant coalition of an organisation and of being able to utilise the Excellence Model of public relations practice will be promoted.

- (4) Research is more likely to be theoretically-grounded and is likely both to increase in volume and to make a worthy contribution to development in South Africa.
- (5) The chances of the fundamental problems of the field of public relations being engaged will be enhanced and this could make significant contributions to the field on a generic scale.
- (6) The fulfilment of the requirement of The White Paper (1997) that South African tertiary education carry out its function with economy and efficiency will be facilitated.

In order to fulfil the primary purpose, current approaches to tertiary level public relations education will be analysed and assessed in various contexts; weaknesses and strengths in current curricula perspectives adopted for tertiary level public relations education will be identified; the impact of the educational context on the curricula of technikon level public relations courses will be analysed; and a theoretical framework for understanding the context of technikon tertiary level public relations education will be developed.

The foregoing yield information for the compilation of guidelines and recommendations for technikon level public relations education in South Africa.