

CHAPTER 7 : GUIDELINES FOR THE CURRICULATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION : A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 has given the case history of technikon public relations education and training. The case history analysis of the student appraisal has provided a list of challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas of curriculaion of the technikon public relations qualification. The appraisal has re-enforced the findings of shortcomings with regard to public relations education discussed previously in this study.

Chapter 7 provides an overview of the study. The main purpose of the study has been to provide guidelines for the curriculaion of technikon level public relations education within an *outcomes-based* approach to education. This required an investigation of the two approaches to public relations education which are currently being utilised - that of the USA, which is an approach aimed at technician level public relations, and that of Europe, which is aimed at managerial level public relations. The weaknesses and also the strengths were revealed, and, because South African tertiary public relations education can be seen as a microcosm of international tertiary public relations education, a South African case history was examined. The case history, as said above, re-inforced the findings. In this way, the first two sub-questions, being to analyse and assess current approaches to tertiary level public relations education in various contexts, and to identify the weaknesses and strengths in current curriculaion perspectives adopted for tertiary level public relations education, were dealt with.

The study has also taken into consideration the effects of context. The very fact that there are two such different approaches to tertiary public relations education suggests that the different contexts have markedly differing impacts upon education and thus on the approach to curriculaion. This has been carefully examined over an extended time period. A systems model representing the context of tertiary public relations education was also drawn up for use in the case study analysis. These sections have dealt with the two remaining sub-questions, being to analyse the impact of the educational context on the curriculaion of technikon level public relations courses, and to develop a theoretical framework for understanding the context of tertiary level public relations

education.

As the background to the approaches to public relations education, which was dealt with in Chapter 2, had revealed significant fundamental problems within the field of public relations itself, these have also been taken into account in drawing up guidelines and recommendations for public relations technikon education. It is hoped that learners will be adequately prepared to enable them to make a vital contribution to the settling of these fundamental problems.

The main purpose of the study has been fulfilled, and the sub-questions have been answered. The guidelines and recommendations for the curriculum of technikon level public relations education are followed by a section which gives the current position of South African higher education, so as to bring this record up-to-date.

A synthesis of findings of the study is also given, and this is also elucidated with a diagram.

The study closes after its critical evaluation and recommendations and directions for further research.

Section 7.2 discusses the issues this study has tried to address.

7.2 ISSUES THIS STUDY HAS TRIED TO ADDRESS

The primary purpose of the study is to provide guidelines for the curriculum of technikon public relations education in an *outcomes-based education* approach.

The dual approach to public relations education which is illustrated by Table 2 shows that in the USA technical skill is emphasised. Maund (1997:1) questions whether the public relations profession in USA will be able to handle the challenges of the new century because of the lack of focus on strategic communication. It is important to recall the statement by White (1995:1-11) that although an international report published by IPRA in 1983 determined that public relations must be combined with communication theory, the PRSA had not until that time recommended this.

These differences in approach to public relations education are confirmed by the IPRA recognition of one approach to public relations education seeking to equip students for technician level work, and a second approach seeking to equip students for management level work. It is important to observe that the two different approaches have different aims, and so it is not a case of either approach providing preliminary education for the other approach. On the contrary, Hazleton and Cutbirth (1993:187-196) regard the more sophisticated approach to public relations education in Europe as being founded on the more complex needs of the many differing national cultures in close proximity to one another, the high value which is placed on education itself, and the varying demands and developments following the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1991. The establishment of the European Economic Community has of itself increased greatly not only the demand for public relations, but also the demand for international public relations. On this last point, too, public relations in USA has, as Sommerness and Beaman (1994) stated, been very slow to respond to the need for training.



Tables 9-13 which illustrate the development of Western higher education from the 12th to the end of the 20th century show that Europe's *generic education* approach began on a basis of rationalism but that the spirit of inquiry it nurtured embraced scientific method and empiricism from the 19th century and also pragmatism from the 20th century. When technical institutes were established as *vocational education* in the 19th century they also utilised an approach of rationalism, empiricism and scientific method, and adopted pragmatism too when it became established in the 20th century. However, while *generic education* has moved through the ages from a pedagogical to an andragogical basis, it has not placed great emphasis on the important pragmatism concept of action-orientation. The tremendous information and technological development of the 20th century has opened undreamed of paths for knowledge application, thus the lack of focus of *generic education* upon practical application of knowledge, or experiential learning, can now be seen as a critical weakness of *generic education*. *Vocational education*, on the other hand, focuses strongly on experiential learning, and in this respect can be seen as more effective than *generic education*. It is very likely that this lack of emphasis upon the practical application of knowledge by *generic education* has helped to give rise to the current call for *outcomes-based education*, in which evaluation

is focused on performance. However, while the investigation by Medsger (1996) into another area of application of communication - journalism - showed that 95% of learners found professional experience to be of greater value in tutors than a doctoral qualification, thus supporting belief in practical experience, Medsger's (1996) investigation also revealed weaknesses in the *vocational education* approach.

The first weakness revealed in the *vocational education* approach is that a very low percentage of learners achieve management level, or gain recognition in the field showing that they possess leadership qualities. The second weakness found by Medsger (1996) is allied to the first weakness, for it found that skills training signifies meaning of limited-centredness in the concept of learner-centredness. As *vocational education* focuses on technician level education and - more critically - as theory coverage is limited to that which is seen as essential for job performance, it can be seen that the background knowledge acquired is unlikely to be broad enough to nurture chances of promotion to management level or to achieve recognition for outstanding performance. Verwey (2000) says that it is vital that graduates are equipped for high purpose and high function public relations for the 21st century, hence underlining the need for the re-curriculation of public relations on a generic level.

The curtailment of the building of background knowledge in *vocational education* also has other far-reaching effects. Whereas the first levels of education and training should provide the knowledge foundation for advancement to higher levels, this is not the case in public relations *vocational education*. The criticism of applied communication research which was raised in the *Journal of Communication* No.33(3) of 1983 was again the main focus in the conference held at Syracuse University in 1985. International communication leaders from both academia and industry pointed to the triviality of much applied communication research and its lack of context, the fact that much of it is devoid of any underlying theoretical base, thus carrying little scientific value for the field. In juxtaposition with these claims, is the lack of a body of theory in public relations, highlighted by Hutton (1999). However, the very fact that Terry (1989) states that there must be a strong link between theorists and practitioners for advancement of the field, raises serious doubts about the appropriateness of the USA approach to public relations education where insufficient attention is paid to theory and also of the approach in Europe where little, if any, attention is given to practical application. Dunne (1999)

shows that theory plays an indispensable role in practice, as it is through knowledge gained in theory that the particularity of a situation is recognised so that such particularity can be brought into some relationship with established norms or procedures for the relevant area. The role of theory is, firstly, the provision of knowledge and, secondly, the yielding of a third-person perspective which yields generalised findings in accordance with clearly-formulated, publicly agreed procedures. This provides a body of knowledge with values of prediction and control. However, Dunne does not relegate practical application to something akin to an afterthought. Knowledge yielded by theory and invested in action yields judgement, and this judgement is the illuminating connection of the theoretical knowledge with the practical action needed in the specific situation. Dunne (1999) points out that the efficacy of activity is matched by the rigour of the knowledge, whose defining feature is rationality. Thus it can be said that rationality is also the defining feature of action, and this is the relationship between knowledge (theory) and good practice. It can be argued that *outcomes-based education*, which espouses the pragmatist principle of knowledge-in-action, has this relationship between knowledge and practice in mind so clearly identified by Dunne (1999).

Terry's (1989) statement that there must be a strong link between theorists and practitioners for advancement in the field supports the argument of Dunne (1999) that there is a relationship between knowledge (theory) and good practice. Their positions also support the point of view that communication science provides the theoretical base and that public relations, as an application of communication, provides practical application of communication in a particular sphere.

All of the foregoing point to the need for a generic framework for the curriculum of public relations education to require as a grounding theoretical component Generic Communication Studies, and also to recognise applications of communication as elective modules. Reflexive competence should also be seen as important, for Dunne's *judgement* is the result of reflection which illuminates the connection of knowledge and the practical action needed for a specific situation. Bellis (1997) states that competence speaks of performance and not only of task performance, but also of understanding, reflectiveness and for development.

However, sight must not be lost of the criticism of the UK competence-based model.

Researchers such as Hodkinson (1992), Marshall (1991) and Ashworth (1992) decry the positivist approach, in which specific form is given to the idea of competence in the description of performance to be seen as “good enough”, and learners can be tested repeatedly until performing to specification. This criticism bears some similarity to the rejection of functionalism as a theoretical approach for this study. For in functionalism the status quo and its preservation is all-important, while the human being assumes a position of a part, or a mechanism, of the system as a whole. Garland (1994), on the other hand, pleads for a positive approach to the UK *competence-based* system. He (vide) considers that competence statements make clear what is meant by *good practice*. Provided Dunne’s (1999) argument for theoretical knowledge is given the place which Ashworth (1992) says that knowledge and understanding deserve, Garland’s (1994) plea that due attention to the processes and not just the outcomes of a competence-based system will provide an integrated approach to education which can yield both personal and professional development, can be heeded.

It can be seen from the foregoing that it is important that careful consideration be extended to the introduction of an *outcomes-based education* model for public relations education, else there is a strong possibility that the building of a body of theory and the other needs, such as reaching agreement on definition and scope, will not be met in the foreseeable future.

Grunig (2000) sees the chances of the professionalisation of public relations being enhanced by practitioners who are part of the dominant coalition of an organisation because he/she will be able to influence the choice of a public relations model. Moreover, if such a practitioner has knowledge of strategic, symmetrical practice, they will practice collaborative advocacy. This is seen as ideal public relations, and such practice will raise the credibility of the field. Professional status of the public relations field, Grunig says (vide) means that accreditation would become compulsory.

Curriculation of public relations education which provides for the qualification of graduates in order that they are able to make a contribution in theoretically-grounded research and also to serve in strategic practice, can readily provide for credit-levels attached to appropriate designation. The need for curriculation so as to provide learners with strategic management and strategic communication skills has been underlined -

Steyn (2000) underlines the need for curriculum of public relations education to provide to senior students education for strategic management and strategic communication capabilities. Steyn's (vide) research confirmed the role of PR strategist at the top management level of the organisation. This role first emerged in the research of Toth, Serini, Wright and Emig (1998), which they called the Agency Profile, but which Steyn's research refers to as PR strategist. The research in both cases supports the curriculum of public relations education to provide for the high purpose and high function level which Verwey (2000) states is needed for the 21st century. The extension of public relations roles into higher level practice in the last five to seven years lends greater force to the argument that education should provide credit-levels furnishing appropriate designation for public relations, as mentioned by Claassen and Verwey (1997).

It is doubtful whether public relations will ever achieve the status of professionalism as defined by Beam (1990), in which practitioners can control the performance and the goals of their work. As mentioned, Exchange theory challenges such a state of affairs because of the practitioner being hired by an organisation and thus being bound to yield service as defined by the organisation. Once again, Grunig's (2000) statement that a practitioner who is a member of the dominant coalition can, nevertheless, influence the choice of the public relations model utilised and so influence the underlying approach of public relations activities, is relevant. The question then becomes *How does a public relations practitioner become a member of the dominant coalition?* Bain (1988) sees the claim that public relations practitioners should practise openness as placing them in a dilemma, for a penchant for openness could make top management unwilling to include them in the top coalition. Grunig (1990) claimed that if the public relations practitioner is not part of the dominant coalition, few public relations programmes are excellent. A strong case cannot be made out for the chances of a public relations practitioner becoming part of the dominant coalition in an organisation solely on the strength of communication practice. The need for exerting influence within the dominant coalition in order to promote the practice of Grunig's (1984) two-way symmetrical model was established by Dozier, Grunig and Grunig (1984). There is an avenue, however, which public relations education could follow. This avenue could, at the same time, serve another need in public relations practice. This is to require learners to qualify in a second major subject which is not allied to the communication field. This will mean that

students will major in communication studies and also in a second major subject: this second major subject can be chosen as a subject for knowledge of the line function in an organisation, thus greatly increasing a graduate's chances of becoming a member of the top coalition, and/or such second major subject will promote the likelihood of research undertaken being contextualised as, for example, a subject such as sociology could do. Medsger (1996) mentioned the difficulty of maintaining visibility within the university with a vocational journalism course, while Leonard Medsger (1996) argues for meaningful research in order to improve a profession and avoid the skills of professionals growing stale. Dennis (1984) urged in the Oregon Report that students be given a general communication education with a largely conceptually based core of courses which will nurture, among other things, critical thinking. The great need of public relations for the building of a body of knowledge highlights these points of view.

The dual approach to public relations education which has been adopted by the USA and in Europe has a close connection with each relevant culture. Europe, a continent of many different peoples and cultures, and having nurtured and valued education down the centuries, is more likely, Boyer (1990) says, to see education as being of high value of itself, while in the USA, where the interests of business and economy prevail, says Boyer (vide), education is seen as a means to an end. This study has also needed to take the impact of culture into account, as well as the many influences which accompany culture and their interconnected influences upon education, as explained in Chapter 5 in the consideration of an appropriate theoretical approach for this study. Hodkinson (1992) points to what he considers a great weakness of the UK competence-based education system. Hodkinson claims (vide) that it is unacceptable to isolate a statement of competence for a standard of evaluation, for Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) state that learning cannot be separated from context and also Resnick (1987) claims that learning is not just about interactions between people, but also the interactions between people and their environment. Hodkinson's (1992) claim is difficult to deny, for, as stated in Chapter 3, context must surely be an active principle guiding subtle nuances of problem-solving knowledge application. Moreover, it has been pointed out in the same chapter that pre-set standards do not provide fertile ground for the nurturing of flexibility, which is a need which Fourie (1997) says is essential because of the rapidly-changing communication industry coupled with the effects of developing technology. This need for flexibility was also pointed to by Shoemaker in 1993. Following Mead's (1932) argument

that reality arises in the interaction between participants, Hodkinson (1992) suggests that this is influenced to an extent by context, including culture. As these influences will affect role definition, Hodkinson (vide) believes that elements of competence cannot be seen as fixed. Elements of competence, Hodkinson (vide) suggests, should be seen as being useful for learning rather than for assessment. Here Hodkinson (vide) is making a very similar point to that of Garland (1994), who says there should be a focus on *process* rather than on *product*. This can be seen as a point of great significance, and deserves particular attention in the compilation of curricula. This is all the more so because both Hodkinson (1992) and Ashworth (1992) see a process of interactive learning as providing opportunity for the development of critical thinking which, in turn, can give rise to considerations of ethics. This study has suggested that if graduates are educated for the high level functioning of the 21st century mentioned by Verwey (2000), exemplified by Steyn's (1999) research as the role of PR strategist, the heightened sensitivity and the wide background knowledge required for environmental scanning and up-to-date alertness for keen anticipation of possible consequences for the organisation, will very likely raise the ethical standards of public relations practice. The PR strategist will have to be creative and ready to take the initiative at the critical moment, rather than being party to *controlling public perceptions*, according to trends in public relations heretofore. Medsger (1996) found that ethical considerations could be explored more readily in an integrated communication education course, while the vocational education journalism course, Medsger (vide) found, saw no need for any course in ethics, stating that ethics could be included in any part of the programme.

Hutton's proposed definition of public relations being *managing strategic relationships* should not be overlooked. This study sees Hutton's definition as being clearer than that of *managing communication between an organisation and its publics*. Hutton's definition is more inclusive of the latest development in public relations - that of activism. This study, however, has some reserve about Hutton's term *managing*, which, Hutton says, implies control, feedback and performance measurement. Linking *control* with *relationship* holds a suggestion of *manipulation* - and the early trends in the development of public relations come to mind. Thus, this study proposes an adjustment so that Hutton's definition reads STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION.

The insights of the foregoing discussion generate the conclusions given at the end of

Chapter 3 of what a generic framework of public relations should consist of, and these are again given below:-

A generic framework which -

- (1) lays down as the grounding theoretical component Generic Communication Studies, providing a deep understanding of human communication, including the areas of interpersonal, small group, intercultural, persuasive, organisational, political, and the philosophy of, communication, inter alia;
- (2) recognises the various applications of communication as elective modules of specialisation each providing a strong link with a particular career;
- (3) provides for qualifications linked with credit-levels, for compulsory registration which furnishes appropriate designation;
- (4) fosters both foundational and applied competence and particularly meets the demand for problem-solving abilities through the fostering of reflexive competence;
- (5) offers as second major subject choices only those which are not a sub-field or closely allied field of communication in order that qualifying learners will be able to offer industry, in addition to strategic communication skills, a knowledge background which connects their potential contribution closely to line function, thus promoting (where relevant) their chances of becoming part of the management/dominant group of an organisation;
- (6) provides adequate background on high levels for research that is contextual and reflective and developmental.

The above generic framework has been given specific form in a suggested framework for an *outcomes-based* public relations curriculum in Table 16 from Chapter 3, which is also shown again for easy reference:-

Table 16 : SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK FOR AN *OUTCOMES-BASED* PUBLIC RELATIONS

CURRICULUM

Length of course :	3 years (can be 4 years)
Compulsory subjects :	Major : Communication studies Major : Choice of 2 nd major from list Minor : Second language (from another country - 2 semesters) Minor : Presentation skills (1 semester) Minor : Media studies, including media law (2 semesters) Minor : Choice of another 1 from list (1 semester) Elective: Public relations (2 semesters)
<p>The full course consists of 2 major subjects, 3 compulsory minor subjects, plus 1 minor subject chosen from remaining minor subjects, and the elective from a list of communication specialisations offered. It should be noted that compulsory minor subjects may vary according to the communication specialisation elected.</p>	
Compulsory major :	Communication studies (The following areas are included, inter alia - fundamental communication theory, interpersonal and group communication, mass communication, persuasive communication, organisational communication, quantitative and qualitative communication research, communication philosophy, ethics of communication, communication policy, communication campaign and project management.)
2 ND Major chosen from :	Economics Business Management / Marketing Management Sociology Political Science Industrial Psychology Development Studies Philosophy (Majors : 6 semesters each.)
Compulsory minor subjects : (List can vary with communication specialisation elected)	(1) A second language - that of another country (2 semesters) (2) Media Studies, including media law, communication media (2 semesters) (3) Presentation skills (1 semester)
1 additional minor subject from : (Can vary with different communication specialisation electives)	Business economics Public administration Public health affairs Sport management, entertainment management and welfare management (Each 1 semester)
one elective : (To be chosen from list of offerings)	Public relations (The following areas are included, inter alia - New communication technologies for public relations, International public relations, Globalisation of public relations, Ethics in public relations.)
Experiential Training :	A period of 3 months' service in an approved organisation, which can be arranged during a study break period or after the end of the study course.

The list of challenges, pitfalls and dilemmas identified through the student appraisal and which was given in Chapter 6, are shown below and are then discussed:-

- (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 curricula 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 curricula 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.

Discussion of this list yields an evaluation of the technikon level public relations qualification, in the light of the suggested generic guidelines for the curricula of public relations education:-

The technikon level qualification does provide for the first requirement stipulated in the generic framework given at the end of Chapter 3, that of Generic Communication Studies as a grounding theoretical component. However, students commented that more time should be given throughout the programme for theory in Communication Science, while their criticism focused on the fourth year, the degree year, for not fulfilling their expectations of dealing with communication issues on management level. This dovetails with the criticism of the Task Group on government Communications (1996) which was discussed in Chapter 4. The model of the environment of an institution of higher education which was compiled in Chapter 5, indicates the great need of public relations education to respond to influences in its broad environment, such as the criticism of such a Task Group. In the discussion in this study Claassen and Verwey (1997) raise the question of whether the solution to the problem of public relations being seen as being tied to the technical level by industry lies in the state of training and the criteria for accreditation. This study confirms that at least part of the solution lies in the state of training.

The second requirement stipulated in the generic framework, that applications of communication be recognised as elective modules of specialisation each providing a strong link with a particular career, is mirrored by the student appraisal in several ways. Chief of these is the comment made by all the students that public relations seemed to lack a theoretical base. Chapter 2 also bears witness to this, firstly, in the dual approach to public relations education, wherein it is seen as education for technician level qualification in the USA, and as qualification for management level in Europe. In South Africa, where the technikon level qualification was modelled on similar programmes from the USA, it was for 24 years seen as a technician level qualification. By adding a fourth year to such a programme, the qualification has been upgraded to a degree programme. This is not to say that it has now been rendered equivalent to the qualification of Europe, for in Europe students commence

with a university degree programme, which is from its beginning one of greater depth and specialisation than is the technikon qualification. Particularly, public relations is not seen in Europe as an academic subject, thus it is left for the business world to teach graduates the practical skills of public relations, which leaves room for other majors in the degree in Europe. In South Africa, however, public relations is seen as a major in addition to Communication Science being seen as a major subject in the same programme. It can thus be seen from the student appraisal that the dual approach in the USA and Europe arises from the lack of an academic base for public relations itself. In the USA this awareness has meant the qualification is seen as a technician level qualification, while Europe offers degree programmes because it focuses on Communication Studies, which has academic status, leaving the career aspect of public relations to be covered after graduation. South Africa, it seems, is offering a technician level programme and seeking degree recognition with the addition of a year of continued technician level programming. One can argue that according to the model which was compiled in Chapter 5, this technikon level qualification must have fitted well into the broader environment. Indeed, this is supported by the finding of Claassen and Verwey (1997 (mentioned in Chapter 4)) that industry sees public relations as a technical function and views its strategic role with scepticism. This may be why it remains unclear what value industry attaches to the four-year technikon degree programme.

Chapter 2 also bears witness to the lack of a theoretical base in public relations in the section 2.4.7.1 dealing with its lack of definition and 2.4.7.2 dealing with applied communication research. It is naive to expect students who have pinpointed a lack of a theoretical base in their major subject of public relations to undertake research which can be seen as well-grounded. The focus on application tends to lead to research being based on trivial matters or whose results cannot be meaningfully extrapolated, or statistical significance is mistaken for practical significance - as mentioned in Chapter 2. It can be seen that this is unlikely to build a body of theoretical knowledge for public relations. Not recognising public relations as a specialisation of Communication Studies is hobbling the chances of public relations achieving scientific status. It is through the valid relationship between communication as a science and the practice of public relations, which is explained in section 2.4.11, that the discrimination needed in the application of communication theories to meet

the objectives of public relations will give rise to a body of theory relative to public relations and which has a sound theoretical base. Reflection brings the observation that any applied knowledge - such as public relations - is knowledge responsive to its environment. The model given in Chapter 5 manifests the large number of impacting influences in the broader environment of public relations education. Public relations is ever a response to the environment in its practice, but such responses need to be launched from a body of established knowledge, for otherwise public relations will be little more than the latest trend in how to win friends and influence people on a broad scale. The real challenge lies in achieving general agreement on what the objectives of public relations are.

The third requirement stipulated in the generic framework, that qualifications be linked with credit-levels for compulsory registration which furnishes appropriate designation would clearly uplift the status of communication officials in South Africa. This will be essential to lend force to the argument for improved education and training. The generic framework developed by Claassen and Verwey (1997:60) and already given in Chapter 4, and its compelling links with the concerns of the Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996), show that it is in the area of communication management that South African education is sadly lacking. Education and accreditation must work hand-in-hand for a firm basis for communication as a discipline to serve South African society well. The White Paper on Higher Education (1997) ushers in the recent *outcomes-based* approach to education, and SAQA carries responsibility for both standards of education and accreditation. The mechanism, therefore, has been put in place. It is vitally important that each of the bodies of SAQA carrying out these functions do so with rigour and integrity. One of the concerns here can be illustrated by referring to standards. Standards are to be set according to levels, tertiary level having broad divisions numbered from level 5 to level 8 as explained in Chapter 4. Setting a standard in clear unambiguous wording which relates to one particular level and which can provide access for the many qualifications of such level, could militate against such standard specifying the very requirements which would ensure that public relations qualifications gain the necessary theoretical foundation. This will have to be striven for with dedication to the ideal of uplifting public relations technikon level qualifications.

The fourth requirement stipulated in the generic framework, that both foundational and practical competence be fostered and that the demand for problem-solving abilities through the fostering of reflexive competence be met, creates a bit of a puzzle when applied to the technikon level qualification. Section 6.4.3 mentions, that although the Draft Mission Statement of the Cape Technikon circulated to staff for comment in 1999 does not mention a problem-centred orientation, it is, nevertheless, a strong orientation in the Cape Technikon programmes. One would doubt the need of the fourth point of the suggested generic framework and also that of the sixth point - that adequate background on high levels be provided for research that is contextual and reflective and developmental - where a problem-solving orientation is being followed. Problem-solving should trigger mental pointers to where research is much-needed, particularly in the area in the micro-syllabus of Communication Science IV labelled *Development Communication*. It is difficult to believe that there are few challenges which research can help to meet in this area, for it should readily give rise to research. The puzzle created by the requirement of reflexive competence can be solved by looking at several points in the analysis of the student appraisal and considering their combined effect. Pitfall (viii) (being the recognition of both Communication Studies and Public Relations as major subjects in the technikon programme) pinpoints the lack of a specialised background which is needed for research meaningful to societal needs. Were public relations seen as a specialisation of Communication Studies, it would provide room for a second major of a subject with academic status, such as sociology, which would help provide the background for research pointed to by Development Communication. Furthermore, the major of sociology and the module of Communication Studies IV called Development Communication, would very likely foster greater understanding of the importance of community media, which is one of the concerns of the Task Group on (Government) Communications (1996) which was discussed in Chapter 4. The foregoing is underlined by dilemma (vii) of the student appraisal, the dilemma of finding a worthy research topic with a public relations focus. It is apparent that the current technikon qualification is unlikely to promote research on the level which will tackle issues significant to South African society or which will help build the body of knowledge which public relations so sorely needs. Research must clearly be tied to its environment in public relations. Thus a qualification which seeks to encourage research needs to take cognisance of all the influences illustrated in the model in

Chapter 5 and to provide adequate background in relevant areas so that research can be well-grounded. Adequate background also enables one to see opposing influences more readily, which is likely to trigger ideas of areas needing research.

The remaining requirement stipulated in the generic framework is that numbered (5). This calls for a second major subject choice from a group of subjects which are not a sub-field or a closely allied field of communication. The discussion of generic public relations in Chapters 2 and 3 points to the advantage of graduates being able to offer industry a sound knowledge background in an area additional to strategic communication skills, and which might even be appropriate for the line function of the industry concerned. This would enhance their chances of becoming part of the management/dominant group of the organisation according to Grunig (2000) (as already mentioned), and also promote the chance of their being able to use symmetrical communication which, Grunig (2000) says, will promote the professionalisation of public relations.

Discussion in this section has already pinpointed the vacuum in the technikon qualification created by calling public relations the second major subject and thus preventing graduates having a deep knowledge of another subject. The requirement in the suggested generic framework goes further, for it stipulates that a second major subject should be chosen from a list not allied with, or a sub-field of, communication. This would, for example, exclude journalism which, in an integrated communication education programme, would be seen as another specialisation of Communication Studies. This could prove to be an important suggestion for the technikon qualification, for an institution could offer Generic communication Studies for all communication students, and two, or perhaps three, areas of specialisation for electives. Should these electives be tutored by members of industry with extensive professional experience (according to Medsger's finding in section 3.7), students would be provided with both a broad and deep knowledge background and also up-to-date practical skills.

The second major subject which could be provided for in the technikon qualification could, for example, be Management. This would satisfy the strong yearning evident in the student appraisal for an in-depth study of this subject. This would also meet the challenge mentioned in the student appraisal of the management of the rapid

changes demanded of organisations. The model of the environment of an institution of higher education shows that the students' concerns about knowing how to deal with these rapid changes are well-founded, for various aspects of the surrounding environment are all linked and so impact upon one another. In addition, the model also shows that the national and the international environment have an impact of which public relations practitioners must constantly be aware. This study has referred several times to globalisation and its need for international public relations. However, it would be important to ensure that supporting subjects, such as business economics, were included in the minor subjects offered in the programme. The dilemma mentioned in the student appraisal of where Public Relations/Corporate Communication management should reside can be seen as a measure of uneasiness that the *management* qualifications they understood they were qualifying for did not hold sufficient *management* properties.

The student appraisal pinpoints two further challenges to the curriculum of the technikon qualification. One is to provide for research on an in-depth scale from the first year of the programme, and the other is for the integration of communication science from year one to year four, and of public relations over its full term of coverage. A difficulty here would be presented by a competence-based programme for, as said in section 4.3, it is difficult to define competencies for public relations, for this is where it crosses over to communication science. If dealt with as a specialisation, as has been suggested, this could be dealt with as practical skills to a large extent, and the difficulty would be obviated. Such an arrangement would also settle the difficulty of allowing "*too much time for too little*" in public relations as a major subject, as students termed it in the appraisal.

It is clear from the foregoing that the suggested generic framework can be fruitfully utilised for South African technikon public relations education. However, the introduction of an *outcomes-based* approach in terms of The White Paper (1997), and the additional challenges to the tertiary education system as set out in Chapter 4, require further recommendations to be made.

The additional recommendations for South African technikon level public relations education are discussed below:-

The White Paper (1997) sets out the basis for higher education in South Africa, which has been shown in section 4.5.1. In order to fulfil these requirements, recommendations will need to be made in order to meet point (3) in section 4.5.1, with regard to the promotion of efficiency and economy. Points (1) and (2) of the higher education basis require its operation as a single national coordinated system and also institutional and regional co-operation. This offers an opportunity to cater for various career fields according to regional industrial and academic needs. Once credit levels have been set showing knowledge, skills and competences needed, the true specialisation referred to by Fourie in section 3.7 can be instituted. The credit levels will provide the blueprint for each specialisation, and registered members of industry can be approached to assist in tuition. In this way, time allocated to specialisations can match requirements more closely. Input by tutors from industry could prove to require reasonable time allocation on their part, in view of the great need for practical involvement for students and thus practical assignments. This association with industry could be invaluable and yet may not be too costly. Moreover the tuition by members of industry holds great promise of sensitive awareness to changes in the environment for learners, as focused on by the model in Chapter 5.

Point (6) requires expansion of enrolments for increased demand in promoting equity of access and redress. Section 4.6 deals with the challenge of enrolment figures not increasing according to expectations in the years 1998/1999. However, student numbers are still much higher than they were in 1994. Moreover, equity of access and redress for students, taken together with the requirement of point (7) that this involve concern for equity of outcomes so as to increase the success rate of Black students, means that competent communication educators representing South Africa's demographic profile should be appointed. At first glance it may seem that there will be great difficulty in finding competent communication educators from all demographic groups, bearing in mind the previous apartheid policy. Yet this requirement provides opportunity on a level other than that of students, for it can be brought into being through the mentoring of enthusiastic and promising students of various demographic groups. In time this could prove to be beneficial in many ways not only for communication education, but also for promoting harmony and a just dispensation.

There are also recommendations which flow from both the requirements of The White Paper (1997) and also from the needs of communication education. Requirement (2) of The White Paper seeks to promote greater articulation between tiers of higher education. In communication education this will mean that firm connection must be made on each level of foundational and reflexive competence with adjacent levels of similar programmes. In order to accommodate the true specialisation which Fourie (1997) refers to in section 3.7, an additional recommendation can be based on requirement (2) of The White Paper with regard to the call for diversification, social and economic development, and institutional and regional co-operation. This could facilitate the focus on particular specialisations of communication by institutions in the region, so that overall the academic and the industrial needs of the region are met with the necessary efficiency and economy. However, the support which institutions practise for the specialisations offered by other institutions in the region could ensure the allocation of sufficient resources for each specialisation, thus dealing with the difficulty raised by Fourie in section 3.7 that South Africa is so much smaller than the USA and does not have resources to provide sufficient training for specialisation areas. This co-operation in specialisation areas of communication can provide the balance needed for education which is trying to preserve sound educational principles in the midst of challenges of a market economy and private enterprise in education and rising costs of education.

Other recommendations will also need to be added to the list. These are recommendations which are required for communication education in particular. The first takes as its basis the need for the requirements for credits on the NQF to be established in a manner which will facilitate advancement to the highest level, which should include knowledge requirements for each level, according to Claassen and Verwey (1997), as mentioned in section 4.3. Such a recommendation can be extended into a further recommendation for credit levels to specify skills and capabilities, so that industry can be guided thereby. This should strongly advance the chances of communication management being given due recognition by industry, according to levels of qualification from technician level upwards.

Another very important recommendation should be made, which involves the

Africanisation of content. It is not only a large part of South African society which stands to benefit thereby, but also foreign students from other African countries. Chapter 2 described the great need which Africa has for public relations education programmes, and it has also been pointed out that South African higher education institutions are accommodating groups of students from other African countries on a regular basis. The Africanisation of content will also influence such things as methods of assessment, and such changes will not only accommodate, but perhaps be a force of initiation for, an adaptation of public relations practices for particular needs in an African context and also in a developmental context. This also underlines the need for educational programmes to adapt to forces of change, such as changes in the international arena and its resulting globalisation, as illustrated by the model in Chapter 5.

Lastly, a recommendation should also be made with regard to quality assurance and the building of trust in the programmes offered.

7.3 GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CURRICULATION OF TECHNIKON LEVEL PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

The introduction of *outcomes-based education* at a time when South Africa is re-organising its higher education system offers a great opportunity to augment its move to a democratic educational dispensation with a contribution to the field of public relations education, both in South Africa itself and also, as explained in Chapter 1, for learners from other African countries. For the guidelines and recommendations which are given below, if followed, should ensure that learners are very well served by public relations education. However, it will also mean that much will be asked of the learner, for it is providing a sound educational basis which could well evoke in the learner the need to fulfil their potential and, in their own particular way, to help in the upliftment of Africa through the field of public relations.

The recommendations referred to above are organised into a list of Guidelines and Recommendations. Consideration has been given to prioritizing the list of Guidelines and Recommendations. However, there is a thread which runs through these Guidelines and Recommendations which may or may not indicate a pattern from greater

to lesser significance, but which does convey a priority order in which implementation can more readily be tackled. If, for example, Guideline No. 1 were to be exchanged for Guideline No. 9, it can be seen that the latter would not carry the same meaning as it now does, for *true specialisation* would appear to be a qualitative judgement rather than organisation along specific lines. Thus the list is not necessarily in order of priority with regard to significance, but is arranged so that the Guidelines following can be introduced within a constructive approach. Moreover, another pattern operates simultaneously to guide broadly the order of listing. This is the grouping of those Guidelines which are in their essence closely connected, which makes for greater economy of expression, for otherwise separated points of a grouping might require rather lengthy elucidation.

INTEGRATED TECHNIKON COMMUNICATION EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES SHOULD BE CURRICULATED UPON A FRAMEWORK WHICH -

- (1) lays down as the grounding theoretical component Generic Communication Studies, providing a deep understanding of human communication, including the areas of interpersonal, small group, intercultural, persuasive, organisational, political, and the philosophy of, communication, inter alia;
- (2) recognises the various applications of communication as elective modules of specialisation each providing a strong link with a particular career;
- (3) establishes a step-ladder of progression according to the requirements of the NQF so that a solid foundation is progressively built with the potential of advancing to the highest credit levels;
- (4) provides for qualifications linked with credit-levels, for compulsory registration which furnishes appropriate designation;
- (5) establishes credit levels which clearly identify knowledge, skills and capabilities gained in order that industry may be guided thereby for appointment potential and due recognition;
- (6) fosters both foundational and practical competence and particularly meets the

demand for problem-solving abilities through the fostering of reflexive competence;

- (7) ensures articulation through firm connections in both foundational and reflexive competence of each programme level with the adjacent rungs of the step-ladder of progression on the NQF;
- (8) promotes efficacy and economy, particularly through the allocation of an appropriate number of units to each module;
- (9) facilitates inter-institutional co-operation in order that each institution is supported in their career/research/teaching orientation specialisations, obviating competitiveness and providing overall for the full spectrum of communication sub-fields in an efficient manner and with optimum resource utilisation so that elective modules offer *true specialisation*;
- (10) accommodates communication education and training focused upon each particular career field through inter-institutional co-ordination and co-operation so that regional industrial and academic needs can be met;
- (11) offers as second major subject choices only those which are not a sub-field or closely allied field of communication in order that qualifying learners will be able to offer industry, in addition to strategic communication skills, a knowledge background which connects their potential contribution closely to line function, thus promoting (where relevant) their chances of becoming part of the management/dominant group of an organisation;
- (12) provides adequate background on high levels for research that is contextual and reflective and developmental;
- (13) considers the African context of communication education programmes such as teaching and learning styles and evaluation of competence as well as Africanisation of content, in order to address the academic needs of our society;
- (14) is pro-actively planned at all levels so as to ensure timely adaptation to forces of change which impact upon communication education and training both within

South Africa and on the international level, and accommodates the implications of globalisation;

- (15) develops and appoints competent communication educators at all levels that are representative of South Africa's demographic profile;
- (16) maintains quality assurance so as to establish the trust of learners, parents and employers through maintaining and ensuring the relevance and quality of communication education and training - for it is only through quality assurance that South African communication education institutions will be in a position to compete successfully with overseas institutions for graduate and post-graduate students.

7.4 THE CURRENT POSITION OF SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

For the sake of completeness for the present circumstances in South African higher education, this section will bring the record in this study up-to-date.

Chapter 4 provided the background of public relations and public relations education in South Africa. The many challenges with which South African Higher Education is grappling since the change to a democracy in 1994 have been described. Among these, the parlous financial state of many institutions is mentioned. This was just one of the questions underlying the request of the Minister of Education to the Council of Higher Education that he be provided with a set of concrete proposals which serve as guidelines for restructuring, by the middle of the year 2000. Accordingly, the Shape and Size Task Team of the Council of Higher Education recommended in their report *Toward a New Higher Education Landscape (2000)*, reconfiguration of the Higher Education system. Their recommendations are represented in Appendix 3 hereto, and the 12 examples of possible combinations given are represented in Appendix 4. The Minister (*National Plan for Higher Education 2001:43*) does not agree, however, that a differentiated and diverse higher education system for meeting the goals of transformation should be achieved through structural differentiation between different institutional types based on a distinction between teaching and research institutions. This would not be consistent with a programme-based approach, and it would also not

provide flexibility so that institutions can respond to changing needs in a regional, national and global context. The Minister (2001:44) proposes to ensure institutional diversity through mission and programme differentiation based on the type and range of qualifications offered.

The National Plan for Higher Education (2001) limits approval of recommendations for mergers made by the Shape and Size Task Team (2000) to those which should strengthen the ability of certain institutions in capacity, administration or economically, or which should help to consolidate Distance Education. These approved recommendations are shown in Appendix 5.

The Ministry (2001:46) proposes that, subject to review after five years, recognition be given to the broad function of universities and technikons as two types of institutions offering different kinds of higher education programmes:-

- Technikons as institutions whose primary function is to provide career-oriented programmes at the diploma level
- Universities as institutions which offer a mix of programmes, including career-oriented degree and professional programmes, general formative programmes and research masters and doctoral programmes.

This does not mean (*National Plan for Higher Education 2001:46*) that technikons will be precluded from offering career-oriented degree programmes on a limited basis, as at present, or that universities cannot offer a limited number of diploma level programmes, as at present. The Ministry (2001:47) is particularly concerned to identify existing and potential capacity to increase enrolments in information and communications technology.

The period of five years mentioned above offers a reasonable time in which programme-based courses can be registered, tried and adjusted. This is thus an opportune time for the integration of education and training on a programme base. Adjustments to the curricula for public relations education can be made with great efficacy, therefore, in the year 2002.

It can be seen that the context of public relations education in South Africa is going to

have a dynamic influence for some time to come. The next section seeks to provide some synthesis in terms of the findings with regard to public relations educational context.

7.5 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

Public relations can be said to be channelled interaction with the environment. Should the public relations practitioner be employed by an organisation, the practice of public relations will be focused on stakeholders internally and externally who can influence to a meaningful extent the achievement of the organisational objectives. This view of public relations focuses attention on the overriding influence of the environment.

It has been shown throughout this study that the broader environment also impacts in a moulding manner upon public relations education. The broader environment stamps an educational approach upon tuition, and thus upon its curricula. This study established weaknesses in the two curricula approaches utilised, being *generic education* and *vocational education*. These weaknesses had a direct link with a paucity of research in public relations. The lack of research was connected with the lack of a body of knowledge and scientific status. In such circumstances, professionalisation of public relations remains elusive.

The study turned to an examination of the most recent model of education, the *outcomes-based* model. It was found that this model could unify the two approaches of *generic education* and *vocational education* and offer a model that would serve public relations education well, with a proviso. This proviso is that the process between tutor and learners must reliably focus on knowledge and the link between learning outcomes and a learner-centred approach. The socio-political situation in South Africa imposes great strain on the process. A factor of overwhelming significance will be, therefore, as before, the curricula approach. In *outcomes-based* education as laid down in The White Paper (1997), curricula will have to focus on *foundational competence*, being knowledge and understanding of the field, *practical competence*, being the practical application of the knowledge and techniques of its application in the field, and also *reflexive competence*, which is the ability to utilise knowledge and experience for new situations, which will thus encompass problem-solving. It is clear that great

responsibility will rest with the bodies responsible for setting standards, approving curricula, criteria for the appointment of assessors and for the appointment of assessors.

In approving curricula for a particular level, the body concerned will need to ensure that learners would be able to proceed to higher levels so that they can eventually be equipped to handle strategic roles, such as that of communication manager. This requires that curricula make provision from the beginning of tertiary education for the development of all three kinds of competence in a learner-centred approach. While this will be very demanding, it holds great promise of serving public relations well. In time it should also yield fruitful results in the form of well-grounded research, and this could make a meaningful contribution to the scientific status of public relations.

Synthesis of findings is reflected in the following diagram:-







The diagram illustrates that the curriculum approach to public relations education must be to inculcate in learners foundational competence, practical competence and reflexive competence. In order to achieve these three competences, the curriculum approach will need to be comprehensive, embracing both the approach to education adopted in Europe and also that adopted in USA. Added to this, will be the requirement of *outcomes-based education* that evaluation be based on performance. Performance will need to be evaluated with respect to all three areas of competence. The criticisms of the UK *competence-based* system which have been discussed, such as that of Marshall (1991), Ashworth (1992) and Hodkinson (1992), question the credibility of performance-based assessment, while Garland (1994) in his plea for a positive attitude to *competence-based* assessment because its void can be filled within the process, inherently supports their doubt. For Garland (1994) is underlining the critical need for the process between tutor and learners to reliably focus on knowledge and the link between the learning outcomes (competence assessment) and a learner-centred approach. A learner centred-approach takes the needs and abilities of learners closely into account. Such a requirement draws in the socio-political realities of the educational context. In South Africa, the challenges here will be multi-various. Major responsibility will fall upon the relevant Standard Generating Body, which will need to ensure that standards set require the basis for all three kinds of competence to be established from the first year of tertiary education, in order that learners are in a position to proceed along an educational path which will enable them to fulfill the role of strategic relationship communicator, should they choose to proceed in education. This should also ensure a constant supply of researchers qualified to make a meaningful contribution to the field of public relations.

7.6 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

This section first considers whether or not the research goals of this study have been met.

The main research goal of the study -

- To provide guidelines for the curriculum of technician level public relations education within an *outcomes-based* approach to education

has been met. It has been found that *outcomes-based* education can unify the two models, that of generic education and vocational education, and eliminate their weaknesses. This finding holds a proviso, which is that the process between tutor and learners must reliably focus on knowledge and the link between learning outcomes and a learner-centred approach. This is illustrated in the diagram at the end of section 7.5. The primary research goal will be discussed again once the secondary research goals have been dealt with.

The secondary research goals of the study have been met. These include -

- To analyse and assess current approaches to tertiary level public relations education in various contexts.

Chapters 2 and 3 have focused on this secondary goal of the study, and have assessed the two approaches to public relations education *generic education* and *vocational education*.



- To identify the weaknesses and strengths in current curriculum approaches adopted for tertiary level public relations education.

Tables were compiled of the historical development of western higher education and the comparison/contrast of curriculum approaches utilised in university and in technical education from the 12th to the end of the 20th century. These revealed a weakness in *generic education* of a lack of practical training, while *vocational education* does not provide an adequate theoretical background. The two approaches to education are set in opposition to one another in both their weaknesses and also in their strengths.

- To develop a theoretical framework for understanding the context of tertiary level public relations education.

Chapter 5 has developed a systems framework for understanding the context of public relations education. This systems framework has been utilised in meeting the following secondary research goal:-

- To analyse the impact of the educational context on the curricula of technikon level public relations courses.

The systems framework which was developed in Chapter 5 was utilised in Chapter 6 for an analysis of a case history. The analysis has provided further confirmation of earlier findings with regard to weaknesses in curricula approach and has also confirmed that educational context is inextricably tied to the curricula of public relations courses.

The primary research goal which has been met in this study is again given -

- To develop guidelines for the curricula of public relations technikon level education in the South African educational context.

Section 7.3 in this chapter provides guidelines and recommendations which have been developed by this study for the curricula of public relations technikon level public relations education in the South African educational context.

Chapter 4 gives the generic framework which was developed by Claassen and Verwey (1997) and which is based upon the levels of work developed by Jacques (1982) and confirmed by Stamp (1993), of the outputs of communication managers. Steyn (1999), as described in Chapter 2, carried out an empirical study which set out to discover the role expectations of the Chief Executive Officer of organisations in the area of corporate communications, being the roles of technician, manager and strategist. Steyn (1999:41) suggests that tertiary education should pay attention to providing students with strategic management and strategic communication skills and knowledge required to fulfill the expectations of top management.

A total lack of understanding of the role of the communication management function in

the broader organisational context by South African industry has been shown by the research of Claassen and Verwey (1997). The majority of outputs of communication management was found to be on levels 3 and 4, according to the stratified systems theory by which workplace qualifications are represented, which was developed by Jacques (1982) and confirmed by Stamp (1993). While communication management was found by Claassen and Verwey (1997) to be mainly a level 3 or 4 function, which is management level, with level 3 representing : *Good practice. Optimise use of all resources* and level 4 representing : *Strategic. Bring into being new systems, coordinate and resource systems, terminate systems*, the research showed that industry rates the most important communication functions as being those on level 2, which is technician level.

The position as pointed to above should be seen in the context of public relations having certain academic voids : its lack of definition and delineation of scope and of an underlying body of knowledge and dearth of well-grounded research, and so a lack of academic status and professionalism.

This study has supported the approach that public relations continue to be tutored as an applied science of Communication Studies. It has also been suggested that once the objectives of public relations have been agreed upon, public relations could well develop theory dealing with the discriminate application of communication theory in order that public relations objectives can be met. Should this be so, it would help to build a body of knowledge for public relations.

An area in which this study could have been stronger is in the number of students utilised in the student appraisal. However, the small numbers of students doing the degree course of B.Tech. Public Relations Management was itself the limitation. As explained in 6.2 and 6.3, the group chosen was a very strong representation of the overall number, and the percentage of the group interviewed represented over 88%. This group also had a strong connection with the case history, the appraisal showing student experience of problems which supports in a compelling way the weaknesses identified in this study by sources which are informed and credible and representative of all levels.

The Guidelines and Recommendations for South African technikon level public relations education can point out the path to successful introduction of the *outcomes-based* education model in technikons. Such a curriculum would enable graduates to serve industry as communication technicians and as communication managers and, in some cases, as communication strategists. Graduates will also be competent to yield academic research and contextual practical research. This last-mentioned point should make a strong contribution to the building of a body of knowledge for public relations. Given time this added input should help public relations to achieve scientific status and professionalisation. Such contribution could benefit, not only the field of public relations itself, but also South African industry, not to mention Government Communication. Indirectly it should also benefit foreign students who attend South African higher education institutions. Higher standards of education can thus have a far-reaching influence.

The study has also contributed heuristic value in the form of the model of the environment of an institution of higher education, which has been adapted from Verwey's (1990) social systems model representing organisational effectiveness. This study has revealed how strongly the broader environment influences public relations and its practice and, therefore, also its education. The broad environment constitutes a complex web of influences. The model can guide researchers to take the full spectrum of influences relevant to particular research into account, and can also be utilised by curriculum planners. It can also promote heightened awareness for educators and for the practice of public relations of impacting influences and their possible interrelationship in the case of changing phenomena.

The unique contribution of this study can be said to be:-

- (1) It is the first and only study dealing with the curriculum of public relations education in the South African context.
- (2) It provides clear guidelines for the broader issues being grappled with within the field of public relations education.
- (3) It has developed a framework for analysis of the higher educational context and its impact on curriculum.

The study closes with recommendations and directions for further research.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has laid the groundwork for movement on the curriculum of public relations education, but also suggests that follow-up investigations should be undertaken which connect with basic concepts.

Such an example arises from Chapter 3. In dealing with curriculum, Hodgkinson's interactive model as an alternative interpretation of the UK Competence Model, suggests that interpretation of laid-down, pre-set standard outcomes will be a product of the interaction between the educator-examiner and the learner, and will thus vary from one case to another. Should research show that the interpretation of laid-down, pre-set standard outcomes is indeed a product of the interaction between the educator-examiner and the learner and that its variance from one case to another is significant, the credibility of *outcomes-based education* will be at stake. Should the relationship between interaction and interpretation be shown to be inconsequential, this would help to build credibility for an *outcomes-based* approach to education.

Chapter 3 also raises another question, which is whether or not examiners should be registered by an established authority, such as the NSB of SAQA. Likewise, in Chapter 5 it is stated that The White Paper (1997) lays down the principle of the recognition of prior learning. The credibility of the *outcomes-based* education model is going to rest upon such issues being based on a firm and credible basis which is uniformly applied and controlled. It is understood that assessors are currently being trained for registration.

Industry could investigate the validity of the South African *outcomes-based* model, which will contribute greatly to its value and enhance credibility.

Research is also required to determine for which level of work employers expect students to be trained. This requires a needs analysis.

Research could also be carried out to establish the foundational competence required for the professional practice of public relations at different levels (technician, managerial and strategic).

Research could also be carried out to establish the practical competence required for the professional practice of public relations at different levels (technician, managerial and strategic).

Research could also be carried out to establish the reflexive competence required for the professional practice of public relations at different levels (technician, managerial and strategic).

The context of public relations has been shown in this study to have a strong influence on its curricula. Thus the background of public relations in Africa will influence its practice, and research can help to establish which areas of public relations service are most needed in countries of Africa.

Another fruitful area of research could be directed at giving an African character to the curriculum content. Persuasion, for example, in many African cultures, is a group phenomenon rather than a phenomenon aimed at many individuals. Thus research could be conducted to establish the channels through which rural communities receive and transmit messages.

Innovative utilisation of technology for use in rural communities could also serve as an objective of research.

Sections of the curriculum could also be given an African character. For example, research could investigate the introduction and the history of public relations in Africa. This could be included in the curriculum, and, together with the link of public relations with business economics, could in time bear fruit in that students could make a more useful contribution within the African economic context.

Methods of evaluation and their appropriateness for learners from Africa could also be researched, particularly with reference to *outcomes-based education* and its focus on

assessment of performance by the individual.

