

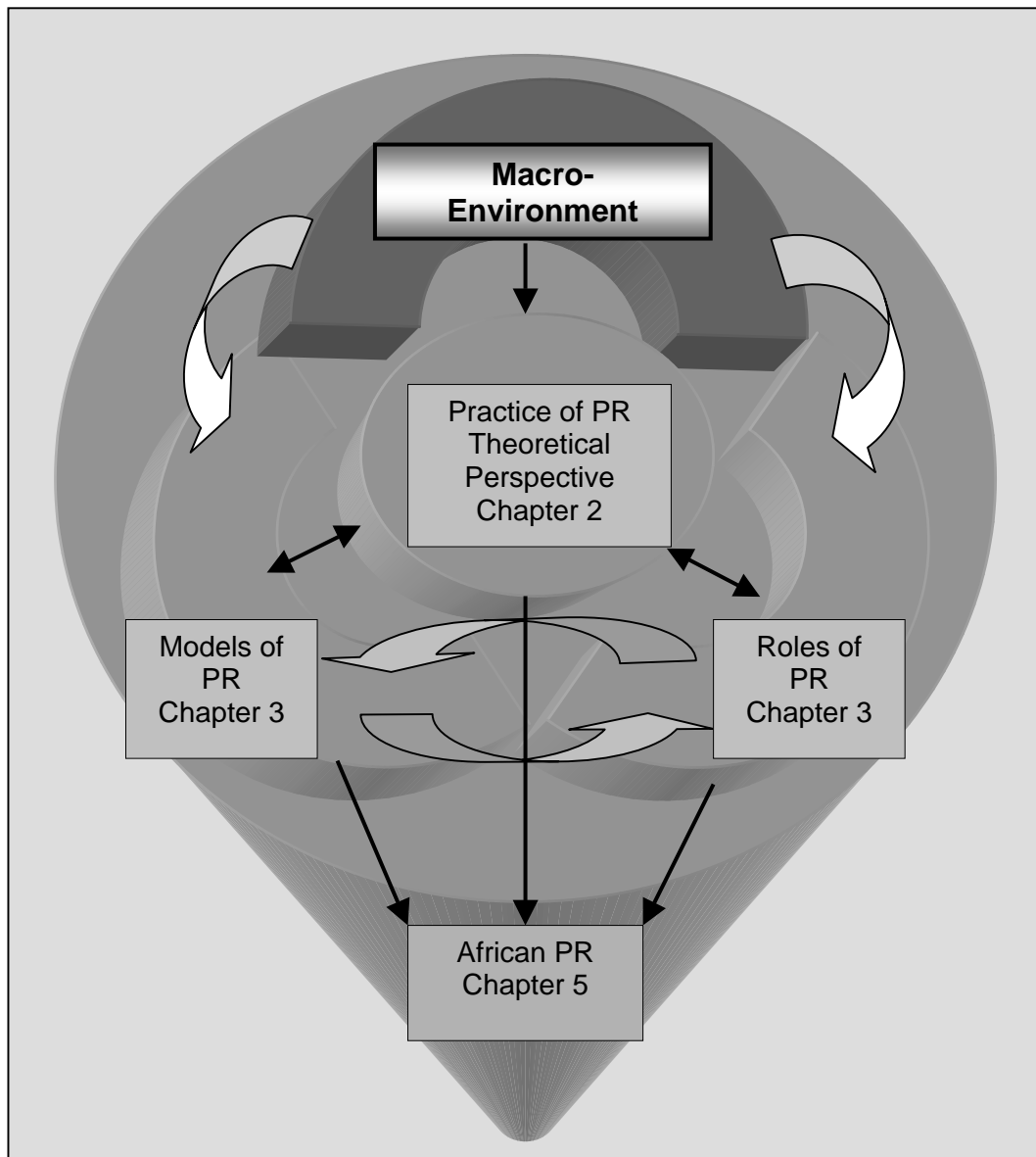
CHAPTER 4
**THE IMPACT OF THE MACRO-ENVIRONMENT ON THE PRACTICE OF PR:
REMOTE AND INDUSTRY ENVIRONMENT**

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 a theoretical framework for the study was discussed. This framework illustrated that the macro-environment has an impact on the practice of PR and in order to investigate PR from a strategic perspective it is important to refer to the macro-environment. The aim of this chapter is to address the impact of the macro-environment on the practice of PR. The chapter will briefly discuss the impact of globalisation, world development and the evolution of business on the practice of PR. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the impact of the professional association on the practice of PR. The focus of this discussion will be on the professionalisation of PR. A discussion on the importance and impact of research and education on the practice of PR will also be included in this discussion. Finally, the chapter will conclude by explaining the importance of a body of knowledge as research in general in this field is guided by it.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, when focussing on strategic PR the interaction of PR and the macro-environment is critical. Any changes in the external environment are adapted through strategy, which influences the practice of PR. In order to put this discussion in the context of the rest of the study a conceptual framework for this chapter is provided in Figure 4.1, highlighting the topics of discussion.

Figure 4.1 Conceptual framework for the impact of the macro-environment on the practice of PR



The social sciences, specifically the social systems theory, refer to the changes in the macro-environmental and their impact on PR. As a strategic management function, PR needs to take cognisance of the dynamic nature of the macro-environment. These changes affect the effectiveness of PR. It specifically affects the decision making and strategy formulation of PR in societal and organisational terms. The professionalisation of PR needs to assist practitioners in performing at the most effective level possible. PR practitioners should continuously assess the values, norms and educational

issues needed for their changing roles as PR practitioners. As the macro-environment changes, it directly impacts on social activities and therefore on the practice of PR.

The remote environment, also referred to as the macro- or societal environment, indirectly affects organisations by influencing the long-term decisions. These issues develop outside the organisation's operating situation and therefore opportunities, threats and constraints are presented to the organisation through the macro-environment. This environment consist of factors such as social, economic, political, technological and ecological factors (Steyn, 2000:57-58). In this study, reference in the macro-environment will be discussed under the following topics: world development, business and society, and social activities. The industry environment is a collection of organisations offering the same product or service to society (Steyn, 2000:58). In this study, the professional PR associations are viewed as the industry environment. These associations determine and influence the profession of PR and therefore have an impact on the practice of PR. The role played by professional associations, standards, ethics, education and training will also be discussed.

4.2 GLOBALISATION

As the world continues to shrink and the people in the far corners of the earth are increasingly influencing each other in various ways, there is a need for increased planned communication amongst members of various nations and cultures. The world has developed into a global village with global citizens, where all boundaries between countries are erased. All communication lines are open and all economies are opening in order to make them more competitive and attractive to foreign investment. In short, globalisation can be explained as the transformation of economies and politics influencing cultures around the world. The developed countries dominate the world economy and the existence of an international economic order establishes a framework for the international economic system (Conrad & Poole, 2002:410).

The driving force of globalisation is the spread of free-market capitalism to every country of the world. The drivers of globalisation are social (increase in global population, dividing rich and poor, changing work patterns etc), technological (global communication increases and IT revolution continues), economic (global market dominated by multinationals), political (democracy) and environmental (impact of diminishing of natural resources and global warming) issues. An understanding of these drivers is necessary to assist cultural introspection and adapting to new ways whilst preserving unique contributions to humanity and more importantly to improve the human condition. The transformation of economics and politics is influencing cultures around the world. The challenge imposed by globalisation is for countries and individuals to find a healthy balance between preserving a sense of identify, home and community while living and acting within a global economy (Halal: 2000; Pearce & Robinson, 2000; Conrad & Poole, 2002; Mercer & Wilter, 2002).

The term world economy refers to the capitalist world economy, which took on the configuration of a core of dominant countries and a periphery of dominated countries. The dominant countries are the industrial capitalist West or better known as the First World. The dominated underdeveloped countries of the Third World in the South are called developing or “less developed countries”.

4.3 WORLD DEVELOPMENT

World development takes place when social, economic, political, cultural and technological changes help or hinder the basic needs of the majority of the people. The uncertainty and disorder of the development process occur at all levels from a rural individual's access to a modern clinic to the international scale of trade relations between rich and poor countries (de Souza, 1990:3). The impact of world development has an impelling impact on human beings sharing one planet where there are two worlds. Those are the world of the rich and the world of the poor. The poor are overwhelmingly the people of the Third World countries that have fallen behind the economic levels of the West since

the beginning of the modern colonial period in the sixteenth century (Weitz in Todaro, 1994:3). Various contexts have been influenced by the current state of world development. Development implies progress towards desirable goals, and a development process is the means to realizing these ends. Development focuses on three common goals sought by all individuals and societies, namely sustenance (the ability to meet basic needs), self-esteem (to be a person) and freedom (to be able to choose). They relate to fundamental human needs that find their expression in almost all societies and cultures at all times (Goulet in Todaro, 1994:17).

The challenge of development is to improve the quality of life. This is usually obtained by focusing on higher incomes, but it involves much more. Development is a

“multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of poverty” (World Development Report, 1991).

Development is about the aspirations for prosperity and posterity. Most current estimates suggest that two billion people will be added to the world's population over the next 30 years. Most of this increase will be in developing countries and the bulk of it in urban areas. Therefore, the core challenge is to ensure productive work and better quality of life for these people (World Development Report, 2003).

According to Todaro (1994:13), the world is a social system, which refers to the actions that isolate a system from its environment. The environment in which these systems function are observed and evaluated from the logic of the system and therefore any environmental changes cause the system to reflect in- and outwards in order to understand itself. Steiner & Steiner (2000:5) explain that economic, political and social activity is the subdivisions of the universe of the human endeavour.

The world is a social system and its development refers to the interdependent relationships between the economic and non-economic factors (attitude towards life, work and authority; public and PR, private bureaucratic and administrative structures; patterns of kinship and religion; cultural traditions; systems of land tenure; the authority and integrity of government agencies; and the flexibility or rigidity of economic and social classes) (Todaro, 1994:13). Within the world, societies are viewed as the most complex of social systems, made up of various social systems that are grouped together in functional systems. These interactions between systems can become formalised like an organisational system (Holmström, 1996:7 & 56; Holmström, 1997:33).

Consequently, world development is not merely about economic growth but also about the environmental and social issues, it is about people and how they interact with one another. The planet and its fabric of life are about the aspirations for prosperity and posterity. If the transformation of societies and the environmental management are not integrally addressed with economic growth, long-term growth will be jeopardised. When environmental and social issues are not addressed the problems accumulate over time and local, national and global problems occur that might have very costly or irreversible consequences (World Development Report, 2003:1).

In the last 10 to 15 years it has become clear that organisations do not operate in a vacuum but that they are the influential groups of citizens of societies. Therefore, they need to account not only for their financial performance but equally important is their reporting on social and environmental performance. This has been referred to as the triple bottom line of organisations (Naidoo, 2002:125).

4.4 BUSINESS IN SOCIETY

The role of business in society has changed considerably. In the continuous attempt to make socio-economic systems function effectively, businesses are often faced with decisions involving the environment outside the organisation.

The relationship of an organisational institution to values and institutions outside the organisation is complex by nature. From a systems perspective, society should be provided with a better understanding of the mission organisations have as well as the criteria for determining how well the organisations are achieving their missions. Society is therefore viewed as a social system, involving people and their organisations in relationships, consisting of some observable whole, normally seeking certain human objectives (Davis & Blomstrom, 1971:3-5).

Institutions are established by society for social purposes, and an organisation is one of these institutions. The challenge of meeting both economic and social expectations, which typically refers to the development and processing of economic values in society, is often overlooked from an organisational perspective. Organisations often overlook the fact that it is also a social institution, performing a social mission, influencing the way people live together. This institution is not in isolation nor does it serve a single purpose or a single constituency. It is linked to a broader social system. Organisations serve many stakeholders and these groups give and demand a lot; therefore, the need for an organisation to develop a reputation for the quality and integrity of its behaviour is essential. A fundamental shift in the relationship of business towards individuals and to society is essential and should be managed in such a way that they are responsive to the legitimate expectations of their stakeholders (Davis & Blomstrom, 1971:11; Sturdivant 1985:1-5).

The relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders have become critical for the long-term success of an organisation. It has become necessary for organisations to integrate social and environmental issues into their core business strategies. This emphasises the fact that financial terms will not suffice for an organisation to be sustainable in the long term. The triple bottom line aims at balancing the needs of the organisation's prosperity, the human needs associated with the organisation and the needs of the environment, therefore referring to the triad of "people, planet and profit" (Naidoo, 2002:125-132).

In an increasingly complex and diverse society, Holmström (2000:47) is of the opinion that a new organisational paradigm is institutionalised where reflective self-understanding entails corporate self-control, to ensure social order. Society is often referred to as a pluralistic society, which means that it has many groups of institutions through which power is diffused. Strict limits are placed on the discretionary exercise of organisational power. These limits are:

- Governments at all levels in all countries regulate business activity and competitors. They are responsible for legitimate behaviour in the marketplace.
- Social interest groups can restrain business by using various methods. Recent years have shown examples of this in labour, environmental, civil rights, religious, consumer and public interest groups.
- Social values are embedded in individuals and include norms of duty, justice, truth, and piety that directly influence organisations' behaviour and can be as powerful as laws.
- Markets and economic stakeholders can pose a threat to the success of the organisation if the decisions made are not in their interest (Steiner & Steiner, 2000:66).

Governing systems of organisations have evolved from a profit-centred model to a socially responsible model and more recently towards a collaborative working relationship referred to as the corporate community model. Businesses have developed from the industrial age where a profit-centred model focused on capital formation as the only legitimate role, to the Neo-Industrial Age focused on a social responsibility model as a remedy to the profit-centred model, focusing on “doing good”. These two models illustrate the conflict that prevails today in corporate governance. The economic role of profit is fundamental for the survival of business but often drives the social responsibilities of business out. Therefore, a new governance model, called the corporate community model, was recently developed to address the economic rationale for the important role stakeholders play in wealth creation. In the current age of information the critical focus of businesses are on

knowledge, which behaves different to capital, as it is transferable and intangible and its value increases when shared. The collaborative relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders can be economically productive. This model views the organisation as a socio-economic system where wealth is created through collaboration, thereby creating social and economic wealth. Organisations are thus evaluated by the status of how they behave towards their publics as well as to their profitability (Halal, 2000:10-16).

The evolution of business has influenced the structure of business. As a function of business, PR has also been affected and has evolved considerably. This evolution can be related to four trends: The increase in big institutions; the increasing nature of change, conflict and confrontation in society; the technological innovations in communications have created an informed society, and lastly, the increase in public opinion as democracy was introduced in the 1990s (Seitel, 1995:26). The role of businesses in society has changed. This can be ascribed to the fact that organisations sometimes behaved in an improper way. Legitimacy and social trust have become critical survival issues for organisations. From a strategic management perspective, PR therefore needs to be aware of and adapt to changes from the macro-environment because this have an impact on effective decision making and strategy formulation.

There is a need to professionalise the field of PR. If the field of PR wants to contribute to organisations and society it is critical for individuals to perform a professional role. It is through the identification of the intellectual traditions and research on the body of knowledge that a set of values can be defined. Grunig (2000:23-24) argues that in order to define PR as a profession, a set of values need to be developed. Core values define professions and the core value of PR is the value of collaboration, found in concepts such as “*societal corporatism, collectivism and communal relationships*”. Therefore, PR practitioners must agree on what and who they are as professionals. They must be able to articulate their world-view before they can perform their professional

role and contribute to organisations within a diverse global society (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000:156).

4.5 PR AS A PROFESSION

The idea of professionalism began during the 5th century B.C. when the Hippocratic oath of medical ethics was developed. At the end of the 19th century, discussions on professions were mostly limited to medicine, law and religion but recently this concept has also been made applicable to occupations such as “accountants, architects, artists, computer scientists, dentists, engineers, journalists, librarians, natural and social scientists, social workers and teachers”. The shared dominant factors in these occupations are public respect and autonomy to practice their professions (Grunig, 2000:25). It was generally agreed that the following criteria apply to all professions:

- Specialised education based on theory developed through research is needed in order to acquire a body of knowledge and skills, with the emphasis on knowledge over skill.
- A unique and essential service that the community can recognise.
- Public service and social responsibility is emphasised over private interests. Therefore, focussing on public good instead of private economic gain and special interests.
- Autonomy and responsibility is given to practitioners in order to have the freedom to decide and act, being individually accountable.
- Codes of ethics and standards of performance are enforced by self-governing association with colleagues where values are interpreted and enforced by disciplining those who deviate from accepted behaviour. Specialised educational standards are set by professional societies in order to prepare and determine individuals for practice (Cutlip *et al*, 2000:51).

Wakefield in Vercic & Grunig (2000:48) identified five specific variables to determine the status of multinational PR. They are the political-economic system, culture (including language), the extent of activism, the level of

development and the media system. In order then to reach a level of effective PR in specific countries, practitioners need to have a thorough knowledge base of the social system, its historical development as well as its cultural development. This will assist and prepare professionals for international performance responsibilities in order to facilitate international PR professionals and prevent major performance blunders. The following five areas of the social system's development are of great importance:

- The government's performances – government of a social system will affect the performance of the entire organisation existing within the system. The structure and management philosophy of the governance structure will also determine the way organisations must operate and will influence the management styles of openness of organisations as well as values of the management teams operating within the social system.
- The communication advancement – refers to the public access to communication technology advancements, the degree of freedom of speech and the media, the degree of recognition on the part of the media of its third estate responsibility, the existence of a check and balance relationship between journalism and PR as well as the literacy level of the public and its knowledge of international language.
- Social system's attitudes towards social responsibility – refers to the citizens' and organisations' attitudes towards social responsibility and how individual and corporate demonstration is encouraged by the system.
- The level of democracy achieved – the world is becoming increasingly more democratic in social structure owing to global communication and people learning more about each other. PR is tied to the empowerment of public opinion as a force in society. Democracy increases the opportunity for public opinion to influence social system decisions and actions, and therefore PR as a profession can be directly related to the public opinion empowerment advancements. The development of open records laws,

consumer protection laws, the restriction on lobbying and on political contributions and the development of unions have all increased the need for organisations to communicate within the social system of which they form a part.

- The economic system – economics has always been a driving force in societies. Investor confidence and public support for the economic system are essential for social stability. The existence of corporations with stockholders, the diversity of owners with diverse interests, the creation of annual reports, and the understanding of economic dependencies and interdependencies of social systems have created a need for communication that mandate PR practices (Sharpe, 1998:23-27).

Knowledge on the above-mentioned areas is essential in order for the PR practitioner to contribute to the effectiveness of society as well as organisations. It was stated before that practitioners from developed countries and those from developing countries fulfil different roles. Pratt (1985:10) is of the opinion that in developing countries the political ideologies, the levels of development and the socio-political controls influence PR practices. On the other hand, Kruckeberg in Bruning & Ledingham (2000:145-154) is of the opinion that PR is best defined and practised when the focus is on restoring and maintaining a sense of community. A critical responsibility of a PR practitioner is building community, and for this purpose PR practitioners are called upon to define their organisations in a social manner. The African people have a strong sense of community and this cultural trait is intertwined into everyday activities and therefore also has an effect on the role PR practitioners play. It will therefore be interesting to assess if the cultural element will have an effect on the way in which PR is performed.

4.5.1 Professional criteria of PR

Several approaches have been used to determine the extent to which an occupation or practitioner is professionalised. The trait method is often used in

developing a list of theoretical characteristics of a profession, applying it to the occupation and then determining the extent to which it is professionalised. Grunig & Hunt (1984) identified five general traits for PR values that generally appear in most lists of traits:

“a set of professional values, strong professional organisations that socialise practitioners into these values, professional norms – such as those provided by a code of ethics – that can be used to enforce values, technical skills acquired through professional training, and an intellectual tradition and an established body of knowledge”.

These authors expressed their concern about practitioners hanging onto career values such as job security, position, salary level etc, instead of professional values as listed above. The core of professionalism consists of values, skills and knowledge. Before these values can be explained it is important to take note of what is meant by the term values.

4.5.2 Ethics and professionalism

Values are often used interchangeably with two other concepts, namely ethics and morals. According to Grunig (2000:28), this is due to the fact that ethical questions generally ask “what is morally right and what should be valued”. Therefore, the study of ethics will assist in the development of rules or principles that can be used to answer problems where morals and values are in question. Morals refer to that which is concerned with right and wrong conduct, and values are beliefs about important ideas or objects (Buchholz in Grunig, 2000:28).

According to Grunig & White in Grunig (1992:51-54), practitioners usually view their role in society as pragmatic, conservative, radical and/or idealistic. Each of these roles forms the basis of the basic values conceptualised for the profession and therefore influences the practice of PR. Each of these concepts will be briefly explained.

- The pragmatic role views PR as a useful practice that adds value and should be result-orientated. In practice, this role is used when a service is offered to a client and the aim is commercially orientated in order to make money.
- The conservative role views PR as a function to maintain and defend the status quo. In practice, this role is used when the practitioner is of the opinion that its client's interests need to be protected and therefore a protective outlook is adopted.
- The radical social role views PR as a contributing factor to change within the organisation and society. This role provides information for public debate in order to establish links between societal groups. In practice, this role views society as a system in which knowledge and information can provide power and influence and assumes that organisational communication can have a powerful effect on society.
- The idealistic role views PR as developing mutual understanding, contributing to informed debate about issues in society, facilitating dialogue and serving the public interest. In practice, this role views society as focused on compromise, assuming that it is a pluralist, progressive society. PR will play the role conceptualised in the symmetrical world-view.
- The neutral social role views PR as a neutral object of study. In practice, this role views society as the unit of analysis and poses questions about the social role of PR. PR takes on the role of logical positivism; however, philosophers of science currently reject the idea that observation and interpretation can be neutral.
- The critical social role views PR as critical scholars drawing implications from data in order to change the practice of PR. In practice, this role views society as constructed systems that can be deconstructed and

reconstructed. PR takes on a role of criticising the practice and advocating more effective practices.

The evolution of an occupation can therefore be determined by measuring the current status of the occupation against a list of characteristics defining a profession. The professionalisation of PR is essential because it will assist practitioners in terms of credibility in participating in decision making and emphasising the value and purpose of PR (Wilcox *et al*, 2000:65).

Grunig & Hunt (1984) stated that occupations could only become professions once the individuals qualify as professionals. Individuals need to understand what is expected of them in order to be able to “act as a professional”. Professional associations often provide assistance to practitioners in explaining what is expected of these individuals.

4.6 PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Professional associations usually have codes of ethics (also referred to as codes of professional conduct) which are used to set acceptable norms of behaviour for working professionals (Wilcox *et al*, 2000:60). Professional associations are mostly represented by practitioners in order to reflect the efforts made by practitioners to surround the function with status and to advance its competence.

Edward Bernays dedicated his career to licensing PR. Bernays was of the opinion that licensing would protect the profession and the public from incompetent individuals who have no knowledge, talent or ethics required by this profession (White & Mazur, 1995:14). Another attempt to improve standards and professionalism in PR was the accreditation of programmes around the world. Practitioners thus are accredited if they achieve a high level of experience, competence and ethical conduct – it almost became a “seal of approval”. Further attempts by professional associations were to design

various programmes in order to advance the profession of PR through (Wilcox *et al*, 2000:69 – 74):

- Education – working with universities to standardise curricula;
- Research – funding projects that advance the body of knowledge in PR, therefore establishing important research activities;
- Recognition of senior practitioners – recognising career achievement and contribution to the profession by providing fellowship programmes and annual awards for outstanding individuals;
- Professional development – the primary purpose of most associations is to advance the profession through education and information. This is usually done by subscription to publications as a form of education and information as well as organising professional development workshops and seminars; and
- Business standards - establishing international standards for business conduct.

In order for PR to achieve professional status, specialised educational programmes must be developed. A body of knowledge must exist. Community recognition should be present. Individual accountability and commitment to abide by established codes must be evident in order to protect the public interest, which is defined by social responsibility (Cutlip *et al*, 2000:149; Holmström, 1997:25-31).

4.7 PR EDUCATION

Professionalism of any particular field is mostly manifested through education, as it provides the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil the tasks and skills needed to perform. The relationship between PR education and PR professionalism has not been that commonsensical (Ehling in Grunig, 1992:440). Discussions and differences amongst academics and practitioners are centred on the nature of curricula and the purpose of courses. In order to

serve business and industry, interest in vocational education is increasingly required (L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996:1).

PR practitioners view professional status as important because social respectability and aspirations are achieved in this way. The concept of professionalism as discussed earlier in this chapter states that there is a strong tendency in literature to define professionalism as something that applies to an individual rather than an occupation. L'Etang & Pieczka (1996:2) is of the opinion that this approach is moving the debate away from important questions about the role of PR in society. These authors are not as concerned about the approach in itself but rather the lack of alternatives, which creates a gap in the literature of PR.

4.7.1 Educational developments in the context of professionalisation

The educational developments in the field of PR have been dominated by the North American research findings. Academic PR journals, *PR Review* and *Journal of PR Research*, have documented and published predominantly North American research and academic orientation, with the result that a predominantly Western perspective has influenced this phenomenon. European PR teaching and practice are largely American based, resulting in a lack of knowledge about European PR (Van Ruler *et al*, 2001:166).

Theoretical and practical elements of PR were devised by North Americans, adopted by European authors and developed further in order to contextualise it. Therefore, North American and European development of PR theory is characterised by ideas travelling from one continent to the other. In scientific discussions on PR, Europe was more interested in the “whys and wherefors”, whilst the North Americans were looking at the effect of PR (Nessmann, 1995:152-153).

Nessmann (1995:156), however, is of the opinion that there are significant differences in the structure and nature of PR educational programmes in North American and Europe. These are:

- The level of generality found in the degree programmes for PR – US PR programmes are significantly more general than European programmes.
- European students receive a greater emphasis on theory than on basic, practical PR skills.
- European PR programmes are clearly more management orientated, whereas US PR programmes emphasise job related training and technical skills for entry-level positions.
- European academics devote more time and effort to PR and relevant communication theory than their American counterparts.

In the United Kingdom, professional bodies have largely determined educational developments. During the 1950s, the Institute of PR (IPR) developed its own courses and examinations for practitioners in the United Kingdom. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, IPR explored degree-level education with a number of educational institutions, largely in the polytechnic sector. On an international level, the International PR Association (IPRA) produced two policy documents on education, reviewing the role and scope of PR education in relation to the professionalisation of the practice (L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996:2).

4.7.2 Evolution of PR educational curricula

In the North American literature the first nationally accepted standard for PR education was developed in 1975. A seven-person commission had to review the state of undergraduate and graduate education. The commission emphasised a well-rounded programme of arts, science and humanities. In 1987 a 27-person commission was asked to review the current status of PR education. They reaffirmed the value of a well-rounded programme and emphasised internship as one of the most valued courses amongst educators

and practitioners. This commission identified five content areas under PR, namely principles and theory, techniques, research, strategy and implementation and internships, and also recommended that PR students minor in business (Fischer, 2000:16-18).

4.7.3 The wheel of education

In 1990, the International PR Association commissioned a study to standardise PR education worldwide. The commission reaffirmed a broad liberal education. The commission developed the “wheel of education” as a proposed curriculum generally orientated towards the PR process (Fischer, 2000:17-18).

IPRA’s Gold Paper No 7, a policy document on PR education, focused on the coordination of educational standards. A model was formulated and produced by PR practitioners and educators across the globe over a period of 18 months. This model, also known as the “wheel of education”, illustrates the recommended curriculum consisting of a core syllabus and a set of specific as well as more general educational recommendations. Its aim is to suggest generally accepted educational standards and requirements and not to propose a rigid standardised syllabus. The model consists of two circles placing PR theory and practice as an academic subject at the centre of the two concentric circles. Each of these circles contains various topics (as can be viewed in Figure 3 below) that can be used in developing theoretical underpinnings for PR, as well as to equip future practitioners with knowledge rather than skills (Ferreira, 1997:25; L’Etang & Pieczka, 1996:3-4).

According to L’Etang & Pieczka (1996:3), the main themes of the IPRA Gold Paper No 7 can be summarised as a concern over the academic and professional standards of those who teach PR, the establishment and maintenance of independence from other disciplines, the role for practitioners in making contributions to education, the balance between academic and practical work and the importance of education in contributing to the professionalisation of the field.

It is the ideal that an individual is trained according to this curriculum, but reality is that many practitioners come into PR from other fields. This caused PR to divide itself into two parts, namely preliminary (pre-practice) education at undergraduate and graduate level, and continuing education. Cooperative efforts between PR education and PR practice have to be taken in order to develop formal education (Newsome *et al*, 2000:8).

4.8 THE INTERACTION BETWEEN EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

As a pragmatic field, PR, like other professions, developed from the need to provide education to a profession that was already being practised. Consequently, education in PR developed through three stages. The first was characterised by apprenticeship outside the formal educational system. Secondly, it moved to a more formal educational institution where experienced practitioners shared their knowledge in a formal learning environment, and the last development was where academia replaced practitioners. Academia started with scientific research in order to analyse and criticise occupation instead of merely sharing current practical skills to learners (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

When referring to the models of PR developed by Grunig & Hunt (1984), one can clearly see the interaction between practice and academia in the field of PR. In the first two models, practice dictated the education, where after scientific research and critical analysis contributed to the way PR should be practised and educated in order to be effective, therefore addressing the last two models of PR practice. This field of study is closely related to industry since by implication education towards the profession or occupation is offered and therefore numerous debates have been focused on what the ideal education programmes for PR managers should be (Groenewald, 1998:60-64).

IPRA's Gold Paper No 7 calls for respect for PR in academia, which is only possible when a sufficient body of academics performs according to the standard academic performance indicators and, more importantly, from a large

volume of respectable published research. This is facilitated by a culture, which encourages research. Differences between academics and practitioners with regard to the development of theory and research in PR have been debated. Literature has highlighted the different perspectives of educators and practitioners with regard to the role, scope and content of PR education. Cottone (1993) in L'Etang & Pieczka (1996:8) is of the opinion that a too close relationship between education and practice threatens the development of the academic discipline:

“PR is compromised when educators allow practitioners to view universities as production houses for business interests, rather than as entities that should engage in critical research”.

The relationships between PR education and practice can be mutually beneficial when it is used in the correct way. Educators need additional resources and recognition, and for this reason the Report on PR education (1999:7) recommended seven areas for interaction between PR education and the professional practice of PR:

- Practitioners should review students closer as the PR education provides a breadth and dept of knowledge and skill to internships and entry-level employment.
- There is a great need for support from practitioners for accreditation of PR programmes.
- Practice should establish PR chairs at academic institutions with outstanding PR programmes.
- Successful individual PR practitioners should consider contributing to PR programmes.
- PR educators and professionals should jointly develop and participate in projects of topical and long-term social significance.
- Joint research projects can advance educator-practitioner relationships but also expand the PR body of knowledge.
- Support programmes for PR educators, students and programmes should be increased.

4.9 DEVELOPMENT AND POSITIONING OF PR AS A DISCIPLINE

The practice and education of PR have grown and changed and will continue to change in perspective, role and evaluation (Stack, Botan & Van Slyke Turk, 1999:9). As the practice of PR has developed, the growth of PR education has also developed. At the root of these changes are the ways the world has changed and continues to change. As PR faces the challenges of the global and international arena, practitioners need to discover and understand the influence of environmental factors and the impact thereof on the practice and education of PR (Wakefield, 2000:186; Zaharna, 2001:136).

From the historical analysis it is clear that PR has developed in the journalism and mass media departments (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Argenti, 1998:48). Currently, the American PR courses are offered in Schools of Journalism, while European PR is generally studied in mass communication and the majority of British courses are situated in business schools and departments of marketing or advertising. The debate of where PR education should be housed is still continuing but in reality each of these schools should offer PR as each addresses important issues of PR. The ideal is to place PR education in departments, which facilitate an interdisciplinary style of teaching, encompassing communication, media studies and cultural studies, management and organisation behaviour and PR theory and practice. This integrated and interdisciplinary approach will encourage students to be curious, play 'devils advocate', question received truths and develop moral courage, which are all qualities needed in practice (Seitel, 1995:39; L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996:10-13).

4.10 THE PR BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

A close association exists between professionalism and a body of knowledge and the role of education in transmitting the body of knowledge (Ehling in Grunig, 1992:442). Over the years an American commission for PR education was formed to investigate the status of the body of knowledge and determine

the gap between education and PR practice. The commission identified that the field of PR has a rich collection of thinking relating to PR education (Fischer, 2000:16).

The educational developments in PR have been dominated by the North American research findings and consequently a predominantly Western perspective has influenced this phenomenon. Considerable emphasis is placed on skill, business education and the legitimization of the profession of PR (L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996:10).

4.10.1 The North American body of knowledge

The changing nature of society has changed the role of the commission for PR education as well. The initial commission was formed during the early 1970s, resulting in a report *A Design for PR education* being published in 1975. Another commission was established during the 1980s and in 1985 recommended a detailed curriculum for graduate education. Earlier commissions have served PR well but have led to an increasing inadequacy owing to a range of unprecedented phenomena in preparing students for professional practice in the 21st century. These include societal, technological and professional changes that directly impact on the future of PR practice. Societal changes will impact on the role and function of PR owing to the globalisation of society. These societal changes revolve around information and the instantaneous nature of time and space, which are addressed by technological advancement. The professionalisation of PR is needed in order to grow the research in contributing to literature as well as high-level degree programs offered by institutions (Kruckenberg, 1998:235-237).

4.10.2 The European body of knowledge

In 1994 a comprehensive survey of PR in Europe was published in which it was stated that there were approximately 60 000 PR practitioners in Europe. The last survey published on PR education in Europe was published in 1991,

stating that there were 79 PR programmes at a higher level of education, 61 of these at university level. The lack of research led a group of academics and PR practitioners in 1994 to initiate an annual symposium on PR research in Slovenia; this has proved to be very successful. In 1998 the European Association for PR Education and Research (CERP Education and Research) initiated the European PR Body of Knowledge (EBOK) project owing to a need that was identified to compile a European body of knowledge that can exist alongside the North American body of knowledge (Vercic, 2000:342).

4.10.2.1 The EBOK project

The purpose of this PR project was firstly to compile a bibliography of European PR literature and secondly to understand the current PR practice and theory of European PR, and therefore a Delphi study was conducted. Furthermore, the authors wanted to contribute to the development of a global PR body of knowledge (Van Ruler *et al*, 2001:2).

The project team started by building a human infrastructure for the purposes of the project and by December 1999, 25 European countries had been included in the structure. Parallel to this, a technical infrastructure was developed in order to document the European bibliography of PR. By 1 July 1999, 20 countries and eight national bibliographies with 432 units had been received (Vercic, 2000:344). In a Delphi study the quality of respondents are essential for the success of the study, and therefore the EBOK project team designed three selection criteria, namely, firstly, to involve as many European countries as possible, secondly, each country should be represented by an academic and a practitioner, and, lastly, the respondents investigating the topic should be well-known researchers within the European network (Van Ruler *et al*, 2001:2).

4.10.2.2 Findings of the EBOK project

According to Van Ruler *et al* (2001:380), there are two identifiable differences in the European approach to PR. Firstly, the lack of conceptual dualism

between communication and relationships and, secondly, the problem of translating the American term PR. The Delphi study questions were clustered in dimensions, and herewith a summary of the responses of all three the rounds in the Delphi study will be briefly discussed.

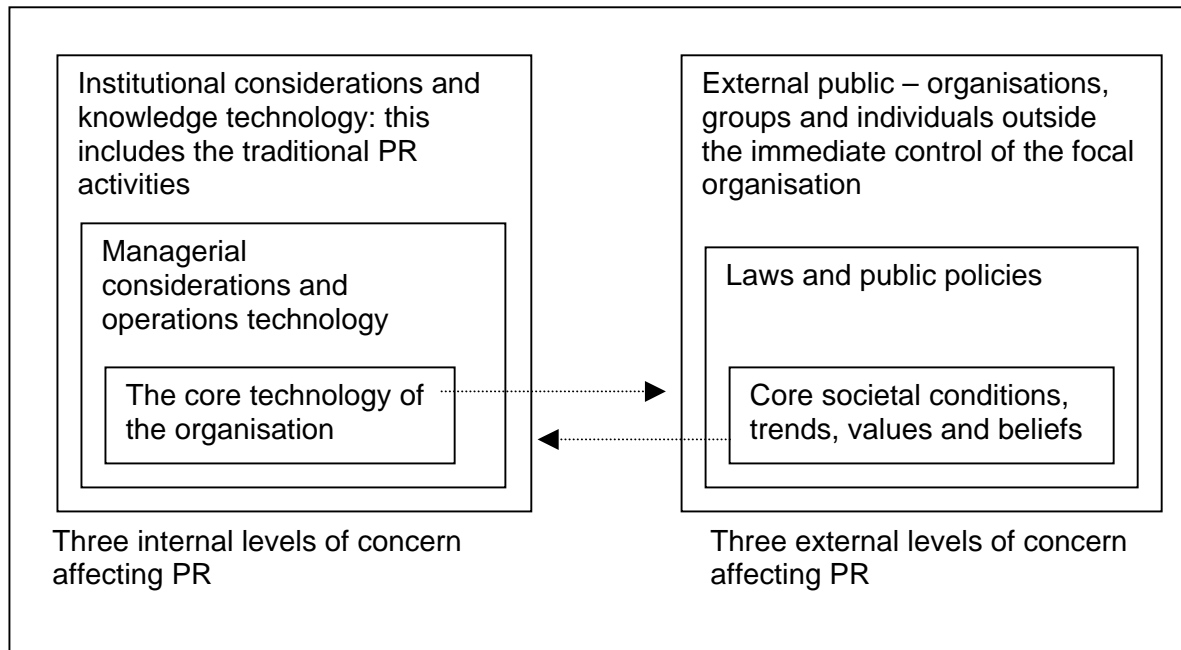
- The definition of PR used by respondents emphasised three concepts of PR, namely 'communication', 'relationships' and 'publics'.
- PR contribution was discussed as the aim of building mutually beneficial relationships, building public trust or reputation. In determining what the organisational role of PR is, a difference in role expectations was found. When referring to the value of PR, a wide range of ideas developed - from analysing social demands to taking care of certain parts of the communication.
- The parameters of PR concluded that PR should have an influence on the strategy formulation of an organisation, influencing the behaviour of employees, thus concurring that internal communication is part of PR.
- The tools of PR referred to the conclusion that PR is a theory-based field. However, when referring to the list of knowledge and skills, theory is not the first item on the list. Few countries have a full research programme where PR is studied at a scientific level.
- The PR issue most frequently mentioned is ethics.
- The dimensions of European PR were agreed upon in four dimensions, namely managerial, technical, reflective and educational.
- The name of the discipline stated that PR was the term used in an international context but it was found that countries used their own name for the discipline. In practice it was found that the term PR was preferred, while in academia the term communication was used most often.

The European countries differ according to a number of dimensions such as historical, political, cultural, social etc, and therefore this type of study is merely an initial step in opening the discussions on the phenomenon of European PR.

4.10.3 Using the body of knowledge examining priority research

The body of knowledge was developed to assist practitioners in applying the social sciences and to encourage theory building in PR. Although theory-building by means of scientific research about PR has increased it is still mostly focused on applied and descriptive research. In a Delphi study McElreath & Blamphin (1979) wanted to determine the most important research questions in the field of PR, and scholars and researchers were asked to participate. The first wave of the study collected more than 100 suggested questions. These questions were classified into a theoretical framework based on a systems analysis and sent to the panellist. Preston (1978) provided this framework viewing PR as a management function, facilitating understanding and relationships amongst an organisation and its internal or external publics. The second wave asked the panellist to rank the list of research questions. In 1989 a similar study was conducted in order to determine if the research priorities identified new questions and forecast research trends in PR during the 1990s (McElreath & Blamphin, 1994:70-72).

Figure 4.2 illustrates Preston's (1978) framework highlighting the three internal and external levels of concern affecting PR, as summarised in the American body of knowledge.

Figure 4.2 A systems framework classifying priority research questions

Adapted from: McElreath & Blamphin (1994:70)

Very similar findings were found in the two studies, 10 years apart, and the analysis of these studies, based on Preston's (1978) systems framework, will be discussed briefly:

- At the institutional level a paradigm shift is needed in the management sciences where more sophisticated theories should be used in order to provide more benchmarking amongst professionals.
- At the managerial level the use of systems-based contingency and situational theories is more needed in order to determine the effectiveness of PR departments.
- At the technical level the dominant coalition's world-view is often a more powerful predictor and explanation of PR activities and therefore more emphasis will probably occur on the study of organisations.

- At the external publics level more research and audience analysis should focus on relationships amongst stakeholders, emphasising ethical issues generated by activists. As the importance of cognitive skills (for example, measurement and evaluation) becomes important for PR managers, more dialogue regarding the importance of professional development and higher education should be initiated between educators and practitioners.
- At the legal level and policy level the focus will be on ethics in PR.
- At the societal belief level more emphasis should be placed on facilitating mutual understanding and conflict resolution amongst increasingly differentiated publics (McElreath & Blamphin, 1994:88-90).

From the discussion above it is clear that professionalism is dependent on a high level of sophistication presented through education and research, and this sophistication may assist PR to relieve itself of the confinement of publicity. Grunig, 1989 in Ehling in Grunig (1992:463) stated the following:

“to make the vision a reality both (practitioner and educator) must make the decision that the profession of PR requires specialised scholarship and education. Then they must back that decision with their support – both political and financial. PR needs such a commitment. So does society.”

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter started by exploring the macro-level of the practice of PR. This analysis is necessary in order to understand the increased complexity and uncertainty within the macro-environment. The issues under discussion were globalisation, world development, the evolution of business and lastly the importance of the professionalisation of PR. These concepts encapsulate the essence and impact of these issues on the practice of PR. By using a deductive reasoning of starting in the macro-level and moving to the meso and micro-level it becomes clear that in order to function strategically, PR need to

take note of all three these levels. The chapter concluded by addressing the association that exists between professionalism, education and a body of knowledge. Therefore, the need to develop a global body of knowledge is critical, as it will direct future research and development of the field of PR.

The next chapter, Chapter 5 will focus on the practice of PR in Africa. This chapter will include all the various issues discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 and apply it to the African context.