

## Strengths and Weaknesses of Public Relations Education in Portugal

Gisela Gonçalves

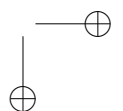
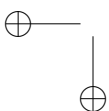
*Communication and Arts Department, University of Beira Interior, Portugal*

E-mail: gisela@ubi.pt

**T**O the contrary of the USA where many studies have been made and are being developed, updated data in Europe about the state of education in public relations (PR) does not exist. The most recent research was published in 1994 by the Confédération Européen de Relations Publiques (see CERP-Education 1994) and covered the state of education in 14 European Union member countries (CERP 1991 and 1994) International Public Relations Association (IPRA) study denominated “Wheel of Education” defend that: “public relations education should strive to provide a well rounded education which consists of a general liberal arts and humanities background to which specific knowledge about communications and PR is added” (IPRA 1990). At that time IPRA recommended education reinforcement to Master-ship level: “Placing the thrust of PR education beyond the Basic bachelor’s degree would raise the intellectual quality of PR itself”. Furthermore, “*research* both pure and applied – should be encouraged in educational spheres and in practice” (IPRA 1982).

However, as Ruler and Verčič (2004) point out, 22 years later, PR in Europe is still not accepted as an academic discipline in its own right. Despite PR education at bachelor level being a constant in countries which integrate the Pan-European study incorporated in *Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe* (Ruler & Verčič, 2004) the absence of academic education at doctorate level is visible. According to Bentele (2004: 485) the PR field “is a field in its infancy, compared with other social science disciplines – even in those countries in which PR has existed as a profession for a long time”. This fact is corroborated by Ruler and Verčič (2004b: 241) by saying that in the *state of art* of the PR investigation in Europe: “hardly any theories and methodologies are being developed for this management function”.

The growing demand for PR/Communication management specialists by a number of contemporary organizations is leading to a small expansion of



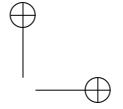
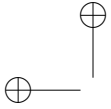
undergraduate studies in PR, throughout Europe. Many authors advocate the necessity of specialized and continuous training and furthermore urgency in reaching a consensus about what is the perfect PR curriculum (Grünig 1989; Sallot 1997, 1998; Turk 1989; Van Leuven 1989) to legitimize the profession in society. Sallot et al. (1997, 1998) discovered that educators and practitioners have different views about the profession and concluded that, in order to improve the education, it is first necessary to reach an agreement about what the professional standards are and what PR curriculum is the most appropriate.

This article studies the Portuguese reality with regard to higher education in public relations, in order to define the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching given in the preparation of future practitioners, from a pedagogical perspective and also in the job market itself. As such, the study was divided into two principal moments. In the first place, a comparative analysis of curriculums currently in force in the offer of undergraduate studies in PR in Portugal was made and then in second place, the perception of practitioners and educators was investigated as to the teaching provided. Thus, the main objective of this article is to investigate if the bachelor degree in PR meets the primary target of preparing students for an entry-level position in PR and to ‘advance over the course of their careers into leaderships roles’ (Commission on Public Relations Education, 2006: 43). However, to better contextualize and substantiate the discussion about the data obtained, it is pertinent to first present a brief chronological synthesis about the teaching and public relations profession in Portugal.

### **Public Relations in Portugal: roots and development**

To understand the PR higher education teaching specifications in Portugal, it is first necessary to know the roots and marks which condition its development. The political and social-economic contextualization, on one hand and the different associated professional manifestations on the other are the fundamental elements for a summarized characterization of the Portuguese reality with regard to the practice and teaching of public relations.

Several Portuguese authors (Lampraia, 1996: 92; Fonseca, 1998: 134; Soares & Mendes, 2004: 320) defend that it was the North American multi-

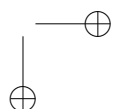
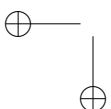


nationals, like Mobile and Shell which introduced PR into Portugal around 1959/60 and also the Portuguese government administration, by creating the first PR office in the National Laboratory of Civil Engineering. The Institute of New Professions (INP) was founded at the same time in 1964 in Lisbon and was the first private school to offer PR courses. It is still functioning today. Another teaching establishment with courses in the communication area was created in 1970 at the High School on Communication Means, also in Lisbon.

Another obvious manifestation of PR roots in Portugal can be observed in the constitution of the first PR professional association in Portugal in 1968, which was the Portuguese Society of PR, SOPREP. Initially created by a group of 40 members it would reach a number of 188 associates in 1979. It is transformed in 1982 into the Portuguese Public Relations Association (APREP), however internal conflicts lead to the suspension of its activities in 1991.

It must be emphasized that the PR profession's seeds were sown in a time of intense internal commotion. Portugal had lived through 49 years of dictatorial rule up to 1974, in a regime, which severely restricted civil and political freedom. The absence of freedom of speech and the tight censorship on mass media, overly limited any information or intervention freedom. Over the years following the revolution in 74, the economical and political development of the country enabled the PR profession to evolve substantially. The pressure of a competitive market and of a more interventive state demanded the constitution of information services from both government and private institutions. Simultaneously the expansion of the media system incited the necessity of establishing practitioner relations with the mass media. Journalists were the main source of public relations recruitment in this period for internal communication departments in the varied organizations. These same practitioners would then later constitute the first PR consultants, specialized in media relations. The International Communication Agency – CNEP, which was created in 1976, was the first Portuguese communication consultancy to emerge in the country and has survived successfully until today under the name of Omni-consul.

The increase in the demand for PR practitioners is also accompanied by an increase in the offer of higher education. The Bachelor degree in Social Communication in the New University of Lisbon is created in 1979, and in 1980, at the Lisbon Technical University. Despite from being courses called broadband in communication, they already included disciplines dedicated to

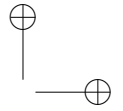
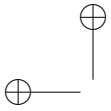


PR. The communication teaching *boom* really comes about at the end of the Eighties, with the multiplication throughout the country, of social communication courses, journalism and communication sciences by various higher education institutions, universities and polytechnics. In such a way that according to a study by Mário Mesquita and Cristina Ponte, there were more than thirty courses, attended by about 6,500 students in 1996 (see Rebelo, 2002: 131-2).

Various entities are founded also at the end of the Eighties with the intention of affiliating practitioners and promoting the recognition of the PR profession. The Portuguese Association of Communication and PR Consultancies (APECOM) is constituted in 1989 and the Business Communication Association (APCE) in 1990. Whilst the first represents the consultancy communication companies, the second supports the companies, organizations, respective technicians, and students in the business communication area.

The political and economic stability of the country following the adhesion of Portugal with the European Union in 1986 would come to very positively and effectively influence the development of PR in Portugal. The Nineties, in particular, are characterized by a period of substantial consolidation and expansion in both the business domain and government institutions. Studies in 1994 prove that 70% of government sector organizations and 87% of private sector organizations have PR functions. In 1999, the numbers evolve to 93% in the government sector and 100% in the private sector (Soares and Mendes, 2004: 323). However, as Soares and Mendes point out, these numbers involve few real PR experts, because they have different educational backgrounds. However, following the increase in practitioners with higher education and specific PR training the practitioners' standards also increase. The PR activity is no longer only media relations and expands to the vaster area of corporate communication and marketing communication.

With regard to academic research, one can underline the creation of the Portuguese Communication Association (SOPCOM) in 1998, constituted by researchers from various Portuguese higher education institutions. This scientific association brought about significant stimulation to the scientific interchange between Portuguese academics and foreigners, notably through national and international congresses. In relation to PhD studies in Communication Sciences, the first thesis was presented at the New University of Lisbon, in 1990 (Rebelo, 2002: 132). However, following consultation of the Min-



istry of Science, Technology and Higher Education database about recognized doctorates in Portugal between 1970 and 2007, we can see the absence of any communication studies dissertation with a title, which includes the concept of “public relations” or “corporate communication”. Only five theses can be found over the 40 years, where the study object approximates a public relations and corporate communication perspective and all are after 2001.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore possible to conclude that public relations teaching in Portugal is not unaffected by the global problem pointed out by Botan and Hazleton (2006: 3): “some ‘professors’ of public relations with zero academics training in the subject area”.

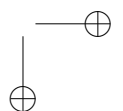
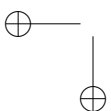
Summarizing, the life cycle of PR in Portugal occurred in three key periods. The Sixties can be considered as the chronological mark of the beginning of PR in Portugal, which was visible in business, academic and associative outlook initiatives. The evolution of the profession starts after the revolution in 1974 and goes on until the Nineties. It is a progressive growth phase, which is particularly consolidated in the Nineties, in both professional and educational levels. At the turn of the century PR in Portugal enters the maturity phase, with the consolidation of the number of practitioners and the importance of this professional sector and also, with the creation of post graduation studies and specializations in PR. However, despite the rapid expansion of higher education communication courses and of the increasing demand from the target public, as will be analyzed later, the scientific area of PR is still in a very embryonic state. As such and if it is possible to say, as Elihu Katz said in 1999, in the conference at the opening of the First Congress of the Portuguese Communication Association (SOPCOM), of the “one hundred years of communication research”, this period reduces itself, in the Portuguese case, to a meagre quarter of a century.

### **Undergraduate Public Relations Programmes: principal features**

Portuguese higher education has been undergoing several modifications within the Bologna Treaty, which aims at establishing a European area for higher ed-

---

<sup>1</sup>Data collected in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education portal: [www.estatisticas.gpeari.mctes.pt/index.php?idc=35](http://www.estatisticas.gpeari.mctes.pt/index.php?idc=35). (access 08/06).



education formed by 45 countries by 2010. The principal objective of this teaching reform is to enable the complete mobility of students and the recognition of credits and academic degrees, divided into 3 cycles of studies: bachelor (3 years), master (2 years) and doctoral degree (3 years) at European level.<sup>2</sup>

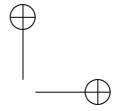
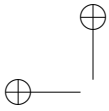
The adoption of the three-study cycle higher education organization model reached 90% in the 2007-2008 school year, two years after the beginning of the Bologna Process in Portugal.<sup>3</sup> The new study plan incited the reformulation of curricular content, as we will see later. Our attention is centralized only on the first teaching cycle in Communication Sciences, where the study offers for PR are integrated, as there is still no significant data about the adhesion of students to the second and third cycle of studies.

Thirty four schools (18 public and 16 private), offer education for the first cycle in the Communication Sciences and Public Relations area in the current panorama. Only 9 (21%) of the 43 courses have the “public relations” nomenclature. The most common designation is “communication sciences” or “social communication”, however there are courses with the most varied names like, “business communication”, “human relations and organizational communication”, or “communication and culture”. This terminological variety is mainly due to the intensification of private teaching course offers. A high number of candidates for this study area was noted in data referring to the 2007/08 school year. Of a total of 51,472 students who competed for higher education government teaching, 8,261 candidates were in the communication sciences area and related subjects. There are 942 vacancies for higher education government teaching for the 2008/2009 school year, (Portugal has a *numerus clausus* system that restricts the number of students per field) to which can be added the higher education private teaching sector that according to data from 2006, offered 1,540 places.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the total, which is offered per year by Portuguese higher education, in approximate numbers, is 2,500 vacancies for the first year of studies in the communication sciences area.

<sup>2</sup>The length of these cycles of studies can be longer in specific studies like Medicine or Engineering.

<sup>3</sup>Data collected in: [http://www.mctes.pt/archive/doc/BolonhaII\\_2008\\_04\\_30.pdf](http://www.mctes.pt/archive/doc/BolonhaII_2008_04_30.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Data collected in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education portal: <http://www.dges.mctes.pt/DGES/pt/OfertaFormativa/CursosConferentesDeGrau/>

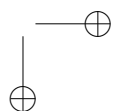
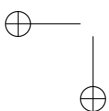


The generality of courses in the communication sciences field is broadband. It can be seen through an analysis of higher education teaching institute websites, that the principal objective of undergraduate studies in communication is the theoretical education of students for the many professions in the communication area. Sometimes explicit professions like journalists, advertisers and PR technicians are indicated and on other occasions, the professional areas are itemized, where the future graduates can work in their activity, like journalism, advertising, public relations, organizational communication, new technology, press relations, cultural management and political marketing.

The habitual division in two parts appears in the curricular content. One part is introductory propaedeutics, which is common for all students and is centralized in the interdisciplinary offer with content in the liberal arts (e.g., languages, literature or history) and social sciences (sociology, psychology or economics) area and also with fundamental content for studies in Communication Sciences (e.g., theory and history of communication, communication law and communication ethics). The second curricular part is constituted by branches or variants for which students can choose a more specific education in journalism, public relations, advertising or visual communication. This specialization varies from institution to institution and other variants can also be found like cultural activities management, cultural communication, or interactive communication.

Taking into consideration these higher education characteristics in the communication area the question arises about the place that PR education can occupy in such multi faceted curriculums. Many authors defend that PR students must receive a wide reaching education in social sciences and human studies, together with more specialized PR disciplines. Some researchers recommend that PR students receive education in psychology, sociology and human studies (Falb 1992; Kruckeberg 1998; Van Leuven 1989) and others emphasize the importance of a management, law, economy and history content (Heath 1991). In the opinion of Kruckeberg (1998) PR students must also have knowledge of technical skills in the journalism area and mass communication.

The inclusion of management and economy disciplines in PR education is one of the most redundant recommendations (Berkowitz 1999; Falb 1992; Grunig 1989; Heath 1991; Kinnick 1994; Turk 1989; Van Leuven 1989). This fact is understandable since as Sriramesh and Hornaman defend, there is lit-



tle doubt about the fact that PR is increasingly more management-based and strategy driven (Sriramesh et al. 2006, 159).

The “theory of PR” and “research methods” (Grunig 1989; Heath 1991) are other subjects often mentioned as essential in a good PR education. According to Grunig (1989), a good theoretic basis in PR increases the possibility of the students contributing in the future to developing a body of knowledge. Heath (1991) also corroborates the importance of conducting useful and rigorous research into PR, which contributes towards increasing the respectability of this scientific field.

Finally, another recommendation for the curriculum elaboration indicates the importance of integrating studies in public relations ethics (Grunig 1989; Heath 1991; Turk 1989; Pratt et al. 1989). Bearing in mind the many critical voices, which refer to PR as a euphemism for manipulation, propaganda or *spin*, (see Gonçalves, 2006) suggest that ethical education may be a good defense because as Pratt and Rentner (1989: 53) argue, “high ethical standards in the practice are seen as substantially contributing to the professionalization of the occupation”.

In *The Professional Bond – Public Relations Education and the Practice*, a recent study by the Commission on Public Relations Education (2006), states that “public relations education must be interdisciplinary and broad, particularly in liberal arts and sciences” (p. 43). Additionally, according to this recommendation, the Commission reports that the ideal public relations major would include a minimum of five courses. Thus, an academic emphasis should minimally include these courses: *Introduction to public relations* (including theory, origin and principles); *Public relations research, measurement and evaluation*; *Public relations writing and production*; *Supervised work experience in public relations* (internship), and an additional public relations course in law and ethics, planning and management, case studies or campaigns (2006, 47).

The report by the *Commission on Public Relations Education* was developed by the Public Relations Association of America, however it appears to us just as its authors assert that “it is simply a point of reference for the development of public relations education in other parts of the world” (2006: 5). We then moved on along these lines to make an analysis of the current graduation curricular content in communication and public relations in government higher education teaching. The fact that all the curriculums had disciplines



within the scope of liberal arts, social sciences and business was evident at first sight. However, the importance given to the disciplines centralized in public relations is not so consensual. This analysis is summed up in the following table, which contains a comparison of the minimum official objectives and programs of the disciplines with regard to the offer in the seven PR study areas recommended by the *Commission on Public Relations Education*.<sup>5</sup>

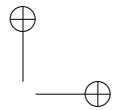
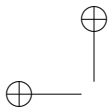
<b>Contents of Public relations</b>	<b>Number of universities</b>	<b>Percentage of universities</b>
Theory, origin, principles and professional practice of public relations	17	94.4
Public relations law and ethics	9	50
Public relations research, measurement and performance evaluation	15	83.3
Public relations planning and management	16	88.8
Public relations writing and production	18	100
Public relations action and implementation	14	77.7
Supervised work experience in public relations	9	50

Table 1: Undergraduate contents offer by Portuguese universities.<sup>6</sup>

Different conclusions can be drawn from an analysis of the data in Table 1. However, beforehand it is befitting to clarify that the content related to “public relations research, planning, production, implementation and evaluation” is integrated in disciplines of a very practical nature, like laboratories, ateliers and workshops, which in most cases is reduced to one or two disciplines in the total course. Other “disciplines related to public relations”, in the terminology of the *Commission on PR Education* (2006), namely “journalism, advertising, radio and tv production, photography/cinema, design and graphics, in education technology” and new technology were furthermore considered.

<sup>5</sup>Data collected from universities official websites.

<sup>6</sup>This table is based on the *Commission report on Public Relations Education* (2006, pp.45-47).



As such, the high percentage of courses with contents related to “Public relations writing and production” (100%) and “Public relations planning and management” (88.8%) must be seen in relation to a number of disciplines which can be taught both in a PR perspective and one of advertising or journalism. The content referring to “Public relations research, measurement and performance evaluation” which is in 83.3% of the curriculums analyzed can be found in subjects dedicated to “research methods”. It must be pointed out however, that these disciplines are not exclusively directed towards PR studies, but in the first instance, to any research in the field of communication studies.

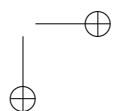
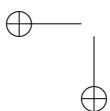
Concerning “Theory, origin, principles and professional practice of public relations” contents, 94.4% of universities offer courses related to PR theory and history and one or more PR specializations such as, “political communication, internal communication, lobby strategies, or international PR”. Data also show that only 50 % of undergraduate programmes offer courses in “PR law and ethics”. However, those contents are always integrated in a more open course like “Communication ethics or communication law”. Finally, we must point out that only 50% of undergraduate studies offer “Supervised work experience in public relations”. Probably, because in the majority of Master degree programmes the internship is mandatory.

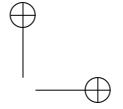
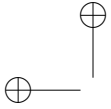
Being aware that the conclusions of this analysis of curricular content are merely descriptive and for this same reason limited, it was decided to complement this reflection through an empiric study about the perception of educators and practitioners about higher education in public relations offered in Portugal.

## Perceptions about PR higher education

### Methodology

An exploratory study through a self-administered questionnaire via e-mail was the method utilized to collect data about the opinion of practitioners and educators on PR teaching in Portugal. The sample of educators was formed based only from public higher education courses and the contacts obtained through visits to institutional sites of the universities, which offer graduation courses in the communication sciences area, PR and related courses. The sample of





practitioners to study was delimited through visits to the websites of Professional Communication Associations and PR (APECOM and APCE) and of the Portuguese Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP) as replies were intended from practitioners who carry out functions in internal organizations departments and in communication consultancies.<sup>7</sup>

57% of valid replies were obtained from a sample of 120 individuals, divided into 4 distinct groups: educators, company practitioners, public administration and communication consultancies. The majority of the practitioners studied are graduated in communication sciences (77%), followed by 9% in Economy/Business management, 4% International Relations and the remaining 10% subdivided by very differentiated graduation areas (Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and Multimedia Design). Due to the heterogeneity of professionals studied, the data obtained was handled through the comparison between 2 groups: educator group and practitioner group. This comparison was developed more specifically between the educator group and practitioner group subdivided into 3 subgroups whenever pertinent: companies; public administration and communication consultancies.

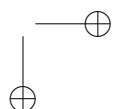
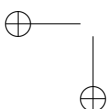
The opinion poll was applied via e-mail between April and June 2007 and the objective of the study was explained. The filling in of a questionnaire was requested through access to a website created especially for the occasion.<sup>8</sup>

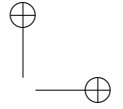
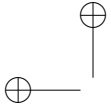
### Critical presentation of results

A list with 25 disciplines or central study areas for a higher education in public relations was created from the analysis of official curricular list in Portuguese higher education, following suggestions from the *Commission on PR Education* (2006) and from bibliographical revision. This list includes content of an interdisciplinary nature (e.g., Sociology and psychology, history, Portuguese and foreign language, marketing), fundamental content for communication sciences (theory and history of communication, law and communication ethics, research methods) and specialized communication sciences con-

<sup>7</sup>National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP): <http://www.anmp.pt/> (access: 07/03); the Portuguese Association of Communication and PR Consultancies (APECOM): <http://www.apecom.pt/> (access: 07/03); the Portuguese Association of Company Communication: <http://www.apce.pt/> (access: 07/03).

<sup>8</sup><http://www.inqueritos.ubi.pt/2007/>

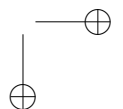
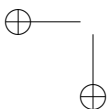




tent (journalism, advertising, radio/tv production, photography/cinema, design and graphics and new technology) and central PR content (theory and history of public relations, public relations ethics, communication planning, international public relations, media relations, internal communication, organizational culture, political communication, lobby strategies, issues management and crisis communication).

The research focuses on two fundamental issues: 1) What is the importance of each study area for higher PR education and 2) what is the relevance, which is currently given to each study area in higher education. Those questioned were challenged to classify the disciplines by their degree of importance and at the same time to give an opinion about the curricular relevance individually attributed to them, in the current Communication Sciences/PR graduation.

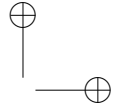
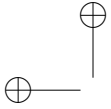
- 1) Through the analysis of the disciplines marked as “very or extremely important” with more than 50% replies, it is able to determine a list of 10 central disciplines (Table2). “Issues management and crisis communication, media relations, strategic communication planning, internal communication” are the 4 disciplines or study areas specifically for PR which are considered more important and which coincide with the opinion of the educators and practitioners. “Foreign language, journalism and marketing” are the other disciplines that both groups marked as priority. The consensus continues regarding the less important disciplines since it can be observed, the two groups questioned excluded “radio/tv production; photography/cinema; design/graphics and new technology” from the table.



Ranking	Educators	Practitioners
1	Issues management and crisis communication	Foreign language
2	Media relations	Internal communication
3	Organizational culture	Issues management and crisis communication
4	Social sciences	Media relations
5	Journalism	Strategic communication planning
6	Advertising	Communication ethics
7	Foreign language	Marketing
8	Marketing	Ethics of public relations
9	Strategic communication planning	Journalism
10	Internal communication	Research methods

Table 1: Ranking of the fundamental disciplines/study areas for higher education in communication sciences/PR

- 2) If the data obtained in this ranking is compared with the data regarding perception which those questioned have about the relevance which is in fact conceded to disciplines in current curricula, it can be seen clear divisions of opinion, not only in the comparison of educator/practitioners, but specially between the different groups of practitioners. As an example, 50% of the educators, of the business practitioners and of public administration consider that sufficient importance has been given to the study of “media relations” whilst only 31% of the communication consultancies agree; 58% of the educators, 68% of the consultancy practitioners and 41% of public administration practitioners think that little importance has been attributed to the teaching of “Issues management and crisis communication” whilst only 16% of the business practitioners are of the same opinion. Perhaps it might be interesting to investigate the reason why the communication consultancies group integrates more skeptical practitioners as to the curricular quality of higher education.



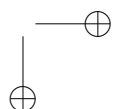
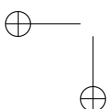
Apart from the “Issues management and crisis communication”, the disciplines in which one detects more displacement about their importance for PR education and the perception of the importance currently attributed to them in the higher education curriculums are “political communication and lobby strategies”. Data shows that 79% of the educators and 53% of the practitioners consider this content to be extremely important for PR higher education and that in parallel, 79% of the educators and 49% of the practitioners think that little importance has been attributed to them in current curriculums.

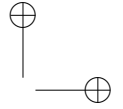
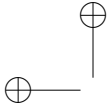
Finally, it must be stressed that those questioned consensually marked Communication Sciences as the most correct scientific localization for a degree in PR, with only 21% of the educators and 16% of the practitioners referring to Marketing as a second option. Further questioned about which is the most relevant post graduation area for a PR practitioner who intends to continue studies, 79% of the educators and 76% of the practitioners clearly marked the specialization in different PR branches again followed by, although by far, Marketing. Perhaps in the future it might be interesting to widen this study to educators in the Marketing area to ascertain their opinion about PR teaching and compare it with the data collected here.

## Conclusions

Through the study of current curriculums in PR higher education in Portugal and from the opinion of educators and practitioners about this same teaching, it can be attempted to define their strengths and weaknesses in the preparation of future practitioners, not only from a pedagogical-scientific perspective but also from the point of view of the job market itself.

The large majority of PR higher education studies are integrated in communication sciences in Portugal, where studies in advertising and journalism are also included. The curriculums are subdivided into 3 large study areas: interdisciplinary, communication sciences and specialization (public relations, advertising or journalism). This curricular dispersion limits the number of specific PR disciplines and most of the content taught within the PR perspective in the propaedeutic disciplines, which are often mandatory. This is a fact that conditions the importance of PR studies, whether theoretical or practical, in the communication sciences curriculum.



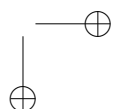
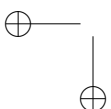


Naturally, the fact that the PR academic and scientific field is relatively new can explain the difficulty in defining the ideal curriculum. However, the results of the research applied to educators and practitioners corroborate the idea that PR studies do not occupy a very prominent position. Despite having consensual opinions about what is the ideal curricular content for PR undergraduate studies, those questioned stress the imperious necessity of attributing more importance to content like “issues management and crisis communication, lobby strategies and political communication”. Furthermore, the opinion prevails that the more technical disciplines (e.g., radio/tv production; design/graphics) must not occupy such a considerably important position in the curricular content.

As L’Etang and Pieczka (2006) pointed out, “public relations education should be integrated and interdisciplinary” (p. 442). The results of this study reveal that in Portugal, PR undergraduate studies are compounded by strong education in communication studies but by insufficient education in PR. As such, the increase in the number of higher education courses which claim to offer PR education seem to represent the academic and scientific solidification of communication courses in the Portuguese university but not necessarily a consolidation of the PR studies.

## References

- Bentele, Günter, New perspectives of public relations in Europe, in Betteke van Ruler and Dejan Verčič (Ed.), *Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe. A Nation by Nation Introduction to Public Relations Theory and Practice* (pp. 485-496), Berlin – New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004.
- Berkowitz, D. and Hristodoulakis, I. ‘Practitioner Roles, Public Relations Education, and Professional Socialization: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(1): 91-103, 1999.
- Botan, C. H. and Hazleton, V., Public relations in a new age, in C. H. Botan and V. Hazleton (Eds.), *Public relations theory II* (pp. 1–18), Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2006.



- Botan, G. M. and Taylor, M., Public relations: State of the field. *Journal of Communication*, Dec., 645-661, 2004.
- CERP-Education (Ed.), *Les relations publiques demain: de la theorie a la pratique*, 1991.
- CERP-Education (Ed.), *Public Relations Education in Europe. Survey of Programmes with appendix*. Gent: CERP-Education, 1994.
- CERP – Confédération Européenne des Relations Publiques: [www.cerp.org](http://www.cerp.org) (access 07/03).
- Commission on Public Relations Education, *The Professional Bond – Public Relations Education and the Practice*, New York: Public Relations Society of America, 2006.
- Falb, R. A., The Place of Public Relations Education in Higher Education: another opinion. *Public Relations Review*, 18 (1): 97-101, 1992.
- Fonseca, Abílio da, *Comunicação Institucional. Contributo das Relações Públicas*, Maia: Edição Instituto Superior da Maia – Série Manuais, 1998.
- Gonçalves, G., *A dupla face de Janus: a ética das relações públicas como fonte de identidade da profissão*. Paper apresentado no IX Congresso IberoAmericano de Comunicação (IBERCOM), Sevilha, 2006.
- Grunig, James. E. , Teaching Public Relations in the future, *Public Relations Review*, 19 (4): 311-13, 1989.
- Heath, R.L. , Public Relations Research and Education: Agendas for the 1990s. *Public Relations Review*, 17(2): 185-94, 1991.
- IPRA (Ed.), *General Report on Public Relations Education Worldwide*, IPRA Gold Paper No. 2. [http://www.ipra.org/members/archive/gold\\_papers/gold2.pdf](http://www.ipra.org/members/archive/gold_papers/gold2.pdf) (access 07/02), 1976.
- IPRA (Ed.), *A Model for Public Relations Education for Professional Practice*. IPRA Gold Paper No. 4, 1982 in [http://www.ipra.org/members/archive/gold\\_papers/gold4.pdf](http://www.ipra.org/members/archive/gold_papers/gold4.pdf) (access 07/02).



IPRA (Ed.), *Public Relations Education. Recommendation and Standards*, IPRA Gold Paper No. 7, 1990.

In [http://www.ipra.org/members/archive/gold\\_papers/gold7.pdf](http://www.ipra.org/members/archive/gold_papers/gold7.pdf) (access 07/02).

Kinnick, K.N. and Cameron, G.T., Teaching Public Relations Management: The Current State of the Art, *Public Relations Review*, 20 (1): 73-88, 1994.

Kruckeberg, D., The Future of PR Education: Some Recommendations, *Public Relations Review*, 24 (2): 235-48, 1998.

Lampreia, J. Martins, *Técnicas de Comunicação –Publicidade, Propaganda e Relações Públicas*, Lisboa: Pub. Europa-América, 1996.

L'Etang, J. e Pieczka, M. , 'Public relations education?', in J. L'Etang e M. Pieczka (eds.), *Public Relations. Critical debates and contemporary practice*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Londres, pp. 413-446, 2006.

Pratt, C.A. and T.L. Rentner, What's really being taught about Ethical Behaviour. *Public Relations Review*, 14 (1): 53-66, 1989.

Rebelo, José, Da comunicação social às ciências da comunicação. Breve análise crítica de duas décadas de ensino e de investigação, in J. A. Bragança de Miranda and J.F.Silveira (org.), *As Ciências da Comunicação na Viragem do Século*, Actas do I Congresso da Associação Portuguesa de Ciências da Comunicação, Lisboa: Veja, 2002.

Ruler, Betteke van and Dejan Verčič (Ed.) *Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe. A Nation-by-Nation Introduction to Public Relations Theory and Practice*. Berlin – New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004.

Ruler, Betteke van and Dejan Verčič, Communication Management across Europe. A Developing Research Field, in: J. Raupp and J. Klewes (Ed.): *Quo Vadis Public Relations?* (pp. 238-250), Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2004b.

- Ruler, Betteke van and Dejan Verčič, Overview of public relations and communication management in Europe, in Betteke van Ruler and Dejan Verčič (Ed.), *Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe. A Nation-by-Nation Introduction to Public Relations Theory and Practice*. Berlin – New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004c.
- Sallot, L. M., G.T. Cameron and R.A.Lariscy, Professional Standards in Public Relations: A Survey of Educators, *Public Relations Review*, 23 (3): 197-216, 1997.
- Sallot, L.M., Pluralistic Ignorance and Professional Standards: Underestimating Professionalism of Our Peers in Public Relations, *Public Relations Review*, 24 (1): 1-19, 1998.
- Soares, J.Viegas and Antonio Mendes, Portugal, in Betteke van Ruler and Dejan Verčič (Ed.), *Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe. A Nation-by-Nation Introduction to Public Relations Theory and Practice*. Berlin – New York: Mouton de Gruyter, p. 317-329, 1994.
- Sriramesh, K. e Hornaman, L.B., Public Relations as a Profession, *Journal of Creative Communications*, 1 (2): 156-172, 2006.
- Turk, J.V., Management Skills Need to be Taught in Public Relations, *Public Relations Review*, 14(1): 38-52, 1989.
- Van Leuven, J., Practioners Talk about the State of PR Education, *Public Relations Review*, 14 (1): 5-24, 1989.